



Tear Down This Wall

“General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”

—President Ronald Reagan, speech at the Berlin Wall, 1987

◀ The Berlin Wall divided Communist East Berlin from democratic West Berlin.

End of the Cold War

Objectives

- Learn about Cold War struggles in Afghanistan and Central America.
- Discover how the Soviet Union responded to President Reagan’s arms buildup.
- Analyze why the Soviet Union dissolved and the Cold War ended.

Reading Skill

Compare and Contrast Effects As different Presidents led America and other nations through the years, their actions led to a range of effects. To compare and contrast those effects, you may have to decide which policies or actions caused which effects. Are later effects the same as earlier ones? Are they different?

Key Terms and People

Mikhail Gorbachev
glasnost

Why It Matters President Nixon had pursued a policy of détente, easing tensions with the Soviet Union and other Communist nations. But the détente soon ended and tensions once again grew. So, as the 1980s began, few imagined that the Soviet Union was about to collapse and the Cold War was about to end.

Section Focus Question: How did the Cold War end?

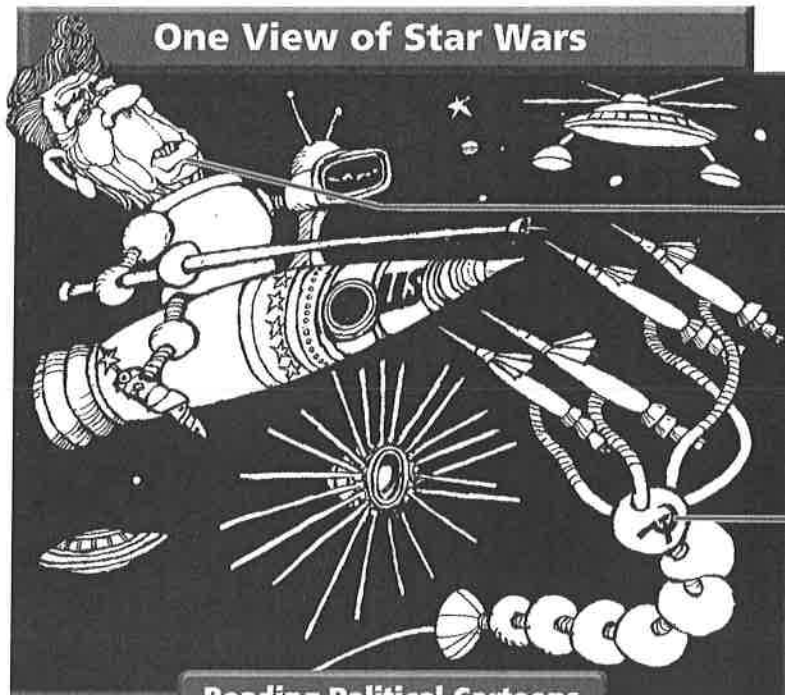
The End of Détente

At first, President Carter continued the policy of détente. Then, in 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, its mountainous southern neighbor. President Carter joined world opinion in condemning the invasion. In protest, he withdrew from the Senate a pending arms agreement with the Soviet Union. He also pulled the United States from the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow and imposed restrictions on trade with the Soviet Union. The invasion of Afghanistan ended the era of détente.

Reagan’s Tough Stand Carter’s successor, Ronald Reagan, took an even harder line. He denounced the Soviet Union as an “evil empire.” He argued that only a well-armed United States could contain the Soviet empire and halt the spread of communism.

Reagan sent millions of dollars in arms to the government of Afghanistan and the Islamic rebels who were fighting the Soviet Union. The rebels were able to inflict heavy casualties on the Soviets.

One of Reagan’s first priorities was to strengthen the military posture of the United States. Accordingly, spending on defense projects jumped by more than 50 percent. One of the key projects was the development of a plane that would be almost invisible to enemy radar. The plane was known as the B-2 stealth bomber.



Ronald Reagan is shown as a knight.



The hammer and sickle symbolize the Soviet Union.



Reading Political Cartoons

Skills Activity

Critics of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) gave it the nickname Star Wars. This cartoon presents one view of President Reagan's proposed defense system.

- Apply Information** What features of SDI led to its nickname?
- Detect Points of View** Do you think this cartoonist favored or opposed SDI? Give reasons for your opinion.

Vocabulary Builder

critic (KRIHT ihk) *n.* someone who makes judgments, especially negative judgments

Reagan's boldest arms proposal was a laser-guided defense system to shoot down enemy missiles from space. The system, called the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), would cost billions. As research began, critics attacked SDI as an expensive fantasy. They called it Star Wars, after the popular science-fiction movie.

