CHAPTER 28

THE COLD WAR AND THE END OF EUROPEAN EMPIRES

The post-war period brought two major developments to Western Europe. Tensions between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies, which could be seen by the end of World War II, quickly degenerated into a "Cold War" that on several occasions threatened to become a hot one, and potentially even a nuclear war. Second, the end of the war accelerated movements for independence in the colonies of the imperial powers. During the first two decades following World War II, most of the colonies of the Western powers achieved independence, sometimes after protracted wars of independence. Decolonization brought the end of European overseas empires. It greatly expanded the number of sovereign states, particularly in Asia and Africa. The Cold War and the process of decolonization were linked, as the Western Powers and the Soviet Union and China both sought to make their influence predominant in emerging post-colonial states.

Cold War

In a speech in March 1946, Churchill lamented that "an iron curtain is drawn down upon their front. We do not know what is going on behind." As Europe counted its millions of dead, hot war gave way to the Cold War between East and West. The Red Army's drive into Central Europe in the waning months of the war had left part of Central Europe and Eastern Europe and the Balkans under Soviet domination. The division of Europe into two camps—Communist, dominated by the Soviet Union, and Western democracies, under the influence of the United States—was formalized by the creation of corresponding military alliances after the war. The

Cold War helped prevent any possible return to the relative isolationism that had characterized the United States during the inter-war period. The United States, now by far the wealthiest state in the world, had 450 military bases in 36 countries in 1955. At the same time, the Soviet Union rapidly added to its military arsenal, soon having the second largest navy in the world.

Germany became the first focal point for Cold War tensions. The failure of the Soviet, British, French, and U.S. foreign ministers to agree on the nature of a peace treaty with Germany in the spring of 1947 began the Cold War. That year Stalin, who had in 1943 officially announced the end of the Comintern, which had been established with the goal of fomenting world-wide revolution, inaugurated its successor organization, the Cominform. It was intended to consolidate Soviet authority in the states of Eastern Europe (see Chapter 27). This, too, accentuated tensions with the Western powers. In 1949, the Soviet-occupied eastern zone of Germany became the German Democratic Republic; the American, British, and French occupation zones became the German Federal Republic. The barbed wire and minefields that divided these zones reflected the ideological division between them. In the meantime, both the Soviet Union and the Western powers worked quickly to create intelligence agencies of great size to spy on the other.

Each international crisis between the Soviet Union and the United States took on great significance because scientists had developed bombs many

The U.S. airlift to Berlin, 1948–1949.

times more destructive than those that had leveled Hiroshima and Nagasaki. During the 1950s, children in the United States participated in mock air raid drills, putting their heads between their knees to practice bracing for the shock of a nuclear explosion, as if such a position would make the slightest difference in the case of a nuclear attack. The United States and the Soviet Union drew up plans to evacuate American and Soviet leaders into elaborate shelters from which they could order the launching of more missiles and bombs. Britain exploded its first atomic bomb in 1952, France in 1960. China, too, before long had "the bomb." In the 1970s, Israel, India, and Pakistan gained nuclear capability.

The Cold War focused on a series of crises that, drawing world attention, exacerbated tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union claimed that the Western Allies had unilaterally broken agreements reached at the Potsdam Conference. In July 1948, Soviet troops blocked trains and truck routes through the Soviet zone of occupation in East Germany to prevent supplies from reaching the Allied half of Berlin. The Allies began a massive airlift of supplies to West Berlin; at times, planes landed in Berlin every three minutes, bringing much-needed food, medicine, and other necessities. After secret negotiations, Stalin backed down, allowing trucks to roll through the German Democratic Republic beginning in 1949, the year of that state's creation. Berlin remained divided into eastern and western zones.

A Greek soldier stands guard during the Civil War in 1947.

In Greece, the departure of German troops led to a bloody civil war that lasted until 1949, pitting Greek Communists against an alliance of forces that supported the monarchy. The Soviet Union held to an agreement made with Churchill in 1944 not to intervene militarily, but it provided the Communists with considerable material assistance. The United States and Britain aided the monarchist forces, who finally prevailed in 1949 and then banned the Communist Party.

The Cold War soon reached Asia. Japan's defeat left China divided between the nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975), which held the south, and the forces of the Communist leader Mao Zedong (1893–1976). In the civil war that followed, Mao's Communist forces gradually pushed the nationalist forces out of China. In full retreat by 1949, Chiang Kai-shek's army occupied the large island of Formosa (Taiwan). There Chiang established a government that claimed to represent all of China. On the mainland, Mao proclaimed the People's Republic of China. The Soviet Union quickly recognized the new, giant Communist state, while the United States recognized the nationalist government of Taiwan as China's legitimate government. In the atmosphere of the Cold War, the United States and its allies worried they would be facing a unified Communist front that included China.

People in Beijing welcome Chinese Communist forces, 1949. Note the portrait of Mao Zedong in the center.

The Korean War (1950–1953)

Adjoining China, Korea had a Communist "people's republic" in the north, supported by the Soviet Union, and in the south, a republic created under the patronage of the United States. In June 1950, North Korean troops, upon Stalin's go-ahead, invaded the southern zone. General Douglas MacArthur took command of the U.S. forces defending South Korea, backed by small contingents sent by other members of the United Nations, which had passed a resolution condemning the Communist invasion. For the first time—with the exception of events in Greece—Communist and non-Communist forces engaged in open warfare, a conflict fought with conventional weapons, but with nuclear bombs lurking in the background.

Although Chinese troops were aiding the northern side, U.S. forces pushed back the Communist forces in 1951. In any case, neither side wanted to see the war expand beyond Korea. The armistice signed in July 1953 left the division between North and South Korea almost the same as before the war, but at the cost of 3 million casualties (including 140,000 U.S. troops killed or wounded).

The Korean War heightened Cold War tensions in Europe. To the Allies, the war raised the outside possibility of a Soviet-led invasion of the German Federal Republic, similar to that launched by North Korean troops against South Korea. In the United States, the war contributed to a mood

U.S. marines file past a burning building in North Korea during the Korean War, 1950.

of anti-communism and fear of "the enemy within" that bordered on mass hysteria, orchestrated by Senator Joseph McCarthy. "McCarthyism" entered the dictionary as a term for political name-calling and persecution.

Stirrings in Eastern Europe

Following Stalin's death in 1953, East German workers complained loudly about high quotas, low wages, and food shortages. On June 17, 1953, Berlin workers rioted. East German troops, backed by Soviet tanks, ended the disturbances. A wave of repression followed. That year alone, more than 330,000 East Germans fled to the West.

The East German Communist government realized that state planning had to provide more consumer goods. Ideology alone could not generate commitment. The Soviet Union sent material assistance to the German Democratic Republic and let it write off most of the war reparations owed from the eastern zone. Despite inadequate housing, few automobiles, and occasional food shortages, more consumer goods gradually became available in the 1960s. Long rows of drab apartments sprang up near the Brandenburg Gate that divided East and West Berlin. State-sponsored clubs for children provided recreation, as well as ideological indoctrination. Through intensive training and programming—and, in some cases, steroids—East Germany began in the late 1960s to produce athletes of great accomplishment in international sporting events, particularly in swimming and track and field.

Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and the "thaw" in foreign and domestic policies had repercussions in Eastern Europe in 1956. That year the Communist government of Poland reined in the secret police and gave amnesty to thousands of political prisoners. However, strikes soon brought military repression. In October 1956, Wladyslaw Gomulka (1905–1982), a moderate imprisoned during the Stalin era, returned from oblivion to head the government by the Polish Politburo. A reformer, Gomulka purged Stalinists and reached accommodation with the enormously influential Polish Catholic Church. Furthermore, Gomulka halted the collectivization of agriculture. Independent peasants held three-quarters of the nation's arable land, a far greater percentage of privately held farms than in any other country in the Eastern bloc. However, Gomulka also reassured the Soviet Union that Poland had no intention of abandoning the Warsaw Pact or turning its back on socialism.

