

Stalins suspicions of his western allies between 1941 and 1945 essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Throughout the Second World War, there were many disagreements and causes for suspicion between the USSR and its allies in the west in the period 1941-1945. The four factors that will be investigated in this coursework, which are the Second Front, Poland, The Grand Alliance and the atomic bomb, were all issues that strained relations between these allies and caused suspicion between the two.

Historian Bradley Lightbody argues that the Soviet Union expected their Western allies delayed the Second Front in the hope that the Soviet and Nazi armies would destroy each other. This would lead Stalin to be suspicious of his western allies as it appears that if what Lightbody argues were to be correct, then this would help the west in eliminating there pre-war threats in Communism with Stalin, and Fascism with Hitler. In his writing, Lightbody says, " 800, 000 Soviet soldiers and civilians were killed in the single battle of Stalingrad, compared to 375, 000 British and 405, 000 American casualties for the entire Second World War."

This evidence is useful in justifying Stalin's suspicions of the west as it appears that Lighbody's view is true. However, after evaluating all the fighting that took place in the Second World War, it is clear that actually, Britain and America were not as involved as the USSR. Most of the casualties suffered by the USA were from fighting with the Japanese. The attack on Pearl Harbour on 7th December 1941, which effectively was the point at which America joined the war, saw 2, 402 Americans were killed, 57 of these being civilians, with a further 1, 247 wounded. Mainland fighting was also a cause of heavy losses for the Americans, for example with the Battle of Okinawa starting on the 1st April 1945 and ending on the 21st June 1945. If <https://assignbuster.com/stalins-suspicions-of-his-western-allies-between-1941-and-1945-essay-sample/>

America were to win this battle, it would prove to be a strategic advantage over the Japanese, as their aim was to control the island as a base for air operations on the planned invasion of the Japanese mainland. U. S losses included 62, 000 casualties, 12, 500 of whom were either killed or missing.

Historian Robert Wolfson strongly challenges Lightbody's view with his argument that the complex preparations needed for the D-Day Landings of June 1944 show that the Second Front could not have been launched any sooner. He states that preparations for the attacks had to be the most elaborate ever to succeed. If this argument were assumed to be correct then Stalin cannot be justified in his suspicions as the western allies were planning for what resulted to be a major turning point in the war. In his writing, Wolfson says that, " some 10, 000 planes, 80 warships and 4, 000 other craft were needed for the invasion, all of which had to be prepared and assembled in the right places."

Wolfson also mentions the fighting that is taking place in North Africa at the time of which Stalin is calling for a Second Front. The North African Campaign took place from 10th June 1940 to 13th May 1943. It included battles fought in Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Many of the countries fighting in this campaign had North African interests of colonisation and would therefore be vital to prestige and power once the war was over. Allied losses were shown at a total of 238, 000 over the whole three year period. This further evidence backs up Wolfson's argument that Stalin had no right to be suspicious of his western allies as this war effort would have needed much thought and time from the west in order to claim victory.

After evaluating each argument about whether Stalin had a right to be suspicious of his western allies over the delaying of the Second Front, it would seem Wolfson is most credible here because Lightbody does not consider the other commitments of the west to show why there was a delay. It is without this consideration it would appear that Wolfson is strongest in his argument.

Historian James Fitzgerald argues that the independence of post-war Poland was undermined by decisions taken at the Teheran Conference in November 1943. His view was that the Western Allies created a situation which no independent Polish government could accept and ensured that a puppet government would have to be installed as a result of agreeing to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Polish boundary in the East. At the conference, Churchill argues that the USSR should be allowed to keep the areas of Poland that the USSR had seized in 1939. However, at the Yalta Conference of 1945, Churchill and Roosevelt do not agree with the suggested boundaries proposed at the conference by Stalin. By going back on their word at the Teheran Conference, this makes Stalin suspicious of his western allies, perhaps out of fear that in post war Europe, Stalin will try and spread the ideology of Communism. In his writing, Fitzgerald says, " there was discussion over the boundaries of post-war Poland, in effect, Poland was moved westward" 3 and that Poland would be, " compensated by receiving territory on her western border from Germany."

Historians Jeremy Isaacs and Taylor Downing strongly challenge this when they describe the actions of the Red Army in Poland in 1944 and argue that the hopes for post-war independence for Poland were crushed by Stalin. <https://assignbuster.com/stalins-suspicions-of-his-western-allies-between-1941-and-1945-essay-sample/>

They argue their view that hopes for genuine democracy in Eastern Europe after the war was destroyed in the ruins of Warsaw. They give their evidence in their writing by saying, “ the Soviet troops unexpectedly waited at the Vistula River, and allowed the Nazis to return and crush the Poles.”⁵ This therefore adds weight to the argument that Stalin cannot be suspicious of his western allies as he is doing as much harm to the hopes of independence for Poland at the end of the war, as much as he thinks the west are doing as well. It must also be considered that a defenceless Poland would be easier for Stalin to control post-war, but since this is for personal gain it cannot be justified.

It appears that after evaluating both arguments in this factor, it would seem that Isaacs and Downing are most credible because although Fitzgerald can give more evidence in his reasoning for Stalin’s suspicions, he does not consider the damage that Stalin himself is doing to the situation and for this lack of consideration this is why Isaacs and Downing are more credible in their argument.

