

Lesson 22

The Cold War: Who Was Responsible?

Objective

- To assess responsibility for the Cold War

be useful in developing historical context for an essay to be written as part of Lesson 22.

Notes to the Teacher

With the close of World War II, international relations entered a new phase. The Grand Alliance of the Center and the Left against the Nazi Right was no longer cemented together by a common foe. Instead of collaboration for the benefit of humankind, the new superpowers, U.S.A. and Soviet Union, wasted energy and resources by entering into a period of unrestrained and irrational policies that poised the world on the verge of conflagration in the next two decades. This phenomenon is known as the Cold War.

With the distance of more than four decades, historians can now attempt to analyze more objectively the origins and progression of the Cold War. In the late 1940s any such objectivity would have been met with McCarthy-like anti-Communist retribution in the U.S.A. and deportation to Siberia in the Soviet Union. The United States perceived itself as defending the Free World and containing Soviet expansion while the Soviets clearly believed they were securing their borders against aggression. On the other hand, the United States saw the Soviet Union aggressively pursuing its aim of world Communism while the Soviet Union viewed the United States as an aggressive militaristic power with global military bases encircling the Communist world. International affairs from 1945 to the 1960s revolved around the rhetoric created by this tension as both sides battled for control of world opinion.

In this lesson students complete a chart on actions and reactions of the principal antagonists in the period 1945-1964. They then examine and interpret quotes of world leaders to gain a sense of changing attitudes during this time. Then they examine historians' assessments of the Cold War. To conclude this lesson they write a paragraph giving their personal analysis of this phase of the Cold War. This paragraph may

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Part A. The chart below gives you some of the major actions and reactions of the Cold War in the period 1945-1964. Complete the chart by filling in the missing information.

Action	Reaction
1.	1. Truman Doctrine
2. Marshall Plan	2.
3. Russian-forced Communist regime in Czechoslovakia	3.
4. Union of West German zones	4.
5.	5. Berlin Airlift and NATO
6.	6. Creation of East Germany
7.	7. Chinese spheres of influence in Korea and Vietnam
8. Chinese spheres of influence in Korea and Vietnam	8.
9.	9. U.S. support of anti-Communist regime in Vietnam

Name _____

Date _____

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 10. NATO | 10. |
| 11. Arab-Israeli-Suez War | 11. |
| 12. Sputnik | 12. |
| 13. | 13. Berlin Wall |
| 14. Khrushchev planted missiles in Cuba | 14. |
| 15. Gulf of Tonkin incident | 15. |
| 16. | 16. Brezhnev in power |

Part B. Study the following quotes and determine how attitudes changed over time from the 1940s to the 1960s.

1940s:

"The atomic bomb is another powerful weapon in the arsenal of righteousness."¹
Harry Truman, 1945

"A single death is a tragedy; a million deaths is a statistic."²
Joseph Stalin

1960s:

"People live in constant fear lest the storm that every moment threatens them should break upon them with dreadful violence."³

Pope John XXIII

"Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate."⁴

John F. Kennedy

"Whether you like your neighbor or not, nothing can be done about it, you have to find some way of getting on with him for you both live on one and the same continent."⁵

Nikita Khrushchev

Part C. Read the following excerpts in order to answer the questions at the end.

The orthodox American view, as originally set forth by the American government and as reaffirmed until recently by most American scholars, has been that the Cold War was the grave and essential response of free men to communist aggression. Some have gone back well before the Second World War to lay open the sources of Russian expansionism. Geopoliticians traced the Cold War to imperial Russian strategic ambitions which in the nineteenth century led to the Crimean War, to Russian penetration of the Balkans and the Middle East and to Russian pressure on Britain's "lifeline" to India. Ideologists traced it to the Communist Manifesto of 1848 ("the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat"). Thoughtful observers (a phrase meant to exclude those who speak in Dullesese about the unlimited evil of godless, atheistic, militant communism) concluded that classical Russian imperialism and Pan-Slavism, compounded after 1917 by Leninist messianism, confronted the West at the end of the Second World War with an inexorable drive for domination.

The revisionist thesis is very different. In its extreme form, it is that, after the death of Franklin Roosevelt and the end of the Second World War, the United States deliberately abandoned the wartime policy of collaboration and, exhilarated by the possession of the atomic bomb, undertook a course of aggression of its own designed to expel all Russian influence from Eastern Europe and to establish democratic-capitalist states on the very border of the Soviet Union. As the revisionists see it, this radically new American policy—or rather this resumption by Truman of the pre-Roosevelt policy of insensate anti-communism—left Moscow no alternative but to take measures in defense of its own borders. The result was the Cold War.⁶

¹ Jonathon Green, ed., *The Book of Political Quotes* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), 157.

² *Ibid.*, 131.

³ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁵ L.S. Stavrianos, *The Epic of Modern Man*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 453.

