

The Cold War

Since the end of the First World War, the United States had emerged as the strongest power in the world. After the Second World War, her power had grown still more compared with the European powers who had dominated the world for centuries. This was both in the spheres of economic and military strength. After she acquired the atom bomb, the awareness of her power was further strengthened. The United States at that time was the only country which possessed the atom bomb. Next to the United States the mightiest power in the world after the Second World War was the Soviet Union. She had suffered more than any other country in the war. Besides the 20 million people that she lost during the war, hundreds of her towns and thousands of factories had been completely destroyed. However, in spite of these losses, her power and prestige had increased. This was to some extent due to the very important role that she had played in defeating Germany. Since the revolution, she had been ostracized and boycotted and had faced the open hostility of the other big powers. However, after the war, a number of countries in Europe, as has already been mentioned, were ruled by communist parties. The Soviet Union exercised a lot of influence over the governments of these countries. As a result of these developments, the isolation of the Soviet Union had come to an end. Also, in many countries of Europe, as well as of Asia, communist parties had emerged stronger after the war. These parties were generally supporters of the Soviet Union. Some of these parties were actively engaged in organizing revolutions in their countries. For example, the communists had been a major force in the resistance against German occupation of Greece. A large part of the country came under their control when the German army retreated from there. However, after the war was over, monarchy was restored in Greece and the new government began to suppress the communists. This resulted in a civil war which lasted till 1949 when the communists were finally defeated.

During the war, Britain, the United States and

the Soviet Union had together fought against the fascist countries. Many declarations issued during the war had emphasized that the unity among these countries would continue after the war also and would be the basis of a durable peace and international brotherhood. These declarations had aroused hopes all over the world. However, the war was hardly over when conflicts and tensions began to emerge between Britain and the United States on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other. The relations between them began to deteriorate and came to be characterized by what has been called the Cold War. Gradually, the Cold War became more and more intense and the world was divided into two major blocs -the United States and West European countries forming one bloc and the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe forming the other. Sometimes the 'cold' war became 'hot' but the hostilities remained confined to specific areas.

The most important reason for the 'out-break' of the Cold War was the Western countries' fear of communism. With the increase in the might of the Soviet Union, the emergence, of governments ruled by communist parties in Eastern and Central Europe and the growing strength of communist parties in many parts of the world, alarmed the governments of the United States, Britain and other West European countries. In 1949, the victory of the Communist Party of China in the civil war which had been raging there for about two decades added to the alarm. The United States openly declared that her policy "was to prevent the spread of communism. One of the objectives of the massive economic aid that the United States gave to West European countries was also to 'contain' communism. The United States began to look upon every development in the world from this standpoint, whether it promoted or helped in checking communism, Britain and West European countries became aligned with the United States and began to follow a policy mainly aimed at curbing the growth of communism. This had many adverse consequences for democracy, and freedom movements in the colonies. Restrictions were imposed on the liberties of the people, for

example, in the United States, and justified on the ground of national security and preventing communist influence. The freedom movements in many countries began to be considered unsympathetically by countries which not themselves colonial powers but aligned to the colonial powers. For ample, the United States supported Fr in suppressing the freedom movement in Indo-China. Countries which wanted pursue an independent policy and mote relations with the Soviet Union looked upon with suspicion. All factors made the international situation tense. In some areas it resulted in wars in many other areas it led to prolonging conflicts.

The growing tension in the world worsened by the setting up of military blocs. In 1949 was formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for fence against the Soviet Union. The members of this alliance were the United State Canada, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Portugal, Britain, France, Belgium, Hall and Luxemburg. Turkey, Greece, the Federal Republic of Germany and Spain came its members later. A NATO army was created which established its bas many countries of Europe. Similar military alliances were set up by the United State and Britain in other parts of the world. 1954 was set up the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEA TO) with the United States, Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, the Philippines and Pakistan as members. In 1955 the Baghdad Pact was brought into being. It consisted Britain, Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan and The United States established its military bases all over the world for use against what she considered the danger of communist aggression. The formation of the alliances and the establishment of military bases worsened the already tense international situation. These alliances and military bases came to be looked upon countries, which were not members of the alliances, as a danger to peace and to their independence. In some countries which were members of these alliances, these alliances were very unpopular. For example, when there was a revolution in Iraq in 1958, that country withdrew from the Baghdad Pact which had been named after capital of Iraq. The name of Baghdad

Pact was then changed to the Central Treaty organization (CENTO). These alliances were generally unpopular in the countries Asia and Africa as all the imperialist were of Europe were members of these alliances and used it to suppress the movements for freedom. Most of the countries of Asia and Africa which had won their freedom refused to join these alliances. As against these Western and Western sponsored alliances, the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of Europe-Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and the German Democratic Republic formed the Warsaw Pact. Under this act, the Soviet Union stationed her troops these countries. However, the Soviet Union and the other members of the War saw Pact did not if, have any military bases in other parts of the world. The Soviet Union had treaties of friendship and mutual assistance with China.