Historian Scott Harrison argues that the alliance between the USSR and the Western Powers was liable to collapse in 1945. If the given view is true then one would assume that perhaps the west would purposely affect relations with the USSR as the alliance was only a marriage of convenience. This view is understandable as realistically the only reason as to why these two unfamiliar allies are working together is the fact that they have a common enemy in Nazi Germany.

Once the Germany had surrendered, this loss of common enemy would surely mark the end of the relationship, given that the ideologies of the wartime allies were completely opposite. In his writing, Harrison explains why the alliance was going to collapse. One of the reasons he gives links in with the first factor about the Second Front. Harrison states how, “ Stalin had asked the Allies to set up a Second Front to relieve the pressure on the Soviet Union.”⁶ In Stalin’s eyes, the Allies had been slow to act and therefore forced the USSR to make an even bigger sacrifice. The second reason being the Western powers feared the expansion of Communism, and especially how Stalin was committed to world domination. The last reason is basically a reverse of the second reason; the USSR feared an expansion of capitalism, especially with how weak post-war Europe was and the power of the USA.

Historian Mike Sewell challenges this when he argues that there were tensions between the wartime allies but a collapse of the alliance was far from inevitable. Historian Oliver Edwards argued that Roosevelt thought that the Soviet Union might be a more important ally than Britain and that Stalin genuinely wanted to remain on good terms with the USA. Having worked together successfully in defeating Nazi Germany, it appears that Stalin’s suspicions cannot be justified as the west are helping the USSR remove a threat of invasion, a theme that Stalin had been paranoid about even since the day he became dictator of the USSR.

In his writings Sewell says, “ deals were possible, especially with the British.”

This is shown in the alleged percentages agreement between Churchill and Stalin at the Fourth Moscow Conference, about how to divide south-eastern
<https://assignbuster.com/stalins-suspicions-of-his-western-allies-between-1941-and-1945-essay-sample/>

Europe into spheres of influence. He also adds, "Roosevelt remained confident that he could deal with Stalin in the basis of the mutual trust that had been built up during the war. The British and the Americans remained confident that they could do deals with Stalin." 8 The argument given by Oliver Edwards to support Mike Sewell's view works well in showing that relations between the east and the west were perhaps not as bad as often shown. They both argue that deals could be done between the two and that they both shared post-war objectives. This also helps in concluding that Stalin's suspicions cannot be justified as he wants to remain on good terms with the west.

After evaluating the two arguments, it appears that Harrison gives the stronger argument as his evidence proves more realistic. The fact that the ideologies of the countries were completely opposite proves that post-war relations would have been difficult and this is why Harrison is more credible.

Historian Steve Phillips argues that the bomb caused both sides to harden their views of the other. In his writing Phillips says, "Stalin saw the failure of Truman to at least inform him of the bomb as a deep insult." 9 Stalin already knew that the US had an atomic bomb, through the means of spies. This adds weight to the argument that Stalin could be justified in his suspicions of his western allies because this made him further distrust US motives. This can be supported when it says that Truman wanted Stalin take more notice. It must also be considered that although America say the bomb was used to defeat Japan, the United States immediately attempted to turn the atom bomb to diplomatic advantage.

Historian Oliver Edwards strongly challenges this with the view that the bomb was dropped because the Americans didn't want to spend the money on developing it without testing it, and because it would defeat Japan. Stalin had known that the reason in which the USA had entered the war was for the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, meaning that the main enemy from the American point of view was the Japanese. Although by May 1945, Germany had surrendered in the war, there was still fighting going on between the USA and Japan, for example the Battle of Okinawa. In his writing Edwards says, " the bomb was dropped because \$2 billion had been invested in its development and because it was seen as the best means of defeating the Japanese." 10 The bombs dropped on the 6th August and 9th August 1945 at Hiroshima and Nagasaki forced the Japanese to surrender and it was for this sole reason that the bombs were dropped.

When one considers the arguments the historians have given, the common theme appears that Stalin could not be justified in his suspicions of the west. This view is more convincing, not only because the historians have given better evidence or considered more events that could alter any suspicions Stalin might have, but also because Stalin himself acted in ways that were just as bad if not worse than the west, which cannot justify his suspicions of his western allies in the period 1941-1945.

Bibliography:

Edwards, O (2002) *The USA and the Cold War 1945 – 1963*

Edwards, O (2002) *The USA and the Cold War 1945 – 1963*

<https://assignbuster.com/stalins-suspicions-of-his-western-allies-between-1941-and-1945-essay-sample/>

Fitzgerald, J (1989) The Cold War and Beyond

Harrison, S (1987) World Conflict in the Twentieth Century

Isaacs, J and Downing, T (1998) Cold War

Lightbody, B (1999) The Cold War

Phillips, S (2001) The Cold War

Sewell, M (2002) The Cold War

Wolfson, R (1978) Years of Change

1 Bradley Lightbody, The Cold War, published in 1999

2 Robert Wolfson, Years of Change, published in 1978

3 James Fitzgerald, The Cold War and Beyond, published in 1989

4 James Fitzgerald, The Cold War and Beyond, published in 1989

5 Jeremy Isaacs and Taylor Downing, Cold War, published in 1998

6 Scott Harrison, World Conflict in the Twentieth Century, published in 1987

7 Mike Sewell, The Cold War, published in 2002

8 Mike Sewell, The Cold War, published in 2002

9 Steve Phillips, The Cold War, published in 2001

10 Oliver Edwards, The USA and the Cold War 1945-63, published in 2002