Soviet concessions to Yugoslavia and Poland encouraged a movement for reform in Hungary, where liberal Communists were already eager to turn their backs on Stalinism. Imre Nagy (c. 1895–1958), a liberal, had risen to become prime minister of Hungary. He had sought to move Hungarian manufacturing away from heavy industry in order to increase production of consumer goods. Nagy also tolerated peasant resistance to the implementation

of agricultural collectivization. At the same time, workers' councils sprung up spontaneously, espousing reform. In 1955, Nagy's policies drew opposition from Communist hard-liners, and he was ousted from office. A profound movement for reform now took root in Hungary. Intellectuals and students held meetings to discuss possible paths to liberalization. A defiant response from the new prime minister led to a demonstration of 50,000 people on October 23, 1956. Protesters smashed a statue of Stalin. Police opened fire on a crowd trying to storm a radio station. Hungarian troops sent to rout the demonstrators refused to fire, in some cases joining those now protesting communism itself. That night, the Hungarian Communist leadership requested Soviet assistance but also named Nagy as prime minister in the hope of ending the demonstrations. Western radio broadcasts heard in Hungary hinted that outside help might be forthcoming, firming popular resolve. Nagy named a new coalition government that included liberal Communists. He began to negotiate with the Soviet government, but he made clear that he intended to end the one-party system by adding several non-Communists to his government. Furthermore, he called for Hungarian withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and asked that Soviet troops be removed from his country.

To the Soviet government, Hungary's defection was unthinkable because it might spark similar movements in other Eastern European nations and even destabilize the republics of the Soviet Union. On November 4, Nagy announced that Hungary would withdraw from the Warsaw Pact. While the French, British, and U.S. governments were preoccupied with the Suez Canal crisis (see pp. 1164–1167), the Soviet government sent tanks and soldiers into Budapest and other major Hungarian cities to crush resistance. Nagy was tried and executed, along with about 2400 other people, perhaps many more. From 1956 through 1961, almost 400,000 people were found guilty of political crimes. More than 200,000 Hungarians fled to Western Europe and the United States. Soviet intervention ended hope that Stalin's death might bring about change in Eastern Europe and end the Cold War. János Kádár (1912–1989) became Hungary's new leader, backed by the Soviet army. Over the long run, Kádár skillfully liberalized the Communist regime, while remaining careful not to antagonize unnecessarily the Soviet Union with any ideological justification for his policies. He relaxed government control if the interests of the Communist Party were not at stake. Hungary's "goulash communism" included market-oriented, decentralized reforms and toleration of some degree of entrepreneurship and profit. The result was a higher standard of living than existed elsewhere in the Communist world.

With their hands full with Hungary, the Soviets were in no position to move aggressively against Poland. In any case, Gomulka was careful to give them no excuse for military action. He gradually rescinded some of the relatively liberal policies, including toleration of free artistic and political

expression, and put workers' councils that had sprung up in 1956 under party control.

In Yugoslavia, despite its determined independence from the Soviet Union, open political opposition was not tolerated. One of the distinguished founders of post-war Yugoslavia, the Montenegrin intellectual Milovan Djilas (1911–1995), was expelled from the party in 1954 for having contended in his book *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (1961) that privileged party officials had become a ruling caste, with little in common with ordinary people.

In the meantime, in the Soviet Union the liberal agitation in Poland and the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 threatened Khrushchev's authority. Stalinists claimed that Khrushchev's attack on Stalin at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 was to blame for agitation in those countries. Furthermore, Soviet aid to stabilize its Eastern European client states undermined economic development at home. But, at the same time, the failure of the Western powers to intervene on behalf of Hungary—because they feared nuclear war with the Soviet Union—seemed to the Soviets to legitimize the division of Europe into spheres of influence dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union.

Soviet–U.S. Tensions

Khrushchev was responsible for a mild thaw in the Cold War. The Soviet leader claimed that "peaceful coexistence" was possible between the two political worlds. In 1955, Khrushchev met with U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower (1890–1969) in Geneva, the first of the "summit" meetings between the two great powers. At the Twentieth Party Congress the following year, Khrushchev rejected Stalin's contention that Communist and capitalist powers would inevitably go to war. Soviet foreign policy became less contentious and somewhat more flexible. Looking to the Third World for allies, the Soviet leader courted India, Egypt, and Syria, as well as a number of smaller states, winning their friendship with technical and material assistance. Soviet foreign policy was carried out with the aim of detaching countries from the direct influence of the United States.

In 1955, the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies countered NATO, the defense organization of the Western powers, by signing the Warsaw Pact, which offered its members similar guarantees to those of NATO against attack. It formalized and internationalized the individual pacts of mutual defense that the Soviet Union had signed with its client states during or immediately following World War II. The Warsaw Pact provided a new justification for the stationing of Soviet troops in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany.

Soviet armed intervention in Hungary in 1956 increased mutual suspicion between East and West, and rapid advances in Soviet military science further augmented the rivalry with the West. Bilateral negotiations between

the Soviet Union and the United States to reduce their respective nuclear capabilities failed in 1955 and again in 1958. In 1957, the Soviets launched the first satellite (*Sputnik*) after developing an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). Space exploration became part of the Cold War. The United States won the race to the moon, when American astronauts landed on the lunar surface in July 1969, an event seen by millions on television.

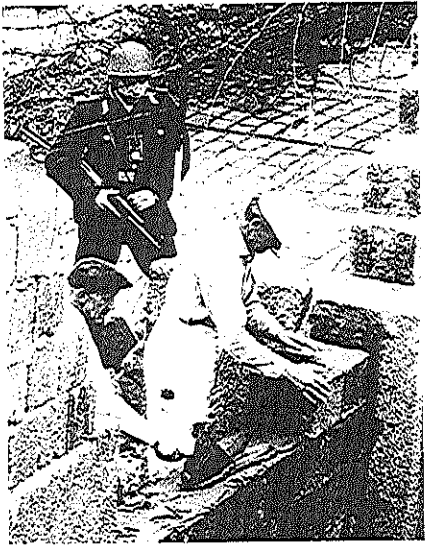
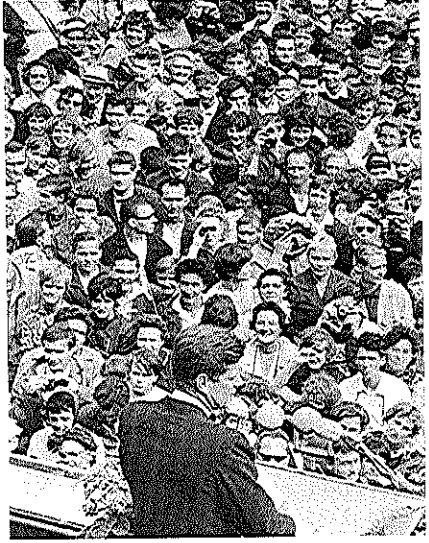
In May 1960, the Soviets shot down an American U-2 plane taking spy photographs from high over the Soviet Union. The Soviets demanded an apology for this violation of Soviet air space and received none. Khrushchev then refused to participate in a Geneva summit meeting (probably also because Soviet relations with China were rapidly deteriorating).

Again Cold War tensions centered on Germany. In 1958, the hot-tempered Khrushchev threatened to hand over to East German authorities the administration of all of Berlin, but backed down in the face of Allied intransigence. In the meantime, streams of East Germans—about 2.6 million people between 1950 and 1962—left for the West, most to the German Federal Republic. The exodus included many doctors and other trained specialists vital to East Germany. Yet between 1950 and 1964, about 500,000 West Germans moved to the East, some fleeing the persecution of Communists in the German Federal Republic, and others simply wanting to be with their families.