The formation of the military alliances accompanied by another dangerous development. This was the race for deadlier weapons of '% destruction. You have already read about the use of two atom bombs against Japan towards the end of the and World War. For about four years the Second World War, only the United States possessed atomic weapons. In 1949, the Soviet Union tested her first atom bomb. A few years later nuclear weapons which were thousands of times more destructive than the atom bombs used against Japan, were developed. These were the thermonuclear or hydrogen bombs. The testing alone of these bombs created serious hazards to life. Many movements were launched in all parts of the world to demand a ban on the testing and manufacture of nuclear weapons. Most of the leading scientists such as Einstein and Linus Pauling also supported this demand. However, the arsenals of nuclear weapons in the world went on increasing. There are so many nuclear weapons in the world today that the world can be destroyed many times over. Along with the nuclear weapons and many other kinds of weapon new bombers, submarines and missiles have been developed which can carry these weapons over thousands of kilometres. The race for armaments which was

a part of the Cold War has created the danger to the very survival of human race. Vast resources have been spent on developing these weapons. These resources, if they had been utilized for peaceful purposes, would have gone a long way in abolishing want and poverty of which millions of people all over the world are victims.

Many newly independent nations of Asia and Africa as well as many nations in other continents did not join the military blocs. They began to follow a policy of non-alignment with any military bloc. Their emergence played a very important role in reducing the intensity of the Cold War and in creating an atmosphere of peace. A crucial role in promoting non-alignment and peace was played by India after her independence.

Rise of Asia and Africa

The period after the Second World War saw the emergence of most countries of Asia and Africa as independent nations. One country after another in these continents became independent. They won their independence through long and hard struggles against colonial powers. To some countries independence came only after long and bitter armed struggle; to others without much bloodshed but not without a long period of strife. Generally, the colonial powers were not willing to give up their hold on the colonies and left only when they found that it was not possible to maintain their rule any more. During the Second World War, many imperialist countries had been ousted from their colonies, but after the war they tried to re-establish their rule. For some time they succeeded in doing so but were ultimately forced to withdraw.

The achievement of independence was the result primarily of the struggles of the peoples of the colonies. However, the changes in the international climate which followed the Second World War helped the peoples struggling for independence. Imperialism as a whole had been weakened as a result of the war. The economies of many imperialist countries had suffered. Forces within the imperialist countries which were friendly with the peoples struggling for independence also had grown powerful. Freedom and democracy

were the major aims for which the Allies had fought against the fascist countries and these aims had been made the basis for arousing peoples all over the world against fascism. The fulfilment of these aims could no longer be confined only to Europe, had been done after the First World War. In many colonies which fascist countries occupied by ousting the older colonial powers, the freedom movements had played important role in the struggle against fascist occupation. For example, Japan had to face the resistance of the freedom movements in the countries of East and South East Asia which she had occupied. It was not easy to restore the rule of the former colonial powers over these countries.

Another major international factor which facilitated the end of imperialism was the emergence of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries as a major force. These countries were inimical to imperialism and often gave aid and support to freedom movements in the colonies. Similarly, the movements of socialism which had grown powerful all over the world, including in the colonial countries, also supported the movements of freedom in colonies.

The entire international context in which the freedom movements were launched had changed after the Second World War. At the international forums, particularly at the United Nations, the case for the independence of colonies began to gain popularity. The international opinion was clearly against the continuation of imperialism. Imperialist countries resorted to various means to maintain their rule. They tried to create divisions in the freedom movements. They resorted to the use of terror. In some countries they tried to install governments which were nominally free but were in fact their puppets. However, most of the freedom movements were able to defeat these methods of disruption.

An important role in the achievement of independence by the countries of Asia and Africa was played by the unity which freedom movements in various countries achieved. The freedom movement in one country supported the freedom movements in other countries. The role of countries

In which had achieved their independence was very crucial in this regard. These countries supported the cause of those peoples who were still under colonial rule at the United Nations and other international forums. They also gave active help to the freedom movements. India played a crucial role in promoting the cause of freedom in Asia and Africa. Besides the movements in the colonies for independence, there were also movements in Asian and African countries to oust out dated political systems, to modernize the social and economic systems and to assume control over the resources of one's country which had remained under foreign control even after freedom. These movements expressed the resolve of the peoples of Asia and Africa to become fully independent as well as to launch programmes of rapid social and economic development. Within two decades of the end of the Second World War, the political map of Asia and Africa had been completely changed.