⁶ Irwin Unger, ed., *The Record of American History: Interpretive Readings*, Vol. II (Waltham, Mass.: Xerox College Publishing, 1971), 374.

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The question to which historians must now address themselves is whether American capitalism really depends, for its continuing growth and survival, on the foreign policy its leaders have been following throughout most of the 20th century. To what extent are its interests really threatened by Communist revolutions in the Third World? To what extent can it accommodate itself to those revolutions, reconciling itself to a greatly diminished role in the rest of the world, without undergoing a fundamental reformation—that is, without giving way (after a tremendous upheaval) to some form of Socialism?⁷

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"Revisionist" historians are arguing instead that the United States did as much as the Soviet Union to bring about the collapse of the wartime coalition. Without attempting to shift the blame exclusively to the United States, they are trying to show, as Gar Alperovitz puts it, that "the cold war cannot be understood simply as an American response to a Soviet challenge, but rather as the insidious interaction of mutual suspicions, blame for which must be shared by all."⁸

1. Identify three distinct interpretations of the Cold War.
2. How do these interpretations help us to understand the Cold War?
3. In what ways do these varied viewpoints help to explain the historical art?

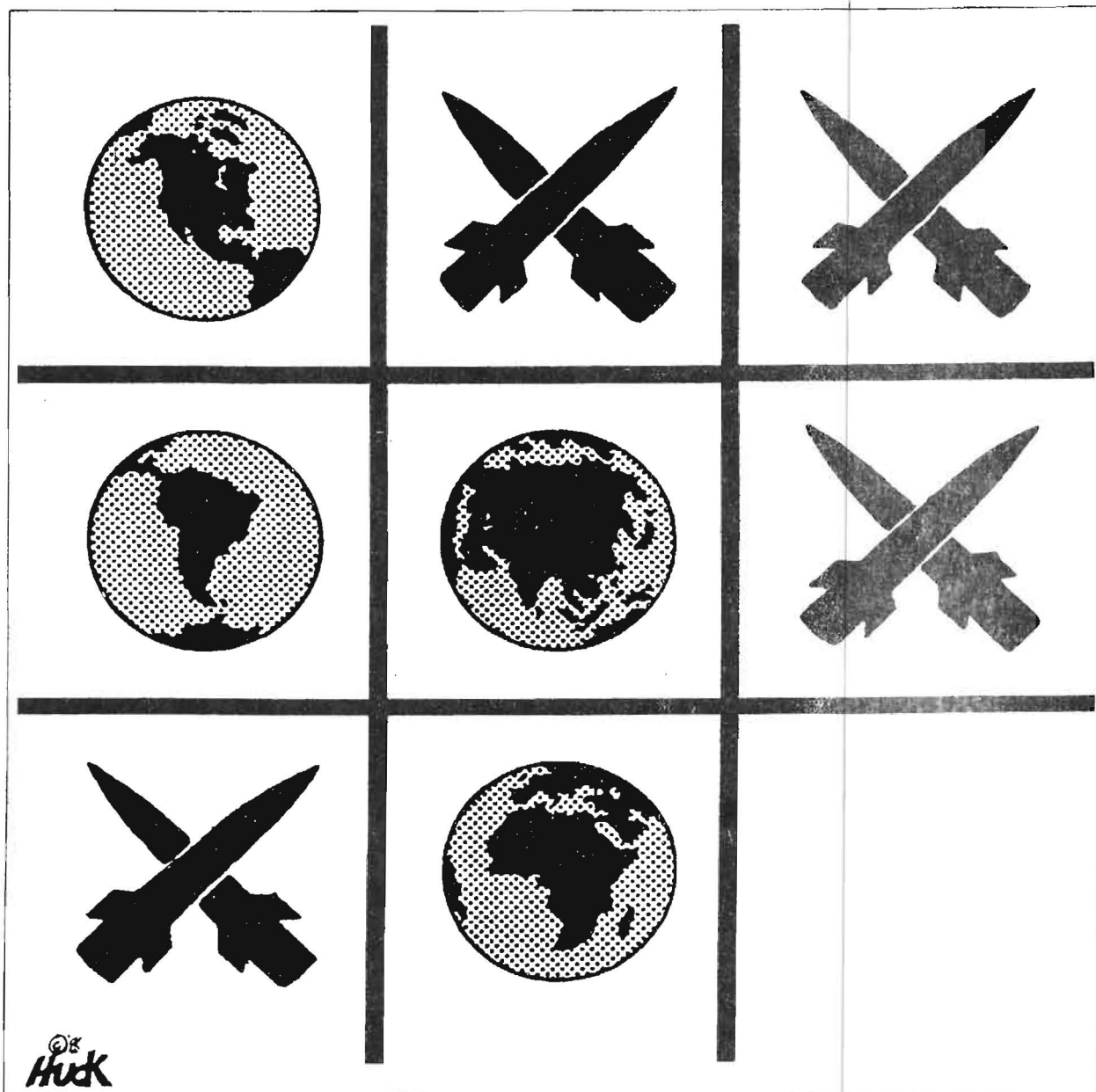
Part D. To conclude the lesson, INTERPRET THE THREE POLITICAL CARTOONS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE COLD WAR. WHAT SYMBOLIC OR METAPHORICAL MESSAGE IS THE ARTIST ATTEMPTING TO CONVEY? IS HE SUCCESSFUL?