On August 17, 1961, Berliners awoke to find East German workers building a wall to divide the eastern sector from the western one. Ground floor windows that permitted escape from East to West were boarded up. Telephone lines leading to West Berlin were cut.

The Berlin Wall became a symbol of the Cold War. U.S. President John F. Kennedy visited Berlin later that summer to view the wall, proclaiming in a speech that he, too, was a "Berliner" (not realizing that a Berliner was also a popular name for a local pastry). Enforcement was brutal, although a subsequent relaxation of East German controls allowed Germans on both sides to visit their relatives. Guards checked car trunks and even the bottoms of cars looking for hidden passengers trying to escape. Western tourists climbed stairs to have a look at East German guards staring back from watchtowers behind barbed wire on the other side. Still, people tried to escape and many succeeded: they sprinted across no-man's-land, defying a hail of bullets, swam across rivers, flew small planes or homemade balloons into West Germany, dug tunnels, and hid in trucks and cars. Some did not make it: hundreds were killed attempting to escape.

Because of the threat of nuclear war, the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 was the world's most dangerous moment since the end of World War II. The island of Cuba, which had been a virtual protectorate of the United States since the Spanish-American War in 1898, became a Communist state in 1959 after Fidel Castro (1926–) led a guerrilla force that ousted the corrupt American protégé, Fulgencio Batista (1901–1973). Batista's supporters, with the help of the U.S. military, then launched an ill-conceived invasion of

(*Left*) The Berlin Wall goes up in 1961. (*Right*) U.S. President John F. Kennedy addresses West Berliners, 1961.

Cuba at the "Bay of Pigs" in 1961. It failed miserably. In October 1962, American aerial photographs revealed that Soviet missiles capable of being armed with nuclear warheads were stationed on the island of Cuba. The U.S. government demanded the removal of the missiles and threatened to destroy them if this demand was not met. Some knowledgeable advisers to President John F. Kennedy estimated the chances of the outbreak of a nuclear war at between one-third and one-half, dangerous odds indeed. Debates in the United Nations helped buy time while negotiations proceeded. The world breathed a collective sigh of relief as Khrushchev ordered the missiles removed.

Despite the fact that the United States and Soviet Union both signed a 1963 treaty banning nuclear tests, the arms race had accelerated. Soviet and American naval vessels and submarines closely monitored each other's movements. The Soviet secret police (KGB) and the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) spread their well-financed spy networks worldwide. Periodic spy scandals occurred in the West, most notably in Britain, where several prominent intellectuals turned out to have been spying for the Soviet Union. The growing number of colonies receiving their independence from Britain and France fostered increased competition between the two systems in Africa and Asia.

By the mid-1960s, the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union spread to Southeast Asia. In 1964, the United States officially became involved in the civil war in Vietnam. When President Lyndon B.

Johnson (1908–1973) announced that an American naval vessel had been attacked off the coast of Vietnam—which in fact never occurred—the American Congress passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution against the North Vietnamese government. The United States committed more and more men and material in support of the South Vietnamese government against the North Vietnamese Communist troops of Ho Chi Minh and their allies, the Vietcong guerrillas fighting in the south. The Soviets backed the Communist forces. The costly American role in the civil war came under increasing opposition at home and in Europe, beginning with university students. The Vietnam War badly divided public opinion in the United States and strained U.S. relations with its allies.

Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and Cuban leader Fidel Castro meet in Moscow, 1963.

Sino-Soviet Rivalry

The alliance between Mao's China and the Soviet Union, cemented by the Korean War, began to break apart. A common Communist ideology could not gloss over issues of power politics between the two giants. Not only did they share an immense frontier, but certain border regions—above all, Mongolia—had long been claimed by both states. Border clashes took place in 1969. In addition, growing Soviet influence in India threatened Chinese relations with the subcontinent. Khrushchev's turn away from Stalinism angered Mao, as did the Soviet leader's overtures for support among Asian political leaders. Khrushchev's policy of peaceful coexistence with the West—and particularly his visit to Washington, D.C., in 1959—irritated Mao, who used the perceived threat from the West as a means of pushing the Chinese to make more sacrifices to modernize the economy. In China, a "cult of personality" focused on Chairman Mao just as one in the Soviet Union had celebrated Stalin. Furthermore, attempts to modernize China's economy had been heavily influenced by Stalin's five-year plans, which had emphasized heavy industry. At the same time, China underwent rapid, ruthless collectivization of all industrial and agricultural production. Chinese economic growth made the Chinese less dependent on Soviet technical advisers and they were sent home.

The Chinese Communist government also grew increasingly uneasy about Russia's nuclear weapons. Mao believed Stalin's contention that war between capitalism and Communism was inevitable. He resented the

unwillingness of the Soviets under Khrushchev, who had abandoned that particular tenet of Communist thought, to share their military secrets. In 1964, Mao accused the Soviet Union of itself being an "imperialist" power because it dominated the smaller states of Eastern Europe.

Chinese and Russian diplomats and advisers now competed as rivals for the ears of Third World leaders. The Chinese Communists received support from an unlikely place. Albania, the small, isolated, largely Muslim state squeezed between Yugoslavia and the Adriatic Sea, broke with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union broke off diplomatic relations with Albania in 1961. This represented an embarrassing rejection of Soviet authority, particularly when put into the context of the ongoing Sino-Soviet split. However, Albanian Communist leader Enver Hoxha (1908–1985) then broke with the Chinese Communist leadership in 1978, criticizing China's improved relations with the United States.

The Brezhnev Era

Soviet economic stagnation and the humiliation of the Cuban Missile Crisis contributed to Khrushchev's sudden fall from power. Some military leaders had opposed Khrushchev's support of economic planning that emphasized consumer goods over heavy industry, although severe shortages still alienated many Soviet citizens. Old Stalinists surfaced again, resistant

Medium-range Soviet strategic missiles displayed in a military parade in Moscow on November 7, 1963, in a Soviet show of strength.

to any reform. Army commanders, wary of the Chinese situation, accused Khrushchev of having taken too great a risk by establishing missile sites in Cuba. In October 1964, Khrushchev returned to Moscow for a meeting called by his enemies only to find out that he was being retired into honorable obscurity.

Leonid Brezhnev (1906–1982), who had risen in the Communist Party with Khrushchev's assistance, became its general secretary. Brezhnev returned to Communist orthodoxy. He affirmed the authority and prestige of party bureaucrats and of the KGB, but he stopped well short of Stalinism. While building up Soviet military capability, the Soviet leader ordered an increase in the production of consumer goods. Nonetheless, centralized planning and agricultural collectivization remained the basis of the inefficient Soviet economy.

There was little talk of a "thaw" either inside or outside the Soviet Union during the Brezhnev era. Cynicism mounted within the Soviet Union, even among committed Communists who had long awaited the day when the corner would be turned and prosperity would arrive. That day never came.

Nuclear Weapons and Superpower Tensions

The phased U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam beginning in 1973 (followed two years later by the victory of the Communist North Vietnamese and their southern allies, the Vietcong) removed one thorny issue between the United States and the Soviet Union. Continued tension between the Soviet Union and China (accompanied by a concentration of Soviet forces along the disputed borders in Manchuria and Siberia) gradually eroded the old U.S. view of Communism as a monolithic force, engendering more realistic diplomatic assessments of international politics. Furthermore, both the United States and the Soviet Union faced daunting economic problems that partially shifted the focus of government to domestic concerns.

