

THE YEAR 1945 AND ITS HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR EUROPE

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More than for any other historical period, the accounts of the end of the Second World War and its consequences have been characterized by deliberate distortion. The author deals with various aspects of this period with which he was acquainted by virtue of personal experience as well as close contacts with leading statesmen and politicians, but which have been ignored in allegedly comprehensive accounts and documentations, both East and West.

He first compares the Vienna Congress of 1815 with the Yalta and Potsdam conferences. At the Congress of Vienna, victors and losers together negotiated a peace which was to shape Central Europe decisively for nearly a hundred years. At Yalta and Potsdam, on the other hand, even the allies of the victorious powers were excluded and outmaneuvered. The consequences have been evident in continuing unrest in Europe, particularly in the uprisings in the satellite states.

The Western powers had no clear concepts with which to counter Stalin's initially moderate war aims of the year 1941. Giving priority to the goal of unconditional surrender only restricted the options of the West. It was this situation that encouraged the USSR to extend its power sphere westward. As a result, however, the Soviet Union also maneuvered itself into a two-front situation. The author details the factors which promoted this development, noting also the dangers for the Soviet Union which could emerge in the future. Whether and to what extent a European revision of the course set by Yalta is possible depends decisively on the West's having a realistic and far-sighted policy.