

SUPERPOWER RELATIONS AND THE COLD WAR

THE ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR 1941-1958

1941-1943

THE GRAND ALLIANCE

1941: USA entered WWII against Germany and Japan, creating a GRAND ALLIANCE with Britain and the USSR. The leaders (the 'BIG THREE') first met at The Tehran Conference (1943).



1945-1946

WWII ENDED & THE ALLIANCE DISSOLVED

The Allied leaders met for the final time at Potsdam. Stalin ordered the speeding up of the development of atomic weapons following the USA's first test on the eve of the Potsdam conference. A few days later the USA dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and then Nagasaki. WWII ended and the US/USSR alliance dissolved.



1947-1949

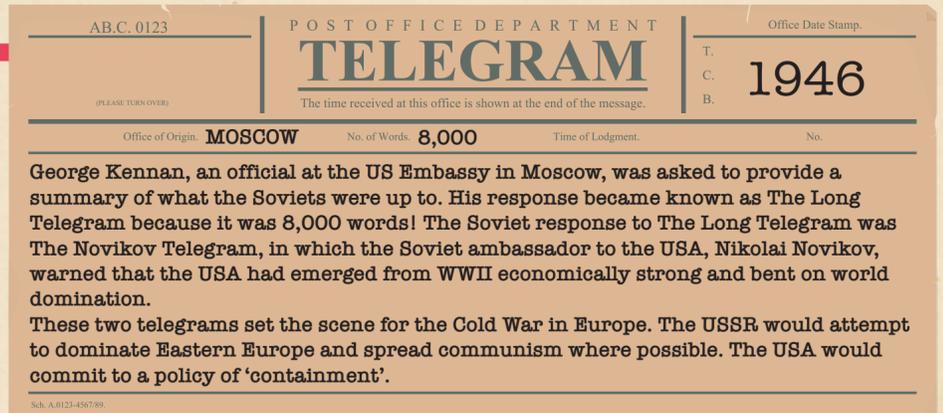
THE BERLIN CRISIS

1947: President Truman promised help to countries facing Communist takeovers; known as the 'Truman Doctrine'. Financial and technical assistance to war-torn Europe, known as The Marshall Plan was also offered. The USSR objected to the Marshall plan, forbidding Soviet Bloc countries it controlled to apply for Marshall Aid. In September 1947: Cominform (the Communist Information Bureau) was established; aiming to tighten Soviet control in Eastern Europe.

1948: Saw the integration of French, USA & UK sections of Germany. The Soviets response was to cut all road and rail links to that sector, meaning food was brought in by US and UK airplanes, an exercise known as the Berlin Airlift.

1949: USSR established Comecon - the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance - to administer its own Molotov Plan of financial aid to keep the Eastern Bloc countries on side.

April 1949: the North Atlantic Treaty was signed (NATO) and the USSR finally ended the Berlin blockade.



1956-1957

HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

1956: Demonstrations in Budapest demanding free elections, freedom of the press and the withdrawal of Soviet troops led to Khrushchev sending troops and tanks into Hungary leading to approximately 3,000 Hungarian casualties.

1957: The USSR launched Sputnik into orbit and the space race began.



THE COLD WAR CRISES 1958-1970

1958-1970

1958 - 1961

THE BERLIN WALL

1958: Khrushchev gave the West an ultimatum. He demanded that, as Berlin lay in East Germany, the Western powers should withdraw their troops from Berlin within six months.

1959: the USA feared it had a communist state 'in its own backyard' Castro formed a liberal nationalist government. He wanted Cuba to be free from US influence. Castro nationalised all American-owned companies in Cuba, and refused to pay compensation.

1961: US-supported and CIA-trained Cuban exiles, attempted and failed to invade Cuba at the Bay of Pigs, and overthrow Castro's Communist government.

1961: Construction of the Berlin Wall had begun - the most iconic symbol of the Cold War.



1965-1969

THE PRAGUE SPRING & THE VIETNAM WAR

1965 - 1974: The Vietnam War.

1968: The Czech people attempted to reform the communist system to create 'Socialism with a human face'. This attempt, known as the Prague Spring, lasted for four months until its suppression by the Soviet Red Army.

1975 - 1979

HUMAN RIGHTS AGREEMENT

1975: American astronauts and Soviet cosmonauts met and symbolically shook hands in space. The Helsinki Agreement was signed by 35 countries including the USA and USSR. This effectively meant Western Allies recognised Soviet control over Eastern Europe. It also meant that, after decades of communist dictatorship, the Soviet Union had signed up to a basic human rights agreement.

1977-79: The USSR began replacing its obsolete nuclear missiles in Eastern Europe with newer missiles. America responded by developing Cruise Missiles and deploying battlefield nuclear weapons to Europe. The Cold War escalated further and SALT talks collapsed after the USSR invaded Afghanistan.

The Carter Doctrine: Believing that the Soviet invasion might lead to threats to US interests in the Persian Gulf, the US President, Jimmy Carter, announced that the USA was prepared to use force to stop any country from gaining control over the oil rich states of the Middle East.



1950-1955

THE WARSAW PACT

1950: The Korean war began in 1950 when North Korea invaded South Korea.

1955: The Warsaw Pact was formed with member states Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the Soviet Union.



1962-1964

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS & ITS CONSEQUENCES

1962: American U2 spy planes took pictures of Soviet missile launch sites in Cuba and of 20 Soviet ships carrying nuclear missiles in the Atlantic Ocean heading for Cuba. President Kennedy set up a naval blockade; demanding removal of the missiles. War was averted after 13 days when the USSR agreed to remove the weapons. The Cuban Missile Crisis was probably the closest moment in the Cold War the world came to nuclear war.

1963: President Kennedy visited West Berlin and addressed a huge crowd stating 'all free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin'.



THE END OF THE COLD WAR 1970-1991

1970-1974

DÉTENTE

After the scare of the Cuban Missile Crisis and then the humiliation of the Vietnam War, the 1970s saw the USA, the USSR and China making an effort to improve relations. This led to a period known as détente, a word meaning the relaxing of tension.

1972: SALT I (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) were signed by US President Nixon and the Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev.

1980-1984

THE SDI (STAR WARS)

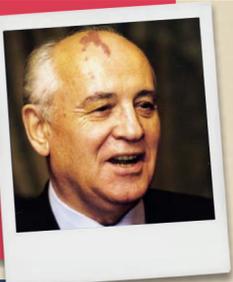
1980: The USA boycotted the Moscow Olympics in protest at the invasion of Afghanistan. The USA increased its defence spending with the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), nicknamed 'Star Wars'. The plan, had it been initiated, would have swung the nuclear balance strongly in the USA's favour. The Soviet Union's economy was struggling and the cost of matching such a programme was too high.



1985-1988

REFORM

1985: Mikhail Gorbachev became Soviet leader; slowly beginning to reform. Realising they could never out-spend the USA, Gorbachev began to cut spending on nuclear weapons; initiating the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) with the USA. In 1987 a deal was signed limiting production of Intermediate Range Nuclear Missiles (ICBMs).



1989-1991

THE FALL OF THE WALL

9 November 1989: East Germans were allowed to cross the West Berlin border. In dramatic scenes, the Berlin Wall was torn down by demonstrators and Germany reunited by 1990. The fall of the Wall was massively symbolic as the Cold War's end.

1990-91: Each of the former Soviet Republics of the USSR declared themselves independent. By the end of 1991 the USSR had been dissolved. Russia declared itself a republic in 1991.