The period from 1969 to 1979 brought a period of détente between the Soviet Union and the United States, leading to serious negotiations between the two powers to reduce nuclear arms. In 1972, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev and U.S. President Richard Nixon (1913–1994) signed an arms-reduction agreement known as SALT I (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks), by which they agreed to maintain parity in nuclear offensive weapons systems. However, as military technology continued to advance rapidly, both sides began to defy the spirit of the agreement by developing new systems. Both the Soviet Union and the United States deployed new missiles in Europe. Nixon was forced to resign as U.S. president in 1974 because of the Watergate Affair: he had approved illegal operations against Democratic Party headquarters and then lied about what he knew. His successors sought to link further arms-reduction talks to issues of human rights in the Soviet Union. In 1979, U.S. President Jimmy Carter (1924–) and Brezhnev signed

a new agreement, SALT II, by which the Soviets agreed to limit missile launchers and nuclear warheads and the United States agreed not to develop a new missile. Carter, however, had to withdraw the agreement from consideration by the Senate in January 1980 because of political opposition, primarily from conservatives who feared that the SALT II agreement would leave the Soviets with greater nuclear capability than that of the United States. As the number of nuclear weapons increased in Europe, anti-nuclear movements revived, particularly in Britain and Germany.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 put an end to détente. Soviet troops were sent in support of the pro-Soviet government, which was besieged by a variety of rebels, including Islamic fundamentalists, who received support from the United States. (One of the motives of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was to forestall fundamentalist movements in Soviet republics with sizable Muslim populations.) Reacting to the Soviet invasion, the United States limited grain sales to the Soviet Union and boycotted the Olympic Games in Moscow in 1980. The Soviet-American chill lasted into the mid-1980s.

Decolonization

The Second World War accelerated the independence movements that had developed after World War I. In the colonies in Africa, Asia, and Southeast Asia, the rise of nationalism led to movements demanding independence. Thus, beginning in the 1950s, European colonies became central actors in some of the dramas of international politics. The peacemakers at Versailles (particularly President Wilson) in 1919 had espoused nationalism as a principle for the territorial organization of states. But France and Britain, in particular, had been unwilling to grant freedom to their colonies, both viewing their empires as part of their national identities. During and after the war, the U.S. government had made clear its unwillingness to support the maintenance of the British and French colonial empires. The Soviet Union, too, was in principle against colonial empires, while, ironically, building something of an empire of its own by controlling states in Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

For his part, Winston Churchill had believed that if Britain was to remain a world power, it had to retain its empire, despite the opposition of Eisenhower to colonialism. "I have not become the king's first minister," Churchill thundered, "to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire." However, succeeding prime ministers realized that it would be better to grant colonies independence than to have to confront massive insurrections. With the economies of the Western European nations still suffering the effects of the war, the costs of resisting independence movements were high for the remaining imperial powers. Moreover, opposition

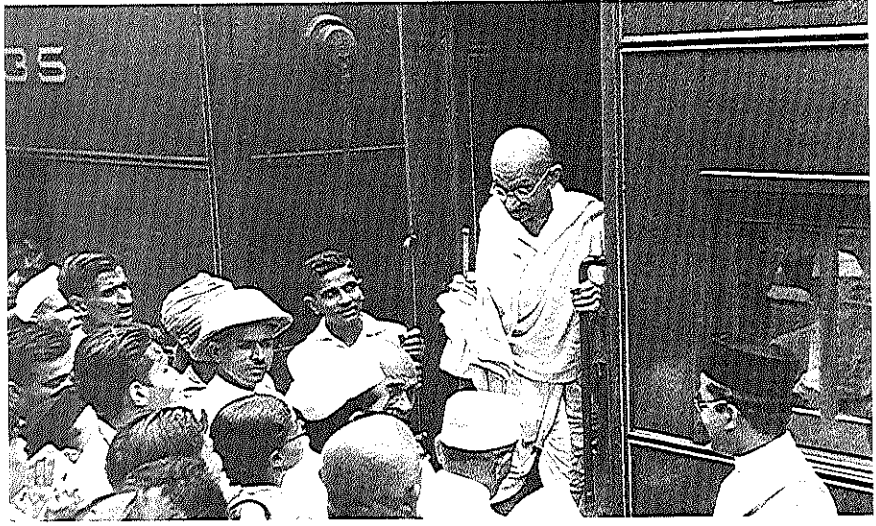
to colonialism came not only from the colonized peoples but also from intellectuals, students, and political parties of the left at home.

The end of the colonial era reflected the relative decline of the European powers in international affairs. The sun finally set on the British Empire as its colonies became independent states. Britain and France left important traditions of government, culture, and language in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East (for example, French prestige in Lebanon). Britain's former colonies achieved independence peacefully for the most part. In contrast, France and Portugal battled to retain their colonies even in the face of popular insurgency. The Netherlands and Belgium both resisted nationalist movements briefly before recognizing the independence of their former colonies. In many colonies, educated and active groups stood ready to work for independence and, when that was achieved, to become leaders of new states. But during the 1960s and 1970s, the United States and the Soviet Union aggressively competed for influence in these young states. By 1980, more than half of the 154 members of the United Nations had been admitted to membership since 1956.

Decolonization in South and Southeast Asia

India, a densely populated, vastly complex subcontinent of many peoples, languages, cultures, and several major religions, was the largest colony in the world. Hindus formed the largest religion, but there were millions of Muslims as well, particularly in Bengal and Punjab in the north. Many Muslims wanted a partition of the subcontinent and the establishment of a Muslim state.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Indian nationalism developed among the Indian elite, some of whom had been educated in England (see Chapter 24). When World War II began, the British government asked the Congress Party, the largest Indian political organization, which included Sikhs and Muslims, for its support against the Japanese. The Hindu leaders of the Congress Party, Mahatmas Gandhi (1869–1948) and Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), refused to offer unqualified support during the war, and the British government imprisoned them. In 1942, the British government promised them self-government following the war—and full status within the British Commonwealth—if India, which had provided thousands of soldiers for the fight (although Indian soldiers captured in Southeast Asia had joined the Japanese in 1943–1945), fully cooperated in the war against Japan. However, Nehru and Gandhi demanded complete independence for India. Gandhi, who dismissed the offer as "a post-dated check on a crashing bank," became a powerful symbol of Indian resolution to win independence by peaceful means. When he threatened a massive campaign of nonviolent resistance to British rule, the British government sent him to jail again. Political unrest swept through India following the war in 1945–1946.



Mahatmas Gandhi steps from a third-class train after Indian independence.

With the British Conservative Party out of government after the war, Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee announced in 1946 that India would be granted full independence, which the Labour Party had long advocated. The last British viceroy, Lord Louis Mountbatten (1900–1979), oversaw the British departure in 1947. India became independent, but bitter fighting followed between Hindus and Muslims. The Muslim League, which represented Muslim interests, insisted on the creation of a separate Muslim nation; however, the Congress Party, dominated by Hindus, rejected this demand outright. Hindus and Muslims battled in much of India. Britain partitioned the Indian subcontinent: India would be largely Hindu, and Pakistan, which also obtained independence in 1947 and was divided into East Pakistan and West Pakistan on either side of India, would be Muslim. Since millions of Muslims lived in India and many Hindus lived in Pakistan, however, it proved impossible to draw state boundaries so that they exactly corresponded to ethnic and religious differences.

Fighting between Hindus and Muslims continued. Hindus drove millions of Muslims out of India. Many of them starved to death during forced marches to Pakistan. Likewise, about the same number of Hindus and Sikhs were expelled from Pakistan. A Hindu extremist assassinated Gandhi in 1948 because he had accepted the establishment of Pakistan.

