

Module 10: The Cold War

Topic 1 Content: Cold War Crises

Cold War Crises

A World on the Brink of Destruction

The image is a composite graphic. On the left, a B-29 bomber is shown in flight. In the center, a map of the Americas is displayed with red curved arrows indicating missile paths from the Caribbean region towards the United States. On the right, a portrait of Fidel Castro is shown. On the left side of the composite, a portrait of Nikita Khrushchev is visible. The background of the composite is a light purple and white color.

Korean War (1950-53) Berlin Cuban Missile Crisis 1962

[Image of Khrushchev courtesy German Federal Archive.]

Korean War (1950-53)

Korean Problem



The infographic is titled "Cold War Crises" and "Korean Problem". It features a central map of Korea divided into North Korea (red) and South Korea (blue) by the 38th Parallel. To the right is a globe with an arrow pointing to the 38th Parallel. Below the map is a timeline with three segments: "Korean War (1950-53)", "Berlin", and "Cuban Missile Crisis 1962".

Korea divided by the 38th parallel

- Soviets control north
- U.S. controls south

1948

- North becomes communist
- South establishes government

1949

- Communist revolution in China

June 1950

- North Korea invaded South
- South Korea kills over 100,000 suspected communists

Korean Problem

Korean War (1950-53) Berlin Cuban Missile Crisis 1962

From 1910 until 1945, Korea was occupied by Japan. At the end of World War II, the Soviets controlled the northern part of the country while the United States controlled the southern half below the 38th parallel. Free elections were supposed to be held throughout the country, but this did not happen. In 1948, the northern half established a communist government.

Meanwhile, in China, revolutionaries overthrew the existing government and replaced it with a communist one in 1949. North Korea now had two communist allies along its borders. The government looked to take over South Korea and establish a communist government over the entire peninsula. In June of 1950, North Korea invaded the south.


During that summer, the South Korean government cracked down suspected communists using its troops to kill over 100,000 people accused of attempting to overthrow the government.

Communists Invade

Cold War Crises

Communists Invade

- North Korean troops pushed South Korean troops to a small corner of the country
- Soviets support North Korea with military hardware
- U.S. and U.N. support South Korea with troops
- Containment - goal was to push communists above the 38th parallel



May 1950 September 1950

Communists Invade

Korean War (1950-53) Berlin Cuban Missile Crisis 1962

The invasion was very successful at first. North Korean troops pushed South Korean troops, which were being supported by the United States and the United Nations, all the way back to a small corner of the peninsula. North Korea was receiving military equipment from the Soviet Union during the war. The battle lines of the Korean War were the same as those of the Cold War - the Americans supported the South in its fight against communism while the Soviets supported the communist invaders.

In pursuit of its policy of containment, the U.S. responded by providing much greater numbers of military forces. Its goal was to reestablish the 38th parallel and contain communism in North Korea without letting it spread to the South.

MacArthur Attacks

Cold War Crises

MacArthur Attacks

- General Douglas MacArthur commanded the U.N. troops
- Invasion pushed North Korean troops well past the 38th parallel going against the U.N. stated goal
- China joins war in support of North Korea
- Combined Chinese North Korean force pushed the U.N. troops back south of the 38th Parallel

MacArthur Attacks

Korean War (1950-53) Berlin Cuban Missile Crisis 1962

After leading the forces that occupied Japan following the war, General Douglas MacArthur commanded the U.N. troops fighting in support of South Korea. He led an invasion which pushed the North Korean troops well past the 38th parallel and almost all the way out of the country. China, fearing that the communists would be eliminated and replaced by an adversarial government along its borders, launched a massive invasion in support of North Korea.

The combined Chinese and North Korean forces pushed the U.N. troops back south of the 38th Parallel.

Stalemate

The image shows a presentation window titled "Cold War Crises" with a sub-slide titled "Stalemate". The sub-slide contains the following text:

1953
Cease-fire signed dividing Korea into two countries near the 38th parallel

China now a military power

Over 1 million killed

Korea still divided today

At the bottom of the presentation window is a timeline with three segments: "Korean War (1950-53)" in green, "Berlin" in red, and "Cuban Missile Crisis 1962" in blue. A white box labeled "Stalemate" is positioned above the "Berlin" segment.

MacArthur strongly advocated using nuclear weapons against China to win the war and President Truman relieved him of command.

By 1952, U.N. forces had regained territory to the 38th parallel, and the two sides agreed to a cease-fire dividing Korea into two countries - communist North Korea and non-communist South Korea. In the aftermath of the war, the U.S. now had two communist rivals, after China had proven itself as a military power.

Korea is still divided by a thin strip of land known as the DMZ or the de-militarized zone. Both countries still maintain large forces on opposite sides of the DMZ. Today, North Korea is a poor, isolated communist regime which places severe restrictions on its citizens while South Korea has become a democracy with a large and growing economy. North Korea is believed to have nuclear weapons which makes it one of the most dangerous adversaries of the U.S. As a consequence, the U.S. still maintains large numbers of troops in South Korea.

