

Chronology, events and people

The **Cold War** is the name given to the relationship that developed between the **capitalist USA** and the **communist Soviet Union**

(**USSR**) after World War Two. Both sides distrusted each other; the USSR had a vast army in the field and ready for action, while the Americans had the most powerful weapon in the world –the atom bomb and the Soviets did not know how many the USA had.

The Cold War and its **arms race** dominated international affairs for decades and many major crises occurred, such as the **Berlin Wall**, the **Cuban Missile Crisis** and **hot wars** like Korea and Vietnam. For many, the growth in **nuclear weapons** of mass destruction was the most worrying issue. The competition between east (USSR) and west (USA) extended into **space**, with both countries launching rockets to orbit the earth and reach the moon, with the first man walking on the moon on 21 July 1969.

America and the Soviet Union never fought each other –the consequences would have been too appalling, but they did fight for their beliefs. Many people tried to **defect** from the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc into western Europe and to America. Gradually a **counter-culture** emerged, especially among young people, who followed the new rock and roll music and campaigned against nuclear weapons.

Key words

**Arms race** –the competition between America and the USSR for the development and accumulation of nuclear weapons.

**Assassination** –the murder of an important person.

**Berlin Wall** –a barrier that divided the German city of Berlin, with the **communist** east on one side and **capitalist** west on the other, to stop people **defecting** from the east.

**Capitalism** –an economic system where property is owned by individuals, not the government, sometimes called ‘the free world’.

**Cold War** –a state of conflict between politically opposed countries, such as the USA and the USSR that does not involve direct military action.

**Communist** –a belief that all property should be owned by ‘the community’ ie everyone.

**Counter culture** –a protest movement that began among young Americans in the 1960s; they voiced their opposition to nuclear weapons through **demonstrations** and music.

**Cuba** –an island in the Caribbean 100 miles off the USA coast. **Communist** revolutionary, Fidel Castro seized power there in 1959; he was allied with the **USSR**.

**Defection** –people illegally emigrating from the Soviet Union or **Eastern Bloc** to the west.

**Demonstration** –a large gathering of people to protest against a government.

**Eastern Bloc** –a group of communist states of eastern Europe, allied with the USSR.

**Hot war** –a war where weapons are used.

**Nuclear weapon** –any weapon that uses a nuclear reaction to explode; they are far more powerful than conventional weapons and cause lethal long-term radiation.

**Soviet Union (USSR)** –a huge **communist** country often called Russia.

**Space race** –the competition between America and the USSR in space exploration.

**Warsaw Pact** –a defence treaty between the USSR and eastern European countries such as Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia.

Key dates

4<sup>th</sup> February 1945 – The Yalta Conference

17<sup>th</sup> July 1945 – Potsdam Conference

5<sup>th</sup> March 1946 – The Iron Curtain Speech

12<sup>th</sup> March 1947 – The Truman Doctrine

24<sup>th</sup> June – The Berlin Blockade begins

4<sup>th</sup> April 1949 – NATO established

25<sup>th</sup> June 1950 – The Korean War begins

14<sup>th</sup> May 1955 – The Warsaw Pact created

2<sup>nd</sup> March 1965 – President Johnson launches Operation Rolling Thunder