Fighting Leftists in Central America Reagan's determination to halt the spread of communism led to new U.S. involvements in Central America. In Nicaragua, the United States had long supported dictator Anastasio Somoza because of his strong opposition to communism. In 1979, leftist rebels called Sandinistas overthrew Somoza. They set up a government with close ties to Cuba and the Soviet Union.

Reagan supported the Contras, a guerrilla army made up of anti-Communist opponents of the Sandinistas. Some Americans opposed aid to the Contras, charging them with acts of brutality. However, the President secretly ordered the CIA to train and supply the Contras. Involvement in Central America ignited a heated debate in the United States. When Congress learned of the secret aid, angry lawmakers banned all money and military assistance to the Contras.

Frustration with the ban led to a scandal. In 1985, Iranian-backed militants in Lebanon took seven Americans hostage. Administration officials hatched a complicated plot to free the hostages and, at the same time, secretly send aid to the Contras. The officials agreed to sell arms to Iran. In exchange, Iran pressured the militants into releasing some hostages. Meanwhile, U.S. officials used money from the arms sale to buy weapons for the Contras in Nicaragua.

Americans were stunned when word of this “Iran-Contra deal” leaked out. Eventually, seven government officials were convicted of lying to Congress and destroying evidence. President Reagan said he had no knowledge of the deal. Still, the Iran-Contra affair threw a shadow over Reagan’s last years as President.

Checkpoint What was the Iran-Contra scandal?

The Soviet Union in Decline

In the 1980s, the Soviet Union was in decline. Its grip on Eastern Europe grew weaker as new movements for democracy sprang up. Within the Soviet Union, opposition to Communist rule was growing.

Growing Problems The Afghan war had been a major burden on the Soviet economy. It had also sapped the morale of the Soviet people. In 1989, after 10 years, the Soviet Union accepted defeat and withdrew its troops.

The Soviet Union responded to Reagan’s military buildup with a buildup of its own. But heavy military spending weakened the Soviet economy and led to severe shortages at home. When Russians went to stores, they waited in long lines and found shelves nearly empty.

A Bold New Leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who became leader of the Soviet Union in 1985, threw his energies into reforming the system. He began to restructure the economy to allow more freedom. He adopted a new policy called **glasnost**, or speaking openly about Soviet problems. However, Gorbachev’s reforms only emboldened the Soviet people to demand more changes.

Gorbachev also tried to improve relations with the West. He realized that a continued arms race could overwhelm the Soviet economy. In 1987, he met with Reagan. The two leaders agreed on a new arms control treaty. Both sides promised to destroy short-range and intermediate-range nuclear missiles. For the first time, the two superpowers agreed to give up entire classes of weapons.



Compare and Contrast Effects

What was the effect of the Iran-Contra affair on the Reagan presidency? Compare and contrast this with the effect of Watergate on President Nixon’s presidency.

Vocabulary Builder

intermediate (ihn ter MEE dee iht)
adj. happening in between; part way from one extreme to another

Soviet Economic Problems

Consumers in the Soviet Union often found store shelves empty as the economy went through upheaval in the 1980s and 1990s.

Critical Thinking: Identify

Costs How were such shortages related to pressures caused by U.S. policies?



Eastern Europe Breaks Free The Soviet Union had long controlled most of the Communist governments of Eastern Europe and kept them in power. In 1956, Soviet troops marched into Hungary and smashed a revolt against its Communist leaders. In 1968, Soviet tanks ended democratic reforms in Czechoslovakia.

Under Gorbachev, the Soviet Union lost interest in supporting unpopular leaders in Eastern Europe. One by one, Communist governments there gave in to demands for democratic change. In Poland, the first free elections since World War II produced a non-Communist government in 1989. Communist regimes in Hungary, Romania, and Czechoslovakia soon crumbled. Communism also fell in Yugoslavia, which the Soviet Union had not dominated.

In November 1989, students and workers in East Germany tore down the Berlin Wall, a bitter symbol of Communist oppression. Berliners danced, exchanged hugs, and battered the Berlin Wall with sledgehammers, pickaxes, and bare hands. Within a year, East and West Germany had reunited as a single nation.

The fall of Communist governments unleashed other forces in Eastern Europe. After 1989, national borders shifted. While Germany reunited, Czechoslovakia split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Yugoslavia became several loosely joined republics.

 **Checkpoint** How did Gorbachev change Soviet policy?

The Cold War Ends

Far-reaching changes affected the Soviet Union, too. It had consisted of 15 republics dominated by a powerful central government in Moscow. As change overtook Eastern Europe, independence movements arose in several Soviet republics.

The Soviet Union Collapses In late 1991, the Soviet Union dissolved. Each republic became an independent state. In the biggest state, Russia, a new president, Boris Yeltsin, vowed to continue the drive for democracy and a strong economy.

"Gorbachev knew how to bring us freedom, but he did not know how to make sausage," complained one Russian. Gorbachev's reforms had failed to solve the problems of shortages and shoddy goods. The new Russia also suffered from unemployment and high prices. Crime and corruption thrived. Many Russians began to question whether democracy could make their lives better.

Unrest in Eastern Europe In Yugoslavia, the fall of communism led to a civil war. Yugoslavia was made up of several republics, including Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 1991, Croatia and Bosnia declared independence. However, Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia wanted to remain part of Yugoslavia. With help from Serbia, they fought to prevent the new governments from splitting away. The civil war lasted for four years. More than 250,000 people died, including many children and teenagers.

END OF THE COLD WAR

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The Cold War had kept international tensions high since the mid-1940s. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Cold War came to an end.

Critical Thinking: Identify Benefits

What benefits might the Soviet people hope for as a result of the collapse of Communist rule?



▲ A summit conference between Gorbachev and Reagan in 1988.



▲ Demonstrators used sledgehammers to tear down the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Russian schoolchildren sit on a toppled statue of Stalin. ►



Soviet Reformer

Soviet ruler Mikhail Gorbachev sought to reform the Soviet system and ease the arms race to relieve pressure on the Soviet economy.

Too Little, Too Late

Gorbachev's reforms could not save the Communist system in the Soviet Union. In December 1991, the 15 Soviet republics became independent. Russia began experiments with democratic government and a free-market economy.

Eastern Europe Abandons Communism

A surge of pro-democracy movements helped bring down communism in Eastern Europe from 1989 onward.

In November 1995, the United States hosted peace talks in Dayton, Ohio. To help enforce the peace, President Clinton sent about 20,000 American troops to Bosnia. Along with Russian and NATO peacekeepers, the troops helped to restore order.

The Dayton Accord did not end trouble in the former Yugoslavia. Ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, a province within Serbia, also sought greater independence. Serbs launched a series of attacks against rebels in Kosovo. Hundreds of thousands of Albanians were killed or forced to flee. In 1999, American and NATO forces bombed Serbia until Serbian troops left Kosovo. After years of negotiations and political infighting, Kosovo declared its independence in 2008.

Cold War Balance Sheet The break-up of the Soviet Union put an end to the 45 years of the Cold War. Americans hailed the emergence of democratic governments in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. U.S. leaders expressed hope that Russia would become a democratic and stable nation.

The United States paid a heavy price during the Cold War. More than 100,000 Americans died fighting “hot” wars in Korea and Vietnam. Taxpayers spent more than \$6 trillion on defense.

The Cold War often divided the nation, especially during the Vietnam War. Still, from the perspective of the 1990s, Americans hailed the end of the Cold War as an event worthy of celebration.

 **Checkpoint** Why did the Cold War come to an end when it did?

 **Looking Back and Ahead** The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe brought the Cold War to an end. In the next section, you will read how U.S. policy responded to these changes.

Section 2 | Check Your Progress

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Comprehension and Critical Thinking

- (a) List** What did President Reagan do to strengthen the American military?
(b) Analyze Cause and Effect How did his actions contribute to the collapse of the Soviet Union?
- (a) Describe** What changes did Mikhail Gorbachev make as leader of the Soviet Union?
(b) Analyze Cause and Effect How did his actions help bring about the end of the Soviet Union?

Reading Skill

- 3. Compare and Contrast Effects** Compare and contrast the effects that Gorbachev hoped to achieve when he took power in the Soviet Union with the actual effects of his leadership.

Key Terms

Read the sentence below. If the sentence is true, write YES. If the sentence is not true, write NO and explain why.

- 4.** Under the policy of glasnost, critics of the Soviet government were severely punished.

Writing

- 5.** Create a plot outline for an eyewitness narrative of the falling of the Berlin Wall. The plot outline should include the five elements that were listed in the Writing activity in the Section 1 Check Your Progress. Then, write the beginning paragraph of a narrative in which an eyewitness tells about this event.