Berlin

Berlin Blockade

Cold War Crises

Berlin Blockade

- Berlin divided amongst the Allied powers after WWII
 - West Berlin controlled by the U.S., Great Britain, and France
 - East Berlin controlled by the Soviet Union
- Soviets blockaded roads and railways
- U.S. and Britain airlifted supplies
- Spring 1949 Soviets ended the blockade
- Germany into East and West Germany

Berlin Blockade

Korean War (1950-53) Berlin Cuban Missile Crisis 1962

From June of 1948 to May of 1949, Berlin was the site of another Cold War crisis involving the superpowers.

After World War II, Berlin, along with the rest of Germany, had been divided amongst the Allied powers. West Berlin was controlled by the U.S., Great Britain, and France while East Berlin was controlled by the Soviet Union. Since Berlin was entirely surrounded by East Germany, this left the sections of Berlin controlled by the Western powers in isolation.

Stalin tried to blockade Berlin in an effort to force the West Berliners buy all of their supplies from the Soviets, thereby giving Russia economic control over the city. The Soviets blockaded all roads and railways leading to West Berlin cutting it off from the outside world.

The U.S. and Britain responded by airlifting supplies to the besieged city. By the spring of 1949, the Soviets ended the blockade when it became clear that the blockade was not working and Stalin was not willing to start a war to enforce it. Afterwards, Germany was formally separated into East and West Germany and would remain that way for the next forty years until the end of the Cold War.

Change of Leaders

The image shows a presentation slide titled "Cold War Crises" with a sub-section "Change of Leaders". The slide contains the following text:

Josef Stalin died in 1953

Nikita Khrushchev comes to power

- Sought to "de-Stalinize" the Soviet Union
- Condemned Stalin's atrocities

Below the text is a timeline with three segments: "Korean War (1950-53)", "Berlin", and "Cuban Missile Crisis 1962". The "Change of Leaders" title is positioned above the "Berlin" segment.

In 1953, Josef Stalin died after ruling the Soviet Union for nearly thirty years. Six months later, he was replaced by Nikita Khrushchev [ni-KEE-tah croosh-cheff]. Khrushchev sought to "de-Stalinize" the Soviet Union. He openly condemned the atrocities that Stalin had committed and had numerous monuments to Stalin destroyed. However, Khrushchev was merely a reformer, not a revolutionary. He still believed in communism and looked to increase the power and influence of the nation over the United States and its allies.

Berlin Wall



Twelve years after the Berlin Blockade, the problem of a divided city remained. West Germany, and West Berlin had prospered, while East Germany and East Berlin had lagged. Many East Germans, especially those who were educated, escaped to the West through West Berlin.

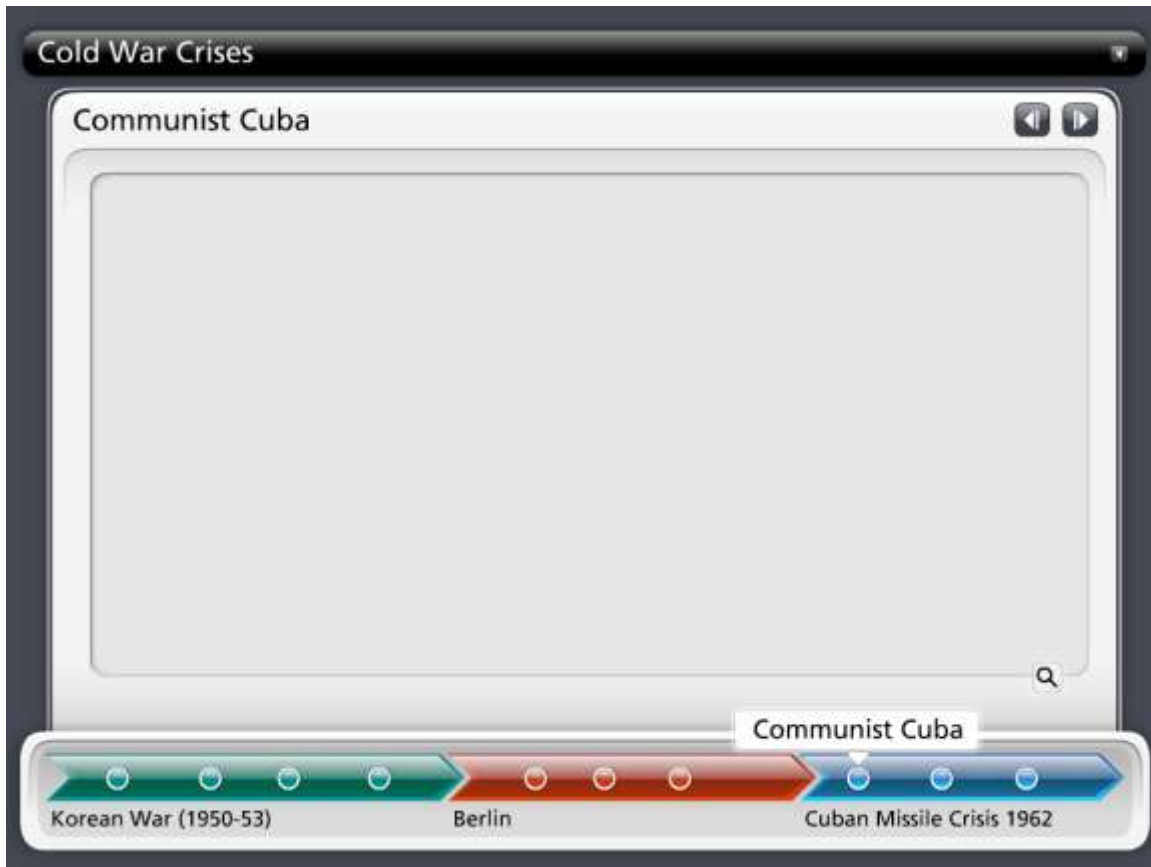
In 1961, East Germany constructed a concrete and barbed wire wall around West Berlin claiming that it protected East Germany from those populations looking to overturn the communist government. In reality, the wall served to stop people escaping to West Berlin in search of greater freedoms and a better life.