India became the world's largest democracy (its population now is well over 1 billion people), but many daunting problems remained unsolved: poverty compounded by a phenomenally high birthrate, underdeveloped democratic institutions, and bitter religious rivalries. Pakistan faced similar challenges. The awkward division of Pakistan into East and West, separated by Hindu India, ended in 1971 when East Pakistan rebelled against

Pakistani authority. After Indian troops intervened against Pakistani forces, Bangladesh became an independent state, one of the poorest nations in the world. Meanwhile, the British government had also granted independence to other British colonies in Asia: the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Burma (Myanmar) in 1948, and Singapore in 1965.

In Southeast Asia, the end of Japanese occupation during World War II served as a catalyst for decolonization, leaving the way open for independence movements. The Japanese occupation had driven the British out of the Malay Peninsula and the Dutch colonists out of Indonesia. The states on the Malay Peninsula formed the Federation of Malaya after the war. Communists battled British troops off and on during the 1940s and 1950s, until Britain granted complete independence in 1957 to what became Malaysia in 1963. In Indonesia, the nationalist leader Sukarno (1901–1970) took advantage of the Dutch absence from the region to proclaim Indonesian independence. Negotiations arranged by the United Nations led the Netherlands to grant Indonesian independence in 1949. Sukarno called his government a "guided democracy," assuming the presidency for life in 1963. As the economy floundered, however, the Indonesian Communist Party grew in size. The Indonesian government accepted large sums of money from the Soviet Union and the United States. In 1965, Lieutenant General Suharto (1921–2008) seized power. Undertaking a bloody campaign of terror against Communists, he consolidated his dictatorship with the support of the armed forces. In 1998, riots in the capital of Jakarta led to his resignation.

Britain and the Middle East

British influence also declined in the Middle East. Growing dependence on oil as a source of energy made the Middle East increasingly important in international politics. Egypt had achieved independence after World War I. Britain still controlled Palestine as a Mandate. Zionists before World War I considered Palestine the promised land for Jews. In 1917, by the Balfour Declaration, the British government had supported the creation of a "national home for the Jewish people," with the understanding that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine." However, Palestine had an Arab majority. During the 1920s and 1930s, many Jews had emigrated there, hoping one day to construct a Jewish state. In the wake of World War II, they were joined by hundreds of thousands of Jews from Europe. For them, the Zionist revival and the creation of an independent Jewish state now seemed enormously more urgent, indeed becoming an important part of the collective identity of many Holocaust survivors. In 1947, the British government, already facing attacks from militant Jews committed to ending British occupation, asked the United Nations to resolve Palestine's future. In its first major international decision, the United Nations called for the division of Palestine into the Jewish state of Israel and an Arab state. That land

intended for a new Arab state was incorporated into the neighboring states of Jordan and Egypt, as well as Israel. Israeli forces took over much of the British Mandate in 1948, achieving independence. Jerusalem, a holy city for Jews, Arabs, and Christians, was to remain temporarily under the control of the United Nations.

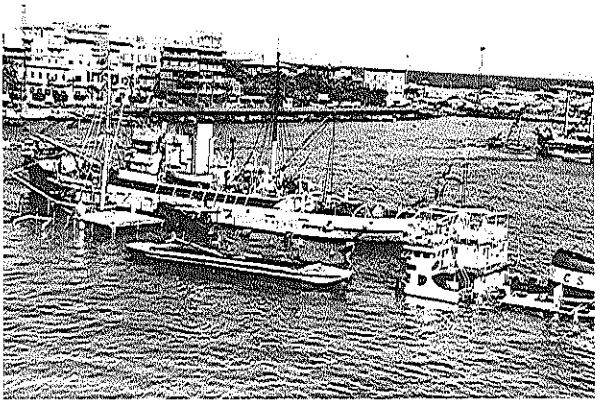
As in India, the policy of partition led to turmoil. Fighting between Palestinian Arabs and Jews began soon after the UN resolution. In May 1948, Arab forces from Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan attacked the newly established state of Israel, but were defeated the following year. The victorious Israeli army expelled large numbers of Arabs from their lands, although about 150,000 Palestinian Arabs remained in Israel. At least 700,000 Palestinian refugees fled to Jordan, which had become independent in 1946. The seeds were sown for future conflicts. The Arab states refused to recognize the existence of Israel, as well as a separate Palestinian Arab identity. Palestinians retained some rights in Israel, such as being able to vote and to serve in the parliament. Yet those Palestinians remaining in Israel believed that they had been relegated to the status of second-class citizens, and they remained under military rule until 1965. After 1948, no new Arab towns were established in Israel, although the population of Palestinians increased five-fold, and until recently it remained Israeli policy that no land "redeemed" by Jews in Israel could be sold to non-Jews.

The Suez Canal Crisis

The Suez Canal had been the centerpiece of British interests and defenses in the Middle East since British troops first occupied Egypt in 1882. Although the British withdrawal from India in 1947 had somewhat reduced its strategic importance to Britain, about two-thirds of the oil from the Middle East on which Britain and Western Europe depended was transported through the canal. Egypt had been independent since 1922, but Britain maintained considerable influence there. Furthermore, the canal itself was owned by the British (more than 40 percent) and French governments, as well as by stockholders, primarily British.

In 1952, when Egyptian nationalist sentiment against Britain ran high (in part because the British government refused to allow Egypt to occupy Sudan), a group of young nationalist military officers overthrew Egyptian King Farouk in a bloodless coup. Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970), the head of the new Egyptian government, emerged as one of the most influential figures in rising Pan-Arab nationalism. Nasser established Egyptian neutrality in the tug-of-war between East and West. He refused to sign a treaty with the United States, and he castigated Iran and Turkey for their pro-American policies.

As Egyptian nationalism mounted, the Egyptian government, which had renounced the Anglo-Egyptian alliance treaty of 1936, demanded British withdrawal from the narrow zone along the Suez Canal. In 1954, the Egypt-



(*Left*) A Russian cartoon salutes Nasser's seizure of the Suez Canal in July 1956. The banner reads "Shares of the Suez Canal Company Ltd." (*Right*) Sunken ships block the Suez Canal.

ian and British governments signed an agreement (vehemently opposed by some British Conservatives) by which British troops would begin a phased withdrawal that would be completed in June 1956. Britain would retain the right to send military forces back should the canal be attacked (presumably by the Soviet Union); the British and Egyptian governments would respect the freedom of navigation through the canal. Many Egyptians, particularly a radical organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, opposed this agreement, which seemed to maintain some degree of British control over the Suez Canal. They sought to end once and for all Egypt's semi-colonial status.

Egypt became a pawn in the struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union for the allegiance of non-aligned nations. Gradually, Nasser, who denounced the British and French role in the Middle East, turned toward the Soviet Union for economic and, in 1955, military support. He resented the United States for its close ties to Israel, which it had been quick to recognize in 1948, and spurned Britain's defensive pact with Turkey and Iraq (the Baghdad Pact, 1955). This pact was directed against the Soviet Union, which sought to increase its reach in the Middle East by capitalizing on considerable dissatisfaction among Arab nationalists with the role of the United States in the construction of a Middle East treaty association similar to NATO. The Soviet government signed an agreement with Egypt, promising to exchange weapons for Egyptian cotton. Egypt planned to construct the Aswan High Dam on the Upper Nile River, which Nasser believed would help modernize the Egyptian economy. The World Bank had agreed to finance the construction of the dam if Britain and the United States would contribute. But the U.S. government was increasingly suspicious of British goals. Indeed, the British government was planning Nasser's overthrow. On July 19, 1956, the United States suddenly withdrew its offer of a loan when it seemed that the Egyptian government

would accept a Soviet offer to finance the dam's construction. On July 26, Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal, with the assurance, however, that shareholders would be compensated.

The British government, pushed by Conservatives who feared that Nasser would undermine British interests throughout the Middle East, decided on armed intervention. France, too, wanted Nasser out of power because of French interests in the canal. More than this, Nasser supported the Algerian National Liberation Front, which sought Algerian independence from France. The U.S. government sought to diffuse the crisis through negotiation.