⁷ Stavrianos, 434.

⁸ Ibid., 424-25.

Independence and Global Interdependence

Cartoon 1



 Huck

Courtesy of Gary Huck

Lesson 5: Regions

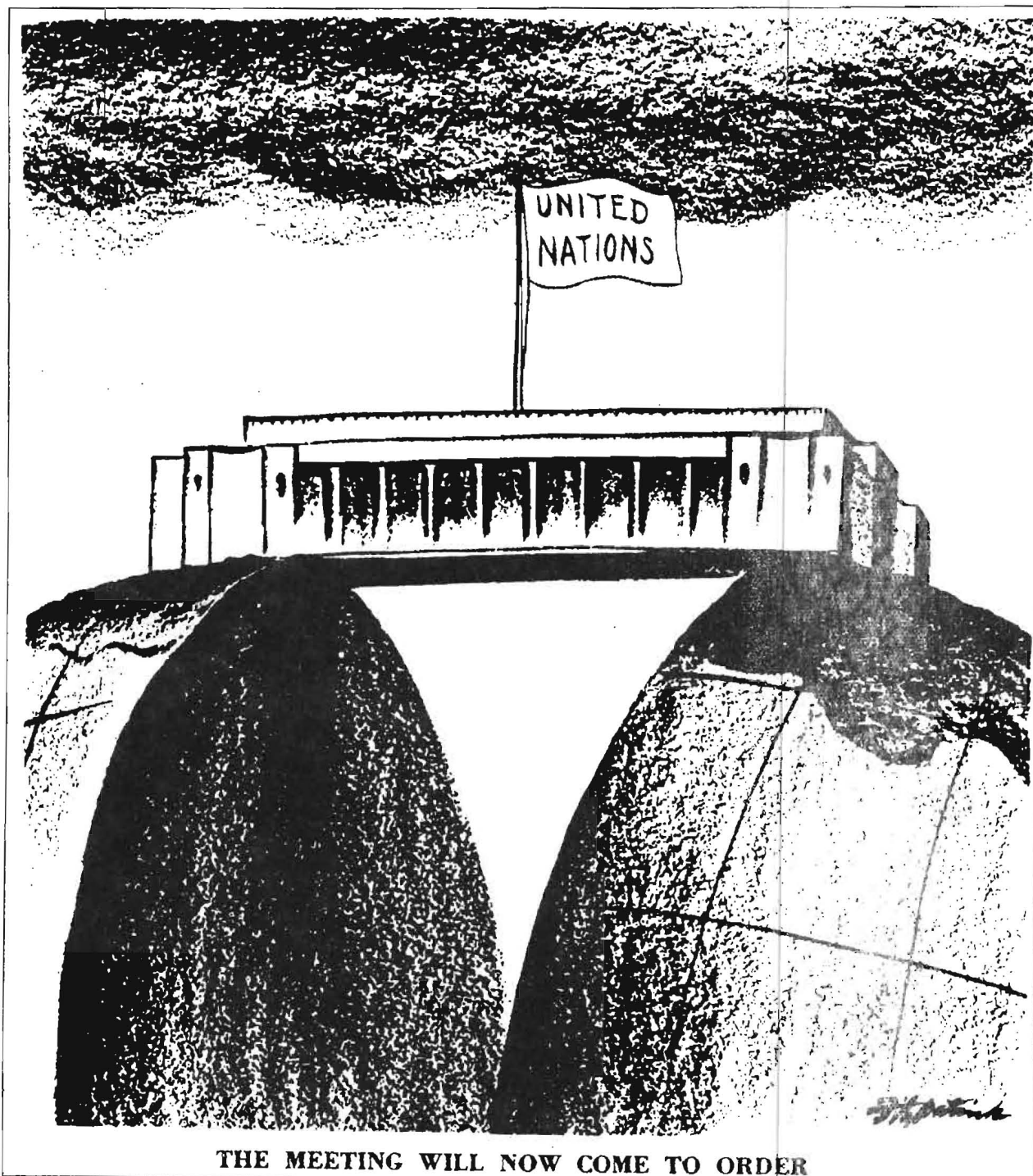
Cartoon 2



Fitzpatrick in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

World War and the End of European Dominance

Cartoon 3



Fitzpatrick in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch