The great confrontation of America and Russia, which finally occurred in the twentieth century, soon came to its inevitable impasse: bitter rivalry and antagonism. The United Nations became the divided nations. The allies in the war against Germany became opponents in the cold war that ceased to be cold after fighting began in Korea.

There is no common American-Soviet territorial frontier. The two powers face each other with military, economic, diplomatic, and propaganda weapons deployed along a long global frontier. This runs from the Arctic area of northern Norway, along the frontiers of Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey, through the fermenting Near and Middle East, to the steaming rice paddies of Indo-China and the bleak hills of Korea.

Behind the Cold War

The two nations of which the instrument of one is freedom, of the other servitude, stand at the peak of their power in the middle of the twentieth century. Their dispute, incomparably the most important issue in contemporary politics, is most difficult to resolve, because it is not caused by specific disputes about territory or trade which could be easily settled on some compromise basis. The four basic causes of the cold war are of an intangible nature which make the most generous compromise fruitless. They are:

1. *The conviction of irrepressible conflict.* It is an article of dogmatic faith with Soviet leaders, set down repeatedly in the writings of Lenin and Stalin, that a last decisive struggle between the Communist and non-Communist worlds is inevitable. Before this final struggle comes there may be temporary truces and adjustments, but never genuine or lasting peace.

2. *The persistent bad faith of the Soviet government,* a product of Communist contempt for all morality. Soviet diplomatic history is a long record of broken promises and violated treaties. To mention only a few conspicuous examples:

The Soviet government, on its own initiative, concluded treaties of nonaggression and neutrality with its five western neighbors: Poland, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. (The treaty with Lithuania was first signed in 1926 and twice extended. The treaties with the other four countries were concluded in 1932 and extended for ten years in 1934.) All these pacts were torn up as part of Stalin's 1939 pact with Hitler, when Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and large sections of Poland and Finland were conveniently annexed by Russia.

At Yalta the Soviet government subscribed to the principle that "free and unfettered elections" should be held in Poland. Stalin also solemnly agreed that the "liberated" peoples of eastern and southeastern Europe should create "democratic institutions of their own choice." But Polish elections have been fraudulent farces. Communist minorities have imposed a similar pattern of dictatorship and terror throughout the large area under Soviet control. The only exceptions are Finland and, to some extent, the Soviet Zone in Austria.

The Soviet government signed the "Big Three" Potsdam Agreement of August 2, 1945, which contains the following constructive provisions, among many others that were foolish, vindictive, and impractical:

> All democratic political parties, with rights of assembly and of public discussion, shall be allowed and encouraged throughout Germany.
>
> Subject to the necessity for maintaining military security, freedom of speech, press, and religion shall be permitted. . . .
>
> During the period of occupation Germany shall be treated as a single economic unit.

All these provisions have been systematically nullified or infringed in the Soviet Zone of Germany.

3. *The Iron Curtain.* No great power in history has remotely approached the Soviet record in methodically isolating its subjects from foreign contacts. This is just as true for the people in the satellite countries. The abatement of mutual fear and suspicion which might come from free and frank intercourse with foreigners, is deliberately made impossible by Soviet policy.

4. *The Fifth Column.* This, like the Iron Curtain, is something formidably new: the government of a great empire acting simultaneously as the head of a vast international revolutionary conspiracy. To reconcile normal friendly relations with foreign governments with direction of movements which aim to destroy these governments is as impossible as it would be to square the circle.

Soviet official repudiation of responsibility for the activities of the Comintern and for the closely coordinated activities of foreign Communist parties is not convincing. For the last quarter of a century of his life Stalin was undisputed master of the Soviet government. And there is the testimony of D. Manuilsky, prominent Russian official in the Comintern that "not one important document of big international significance was issued by the Comintern without the most active participation by Comrade Stalin in its composition." Headquarters of the Comintern were in Moscow, The Soviet authorities have always maintained the closest control over foreign activities in Soviet territory. It would be absurd to suppose that an organization like the Comintern, with its far-flung international ramifications, would have been permitted to function for five minutes on Soviet soil if the Soviet government had not fully approved of and controlled its activities.

The confrontation of the United States and the Soviet Union is far more than the normal antagonism of two leading world powers. It is an irrepressible conflict between two diametrically opposed national ideas, accurately described by de Tocqueville as freedom and servitude.

America was able to develop and grow strong without any serious threat from without. Such familiar features of life in Europe as large standing armies, conscription, and heavy taxation for military purposes, were unknown in the United States until very recent times. This freedom from fear of external attack was very favorable to the smooth development of free institutions. It helped to implant in the American character the spirit of individual self-reliance that does not flourish in a militarized society.

The medieval Russian state, by contrast, was located in a vast plain, with no natural frontiers and many enemies. It expanded in an atmosphere of continuous war, regular and irregular. The early Russian principalities were swamped by the tide of the Tartar conquest. As the Muscovite tsars became more powerful they widened their frontiers in a long series of wars with Turks and Tartars, Swedes, Lithuanians, and Poles. Ultimately Russia, by sheer bulk and size, became a strong factor in European politics. Russian troops temporarily occupied Berlin during the Seven Years War (1756-1763). The stubborn courage of the Russian armies and the rigors of the Russian winter started Napoleon on the road to decline and fall. Both under the tsars and under the Soviets Russia maintained a huge military establishment.

Russia's Tradition of Autocracy

Absence or presence of outside military pressure is not the only reason why Russia and America, as they grew into world powers, developed differing sets of values, especially as regards individual freedom. Autocracy, absolute power of the tsar, was the distinctive principle of Russian political life. Its origins were oriental and semi-oriental. Russian ideas of government were largely derived from the absolutist Byzantine Empire, from which Russia accepted Christianity, and from the Tartar khans who were overlords for two centuries.

Russia remained almost entirely outside the influence of three movements which, in various ways, fostered the growth of individual judgment: the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, and the French Revolution. Russian autocracy stood like an immovable rock while most of Europe was evolving in the direction of constitutional regimes, with limitations on the sovereign's power.

There was some softening of the rigid character of the Russian political, social, and economic order during the half century before the First World War. Serfdom was abolished by Alexander II in 1861, only to be restored by Stalin, in the form of the collective farms, seventy years later. The same Tsar introduced some local self-government and gave Russia a modern and civilized judicial system. A national parliament, the Duma, elected on a narrow franchise and invested with limited powers, came into existence after the 1905 Revolution. But most Russians, apart from a minority of Westernized intellectuals, conceived of governmental power as something far removed, vast, unlimited, beyond their check or control.

A Tragic Revolution

Westernized Russian liberals and radicals and foreigners who admired Russian achievement in literature and the arts and found Russians as human beings congenial looked hopefully for the coming of a revolution that would sweep away tyranny and release the creative energies of the Russian people. The Revolution came; but the tyranny over the minds and bodies of men became only more intense. This is evident from comparative figures of executions and numbers of political prisoners in slave labor camps under the tsars and under the Soviets.

It was a profoundly tragic development, especially for the civilized and humane pre-Bolshevik Russian intellectuals, who counted among their number a high proportion of the finest human beings who could be found anywhere in the world. But the Soviet addiction to methods of barbarous tyranny is not surprising if two historical facts are considered. First, there was the poverty, ignorance, often downright illiteracy, combined with total inexperience in self-government, of the Russian masses. Second, few Russian revolutionary thinkers were genuine liberals. This observation holds true not only for the Bolsheviks, but for Russian rebels of other points of view.

If one studies Russian revolutionary literature one finds very little emphasis on assuring the rights of the individual, on protecting the individual against the state. Property, one of the most fundamental of human rights, is regarded with hostility and contempt. The emphasis is almost always on realizing some kind of social utopia, if necessary by the most ruthless means. The aspiration of the typical Russian revolutionary was not to curb the power of the state, but to capture that power and use it to force people into the mold of some ambitious blueprint of social reorganization that was supposed, in some happy future, to produce a millennium of virtue and happiness.

The founders of the American Republic were equally far removed in their political thinking from the models of Byzantine emperors and Tartar khans and from such revolutionary fantasies as Lenin's belief that absolute freedom would some day emerge from a period of absolute "proletarian" dictatorship. Jefferson and Madison, Adams and Hamilton were among the best-read men of their time. The Federalist Papers, the intellectual background for our Constitution, are full of pertinent historical analogies, drawn from the experiences of the Carthaginian Senate, the Achaean League, the Archons of Athens, the League of Cambray.