The government of Israel, which was still technically at war with Egypt since 1948, was also concerned about emerging ties between Egypt and the Soviet Union. Moreover, the arrival of Soviet arms in Egypt raised fears of a possible Egyptian invasion of Israel. In October 1956, the British government came around to the French view that they should agree to an Israeli invasion of Egypt, which would provide both powers with an excuse to intervene militarily and occupy the Suez Canal Zone. (The U.S. government was kept unaware of these difficult negotiations.) Israel sent an invasion force into Egypt on October 29. The Egyptian army put up stiff resistance. A Franco-British ultimatum then demanded that Israeli and Egyptian forces both withdraw to ten miles from the canal. The Israeli government halted the military drive within Egypt. An Anglo-French force then occupied the Canal Zone after Nasser ordered the scuttling of ships to block the canal. On November 3, the General Assembly of the United Nations called for a cease-fire (supported by both the United States and the Soviet Union) and a day later authorized a peacekeeping force. On November 5, British and French troops parachuted into Port Said, followed by troops put ashore the next day. Britain agreed to accept the cease-fire. Pressure on both Israel and Egypt from the United States and the Soviet Union (which had reason to be pleased that the world's attention could be diverted from Hungary, where Russian tanks were crushing an anti-Communist revolt; see Chapter 29) brought an end to the Suez crisis. U.S. pressure proved decisive, particularly with Britain, as the U.S. government refused to support British sterling, and the currency fell dramatically in the face of fears of a cut-off of oil from the Middle East. British and French troops withdrew. The Suez Canal crisis had demonstrated that European Western powers could no longer impose their will on the Middle East. Thereafter, the process of decolonization proceeded rapidly.

In Britain, Prime Minister Sir Anthony Eden (1897–1977) suffered a nervous breakdown and resigned from office in January 1957. Conservative Harold Macmillan (1894–1986), who succeeded Eden as prime minister and who had been a proponent of the Suez action, then undertook what one of his colleagues called the "most spectacular retreat from Suez since the time of Moses." Following the salvaging of the forty ships that Egypt had sunk in the canal, the Suez Canal reopened in April 1957 under Egyptian control. British influence in the Middle East continued to decline. A year

later, British ally King Faisal II was assassinated in Iraq. When the island of Cyprus gained its independence in 1960, Britain lost its last base in the Middle East.

French Decolonization

France, too, lost its colonial empire in the post-war era, but not without bloody struggles. The French had begun their conquest of North Africa in 1830, and in Southeast Asia had held modern-day Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam since the 1880s. The French left Syria and Lebanon in 1946 by agreement with the United States and Britain. In 1947, French troops put down a massive insurrection in Madagascar, with an enormous loss of life. The island finally received its independence in 1960, one of fourteen former French colonies in Africa.

In Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh (Nguyen Tat Thanh or Nguyen Ai Quoc, or "the Patriot," 1890–1969) emerged as a Vietnamese Communist leader. His father was an official under the French who had resigned from his position because of his Vietnamese nationalism. Ho Chi Minh himself worked as a kitchen helper on a French passenger liner before becoming a Communist activist. In 1929 he founded the Indochinese Communist Party. Following condemnation to death by the French government, Ho was saved by the refusal of the British government in Hong Kong to turn him over to French authorities. Nonetheless, the British arrested him in 1931, and he remained in prison in Hong Kong for two years. During World War II, he led the Viet Minh, an organization of Vietnamese Communists.

During World War II, Vichy France had held Vietnam as a colony until Japanese forces took control in 1945. When Vietnam proclaimed its independence, France attempted to re-conquer its former colony. In November 1946, the French army attacked the port of Haiphong, killing 6,000 Vietnamese, and captured Hanoi, the Vietnamese capital. The French military restored the nominal authority of a playboy emperor, Bao Dai (1913–1997). Yet Vietnam remained a colony. War between Ho Chi Minh's Vietnamese army, which held most of the countryside, and the French continued. Ho, supported by the Chinese, prophesied, "You will kill ten of our men, but we will kill one of yours and you will end up by wearing yourselves out." The Korean War increased U.S. interest in the ongoing struggles in Vietnam, bringing U.S. military assistance to the French effort. In 1954, the French army suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Vietnamese at Dien Bien Phu. Pierre Mendès-France (1907–1982), the new Socialist premier, succeeded in extracting France from war in Vietnam (he would later prove less successful in encouraging the French to drink milk instead of wine, a more hopeless task). At the Geneva Convention that year, France agreed to the division of Vietnam into two states. North Vietnam became a Communist regime led by Ho Chi Minh; South Vietnam became a republic run by a succession of leaders who carried out U.S. policy in exchange for a free hand.

(*Left*) A Viet Minh fighter is taken prisoner by a French soldier in 1952. (*Right*) A French patrol in Vietnam in 1954.

The end of French colonialism was even more wrenching in North Africa. There were 1.2 million French citizens in Algeria, 300,000 in Morocco, and 200,000 in Tunisia. They were called *pieds noirs* ("black feet") because of the black boots worn by French soldiers. Morocco and Tunisia were French protectorates, although nominally ruled by a sultan and bey (sovereign), respectively. Algeria, in contrast, was directly administered as a colony by French officials. During the inter-war period, a small nationalist movement developed in Algeria. In 1945, French troops put down an uprising in Algeria at the cost of 40,000 Algerian lives. During the early 1950s, movements for national independence continued to develop in France's North African colonies.

The writer Albert Camus, born in Algeria, summed up the difficult choices for some French families who lived there; he said that if given the choice between justice and his mother, he would take his mother. Many of the French living in North Africa had become wealthy, successfully developing land taken from the Arab population over the past century. Others were of modest means, including café owners in Algiers, government functionaries, and farmers with small plots of land.

In 1954, the National Liberation Front (Front de Libération Nationale, the FLN) called for Algerian independence. An uprising for independence began just four months after the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu. Fearing that the movement might spread to Tunisia and Morocco (where, in fact, some fighting followed), the French government granted virtual independence to both states in 1956, despite the protests of French residents and the vigorous opposition of the French officer corps.

As guerrilla actions and bombings increased and losses mounted, many people in France began to accept Algerian independence as both inevitable

and desirable. In February 1956, French residents in Algiers rioted against the government when French Premier Guy Mollet (1906–1975), who had at first been willing to negotiate with the FLN, came to introduce his newly appointed governor of Algeria. In October, the newly crowned king of Morocco met with leaders of the FLN, enraging the French right. Mollet, fearing the political consequences of the war, then ordered the kidnapping of Ahmed Ben Bella (1919–), a leader of the Algerians, and launched a repression in France of critics of the French Algerian policy. In November 1956, France joined Britain in the ill-fated Suez expedition in part because of French anger at Egyptian support for the Algerian insurrection. French troops undertook a brutal campaign that included torture against militants and civilians alike, culminating in "the battle of Algiers" fought in the Arab quarters of the Algerian capital. In France, the left increasingly demanded an end to the war; intellectuals, like the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre and the novelist Camus, denounced the torture of Algerians by the French army. In the meantime, casualties mounted in the French army (which, unlike the French war in Vietnam, included conscripts). Throughout the Algerian war of independence, the FLN successfully played off Cold War rivalries, using mass communication and building support in Algerian communities abroad, while winning international support. Their campaign helped isolate France internationally.