There was little that the Allied powers could do to stop the wall from being built. Although they were prepared to defend West Berlin in the event of an attack, they weren't willing to go to war to stop the construction of the wall. The wall became one of the most potent symbols of the Cold War and was a site of numerous famous speeches until it was torn down in 1989 – the event which foreshadowed the end of the Soviet Union.

[Image courtesy Edward Valachovic]

Cuban Missile Crisis 1962

Communist Cuba



While the Soviet Union and its satellite states shared borders with its perceived enemies, the United States remained far removed from its communist adversaries. That all changed in 1959 when Cuba, just ninety miles off the coast of Florida, had a communist revolution under the leadership of Fidel Castro.

The communists took control of property owned by American companies after the revolution, leading to unsuccessful attempts by the U.S. to remove them from power. In lieu of invading the island nation, the U.S. placed economic sanctions on Cuba, refusing to trade with them and leaving the country isolated.

This wouldn't last for long. Having fallen behind on developing long range missiles that could hit the U.S., the Soviets were looking for strategic gains in the nuclear arms race against the Americans. Meanwhile, the Cubans were looking for economic partners who could support their fledgling revolution. The fact that these countries were both communist and had the U.S. as an adversary made them a natural match for one another.

[Image of Fidel Castro courtesy Agência Brasil.]

Missile Crisis



In order to make up for the fact that the Soviet Union lacked the technology to hit the U.S. with long range nuclear weapons, Khrushchev decided to secretly build missile sites in Cuba where the Soviets would install nuclear missiles.

U.S. spy planes spotted the missile sites in October of 1962. President John Kennedy declared that the presence of missiles in Cuba was unacceptable. He ordered a blockade of Cuba to prevent any new missiles from being delivered and demanded that the missiles in Cuba be removed. Khrushchev renounced the blockade. Meanwhile, Kennedy prepared a large force to invade Cuba. He also announced that any attack on the U.S. or any other country in Western Hemisphere would be met with a direct attack on Cuba or the Soviet Union. The two powers appeared to be headed for nuclear war.

Resolution

The image shows a presentation slide titled "Cold War Crises" with a sub-section titled "Resolution". The slide contains a bulleted list of three points and a timeline at the bottom. The timeline consists of three colored arrows pointing right: a green arrow labeled "Korean War (1950-53)", a red arrow labeled "Berlin", and a blue arrow labeled "Cuban Missile Crisis 1962". A white box labeled "Resolution" is positioned above the blue arrow.

Cold War Crises

Resolution

- Soviets decide not to resist the U.S. blockade and remove missiles
- U.S. promises not to invade Cuba and removes nuclear missile sites in Turkey
- Closest both sides came to nuclear war

Korean War (1950-53) Berlin Cuban Missile Crisis 1962

Resolution

For two weeks, the world watched and waited while the threat of nuclear destruction loomed. Would either country break the impasse, or was nuclear war inevitable?

The Soviets were the first to give in when they decided not to resist the U.S. blockade. They offered to remove the missiles from Cuba, if the U.S. promised never to invade Cuba in the future. They also wanted the U.S. to remove some of its nuclear missile sites in Turkey.

The U.S. agreed to the demands and quietly removed their missiles from Turkey within six months bringing the tensions to a peaceful conclusion.

The Cuban Missile Crisis represented the highest tensions between the two superpowers during the Cold War, and the closest the two sides came to actual conflict. Within a year, both of the leaders would be replaced. Sadly, President Kennedy was shot and killed the next year. The Soviets viewed the crisis as an embarrassment and Khrushchev was replaced as the head of the Soviet Union a few months later. The war would outlive them both and continue for another 25 years.