After humiliating defeats at the hands of the German army in 1940 and by the Vietnamese at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, some French military officers

French riot police throw back stones, as well as tear gas bombs, at demonstrators in Algiers in 1960, during the Algerian war of independence.

saw the fight in Algeria as a last stand for their honor. Early in 1958, by which time French troops in Algeria numbered 500,000, French planes attacked FLN camps on the other side of the border with Tunisia. A new premier was rumored to be willing to negotiate with the insurgents. On May 13, 1958, a demonstration by French settlers in Algiers protesting against any compromise turned into a military-led insurrection against the French government. A "Committee of Public Safety" of rightists seized power, led by General Jacques Massu (1908–2002). On May 24, another right-wing group seized power in Corsica. A military coup d'état seemed possible on the mainland of France.

Charles de Gaulle, who had been waiting in self-imposed exile for something like this to happen, announced that he was ready to serve France again. Many politicians believed that de Gaulle alone could prevent chaos. On May 29, 1958, President René Coty appointed de Gaulle prime minister, a move approved by the National Assembly early in June. The general accepted on the condition that he could rule by emergency decree for six months and could then ask the nation to approve a new constitution. The right, which counted many army officers among its ranks, was delighted with de Gaulle's return to power, thinking that the general would never allow Algerian independence.

The new constitution greatly increased the authority of the president, whose term was set at seven years. Presidents under the Fifth French Republic would conduct foreign policy, appoint prime ministers, and dissolve the French parliament. In September 1958, 80 percent of French voters approved the new constitution.

But what about Algeria? De Gaulle went to Algiers and, in a remarkably noncommittal speech, told the settlers in June 1958, "I have understood you, I know what you have tried to do here." But he had already decided that the costs of continuing the war in Algeria were too great, too divisive. He removed the generals responsible for the coup in Algeria from their posts. For a man whose French nationalism underlay his political philosophy, it seemed an astonishing turnaround.

To some officers, de Gaulle's actions seemed an incredible betrayal, a stab in the back by a fellow military man. As the Dreyfus Affair had revealed in the 1890s and the Vichy years had confirmed, a right-wing anti-democratic tradition survived in the officer corps. Many officers now felt betrayed not only by de Gaulle but also by much of the population in France. They enjoyed some support among rightist parties. When de Gaulle recalled General Massu to Paris in January 1960, right-wing riots took place in Paris. In Algeria, *pieds noirs* began a general strike and put up barricades. De Gaulle rallied French public opinion to what had clearly become a policy of allowing Algerians to decide their own future.

Negotiations between Algerian leaders and de Gaulle's government began in the spring of 1961. In the meantime, a secret group within the army, the Secret Army Organization (OAS), had formed in January 1961, determined

at all costs to keep Algeria French. In April it staged a coup d'état and held power in Algiers and in the city of Oran for three days, yet it did not win support of the entire army. Political parties of the left and center threw their support to de Gaulle. The general assumed emergency powers, this time for a year. The OAS twice tried to assassinate de Gaulle and once nearly succeeded, riddling his car with machine-gun fire. Members planted bombs in Algerian cities and in Paris to terrorize the civilian population. Given the chance to vote on their future, the Algerians opted for independence; in France, the vote for Algerian independence in July 1961 was 15 million to 5 million. On March 19, 1962, the Algerian War officially ended, with the French people overwhelmingly ratifying the peace terms. In July 1962, Algeria became independent. However, France contined to maintain considerable prestige in the Third World.

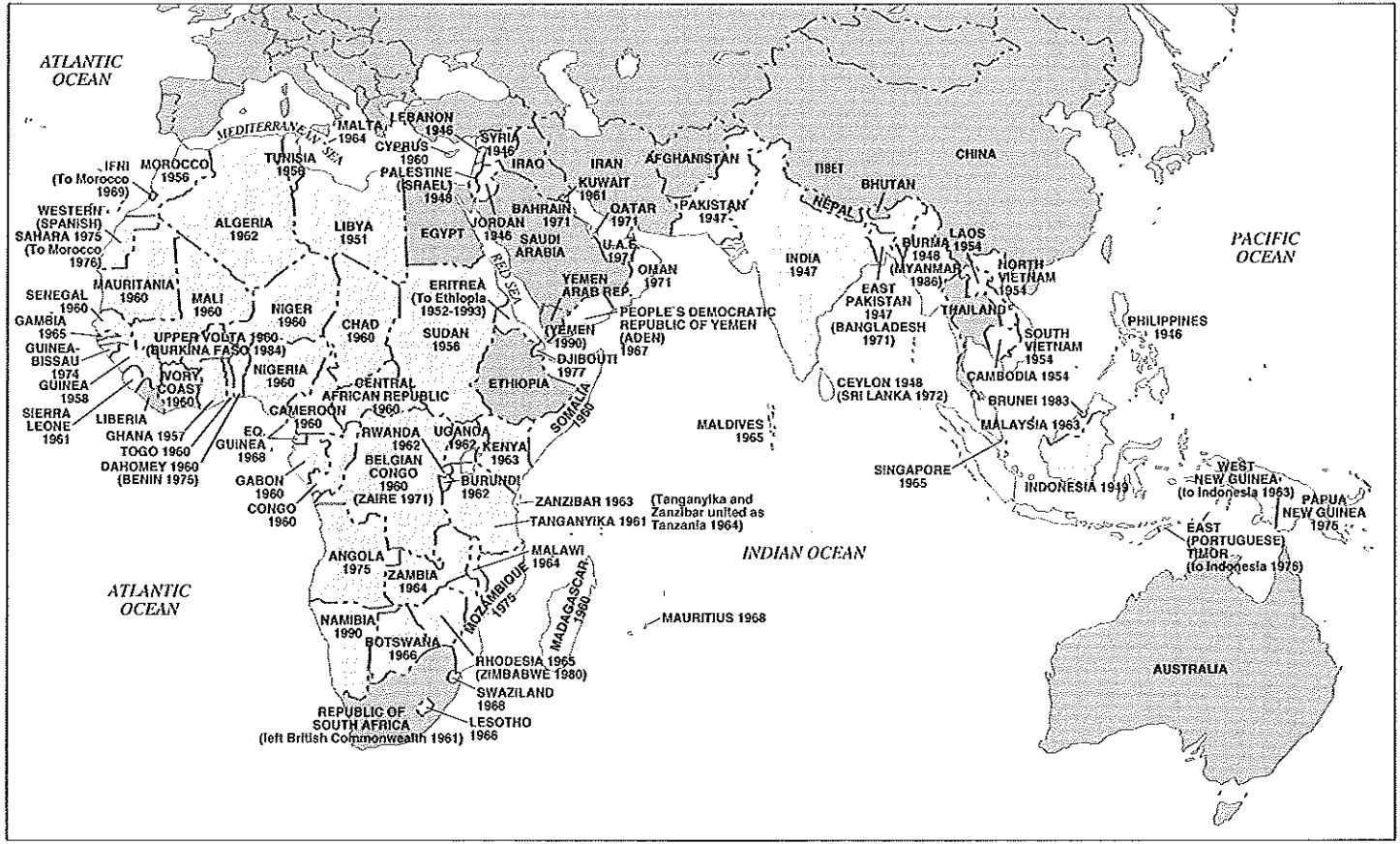
Decolonization in Sub-Saharan Africa

At the end of World War II, only Liberia, Ethiopia, and Egypt had achieved independence in Africa. Nationalist groups in Africa were less organized than had been their counterparts in India and Southeast Asia. But in the subsequent decades, British rule ended in one African colony after another. In 1957, Ghana (formerly the Gold Coast) became independent. Others soon followed, including Nigeria in 1960, Sierra Leone and Tanganyika in 1961, Uganda in 1962, and Kenya in 1963. Sixteen states in Africa became independent in 1960, including the Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Cameroon, all former French colonies (see Map 28.1).

British determination to hold onto its East African colony of Kenya—presented under the guise of the mission to "civilize" people that they considered inferior—was particularly bloody. In the late nineteenth century, British colonialists obtained huge estates in fertile central Kenya in what they called the "White Highlands." They were followed by other white settlers of more modest means. Livestock farming, coffee growing, and the production of cereals enriched many of them, as Kenya became known as a fitting home for privileged British gentry, a "colony for gentlemen." In 1914 almost 5,500 European settlers were in Kenya and, aided by a government campaign after World War II to encourage immigration there, in 1948 about 30,000 whites resided there (compared with an African population of 5.3 million and almost 100,000 Asians). By the early 1950s there were at least 40,000 Europeans. Many benefited from good land that could be purchased or leased for very little, government subsidies, and cheap African labor, working at wage rates set by the colonial government.

The Kikuyu people, who had lost enormous amounts of land to the settlers and been forced to work for and pay onerous taxes to the British, did not profit from the economic boom generated by World War II. The Kikuyu launched a campaign for self-determination. Jomo Kenyatta (1889–1978), who had studied in London, emerged as an effective, charismatic leader of

MAP 28.1 DECOLONIZATION The map shows movements for decolonization in Africa, Asia, and the Far East, giving the dates at which each of the colonies achieved independence.



the Kenyan African Union, which by the early 1950s encompassed almost the entire Kikuyu population. What became known to the British as the "Mau Mau" rebellion (the origins of the term are mysterious but the rebels called themselves the "Land and Freedom Army") began in 1952, with violence directed at British settlers, thirty-two of whom were killed in the rebellion. Kenyatta's arrest, trial, conviction, and imprisonment for his role in the Mau Mau insurgency (despite no evidence) helped make him an international symbol of Kenyan resistance.

The British government declared a state of emergency and detained perhaps as many as 1.5 million people, virtually the entire Kikuyu population, in what amounted to a mass gulag. At the same time, the Mau Mau exacted bloody revenge against loyalist Kenyans with guerilla attacks. The British portrayed the struggle as one between civilization and savagery. British forces, including the Home Guard of white settlers recognized as part of the security forces in 1953, and indigenous loyalists killed tens of thousands of people, not counting thousands who perished in the detention camps or were shot when allegedly trying to escape. The counter-insurgency included terror, atrocious brutality, and widespread torture, most of which the British government succeeded in keeping secret. About 1,000 Kikuyu were hung after being convicted in British courts. British authorities enacted collective punishments against villagers who refused to cooperate with them, seizing livestock and closing down markets for months. The bloody struggle lasted until 1957, when British forces succeeded in breaking apart the Mau Mau armies.

Mau Mau soldiers training in Kenya, 1963.

However, the British government appeared in an increasingly bad light as word got out of the detention camps and conditions within them. In the meantime, Britain had accepted decolonization as inevitable. Prime Minister Harold Macmillan put together a "balance sheet of empire," which screamed out in red ink. He took the decision to end British colonial rule in Africa. Emergency rule ended and Kenyatta was freed in 1959. Majority rule followed. White settlers were allowed to sell their land under favorable conditions. Kenyatta's Kenya African National Union established a government after an overwhelming victory in elections in 1963. Britain granted Kenya independence later that year. Kenyatta earned his reputation as "the reconciler" and became president in 1964.

The Republic of South Africa left the British Commonwealth in 1961. With a white population of 21 percent in 1950 (and 68 percent African, 2 percent of mixed race, and 2 percent Asian), South Africa maintained a system of apartheid, an official policy of racial inequality and segregation implemented in 1948. It was supported by the white Afrikaner population of Dutch origin. In 1965 Rhodesia, which had been a self-governing colony, declared its independence from Britain. It did so, in part, so that its white minority would not have to share power with the black majority population. The British government then led a campaign of international economic sanctions against the white regime of its former colony. In 1980, Rhodesia was divided into the independent states of Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In the Belgian Congo in central West Africa, the Belgian government first tried to placate nationalists with concessions in the late 1950s and then to repress them following rioting in 1959. A year later, the Belgian government suddenly pulled out of its former colony (although the Congo's army retained Belgian officers), declaring the Congo independent. Civil war began between two nationalist leaders, a bloody conflict complicated by ethnic and tribal loyalties. Soldiers mutinied against their Belgian commanders and began to attack Europeans remaining in the Congo. The Congo's wealthiest province, Katanga, which has great mining resources such as cobalt, copper, and uranium, then declared its independence. At the request of the Congo's premier, the United Nations sent troops to restore order. After a year, the civil war ended. Katanga's secession lasted until 1963. Two years later, Colonel Mobutu Sese Seko (1930–1997) imposed military rule in Congo, which was known as Zaire between 1971 and 1997. After nationalizing his country's wealthy mines, Mobutu set about amassing enormous personal wealth.

Portugal's colonies were many times its size. It faced insurrections in its African colonies of Angola and Mozambique, which lie on the southwestern and southeastern coasts, respectively, beginning in 1961. Following years of bloody fighting, the new Portuguese government, which a year earlier had overthrown the dictatorship that had ruled Portugal for decades (see Chapter 29), recognized the independence of Angola and Mozambique. In both new states, horrendous civil war raged between left-wing and right-wing groups. In Angola, Cuban funds and soldiers helped the left-wing Popular

Movement, which emerged victorious. In Mozambique, too, the left won, despite assistance to the right by the South African government and a campaign of terror. Ordinary people suffered famine and slaughter.

Independence in many cases proved to be no panacea for the new African nations. Many post-colonial administrations proved unable or unwilling to provide a decent quality of life to their people. Some new states, like Angola and Mozambique, and more recently, Sudan, fell into bloody and debilitating civil wars. These conflicts were compounded by the multiplicity of ethnic groups, tribalism, and a lack of political experience—problems that still stand as major impediments to the construction of modern political systems in developing nations. Even with the departure of colonial governments, European companies still controlled valuable natural resources. Moreover, some African rulers have abused their power by enriching themselves at the expense of their people, while adopting, as in the case of Robert Mugabe (1924–) of Zimbabwe, anti-colonial rhetoric to justify their plunder. Appalling poverty and inadequate health care remain daunting challenges.

Conclusion

The end of European overseas empires was accompanied by significant political changes on the European continent as well. The late 1960s brought waves of student protest in many Western European countries and a movement for reform in Communist Czechoslovkia, which threatened Soviet orthodoxy before being crushed by Russian tanks. Dictatorships subsequently fell in Greece, Spain, and Portugal. And then, in a dramatic sequence of remarkable events, Communism collapsed in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans in 1989, followed by the break-up of the Soviet Union itself in 1991. Europe entered a new age.

CHAPTER 29

TRANSITIONS TO DEMOCRACY AND THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNISM

After almost two decades of growing prosperity and relative political and social calm, domestic political conflict erupted in Europe—above all, in France—and the United States in 1968. The social, political, and cultural revolts that exploded that year seemed to pit young people, especially students, against those entrenched in power. Many "baby boomers" born after the war saw their revolt as one of an entire generation against its elders. They blamed them for a world that seemed unresponsive to demands for social justice and political change on behalf of the underprivileged and the oppressed. Many felt alienated (a word then much in vogue) from materialistic, industrial, bureaucratic society, and from the universities where they studied. Feminism, too, was a significant undercurrent during the protests of 1968, but it largely remained a movement of middle-class intellectuals and students.

Demonstrations and protest brought political reaction. The turmoil in France ended amid government repression and a conservative show of force. Demonstrations subsided elsewhere in Western Europe, although they continued in the United States against the war in Vietnam. In Western Europe, conservative or centrist parties dominated the governments of Britain, the German Federal Republic, and Italy for most of the 1970s and 1980s, while Socialists held power in France between 1981 and 1995. And, in southern Europe, democratic rule came to Portugal, Spain, and Greece.

A period of détente between the United States and the Soviet Union in the 1970s was followed by a chill that began as a result of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979. Then in 1989, dramatic change occurred in