

Chronology  
Office of the Historian  
U. S. Department of State  
Washington, DC

## **United States Relations with Russia: The Cold War**

### **1945-1949**

#### **1945-1946: Creation of Eastern European People's Republics**

Between November 1945 and December 1946, a number of the coalition governments established in the Eastern European countries occupied by Soviet troops during the war transformed into Communist "People's Republics" with strong ties to the Soviet Union. These included Yugoslavia (November 1945); Albania (January 1946); and Bulgaria (December 1946). The United States and Britain considered this an abrogation of agreements made at the Yalta Conference.

#### **February 1946: George Kennan's Long Telegram and the Policy of Containment**

On February 22, 1946, George F. Kennan, the Charge d'Affaires at the Moscow Embassy, sent a long telegram to the Department of State detailing his concerns about Soviet expansionism. Kennan argued that the United States would never be able to cooperate successfully with the Soviets, because they saw the West as an enemy and would engage in a protracted battle to limit Western power and increase Soviet domination. Kennan argued that the United States should lead the West in "containing" the Soviets by exerting counterforce at various geographical and political points of conflict. Kennan published a public version of this argument in the July 1947 issue of the journal *Foreign Affairs*. Kennan's articulations of the policy of containment had a major influence on American foreign policy toward the Soviet Union.

#### **March 1946: Churchill's Iron Curtain Speech**

During a speech at Fulton, Missouri, on March 5, 1946, visiting British Prime Minister Winston Churchill proclaimed that Europe was divided by an "Iron Curtain" as the nations of Eastern Europe fell increasingly under Soviet control. Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia all fell under Communist control by early 1948.

#### **Spring 1946: Soviet Troops in Iran**

Responding to Iranian requests to the United Nations, on March 5, 1946, the United States sent a note to Moscow protesting the retention of Soviet troops in Iran, where Stalin wanted to establish Soviet influence. On April 3, the Soviet Union announced that its troops would leave by May 6.

#### **March 1947: Truman Doctrine**

The Soviets aimed also to establish influence over Turkey and Greece in an effort to seek access to the Mediterranean. President Truman delivered a speech before Congress on

March 12, 1947, asking for \$400 million to provide assistance for Greece and Turkey in the hopes of bolstering pro-Western governments there. In this speech, he enunciated the Truman Doctrine that would serve to justify the U.S. Cold War policy of containment. This doctrine described the U.S. policy of supporting free peoples who resisted subjugation from armed minorities or outside pressures.

### **June 1947: U.S. Efforts to Control Atomic Energy**

In June 1947, the United States submitted proposals, known as the Baruch Plan, for the creation of an International Atomic Energy Development Authority to control all phases of the development and use of atomic energy. The United States offered to destroy its atomic weapons after international control and inspection became effective. The Soviet Union rejected the proposal.

### **June 5, 1947: Marshall's Offer of Economic Assistance**

In a speech given at Harvard University on June 5, 1947, Secretary of State George C. Marshall offered U.S. assistance for the postwar economic rehabilitation of all European nations, including those that had adopted Communist governments. The Soviet Union denounced the Marshall Plan, saying it would infringe upon European sovereignty. Western European nations accepted Marshall's offer, while the Eastern European states followed Moscow's lead.

### **1948-1949: Berlin Airlift**

In the summer of 1948, the Soviet Union cut off access to the Western sectors of Berlin, situated in the Soviet occupation zone of Germany. The Western powers organized a massive airlift to supply West Berlin and organized a counter-blockade of the Soviet zone. On May 12, 1949, the Soviets lifted their blockade.

### **April 1949: North Atlantic Treaty Organization**

On April 14, 1949, twelve Western nations signed the North Atlantic Treaty providing for mutual support in the event of a military attack on any of the parties to the treaty and established the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The original members of NATO were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

### **September-October 1949: Creation of the two Germanys**

Recognizing that the Soviets would not honor agreements to reunite the German zones of occupation, the Western powers moved in the fall of 1949 to establish the Federal Republic of Germany out of the Western zones of occupation. The Soviets countered by supporting the creation of the German Democratic Republic in their zone. Berlin remained divided.

### **September 1949: Soviet Atomic Bomb**

On September 22, 1949, President Truman announced that the Soviet Union had detonated its first atomic bomb.

## 1950-1959

### February 1950: Sino-Soviet Treaty

Despite U.S. efforts, mainland China became a Communist People's Republic. The Soviets and the Chinese signed a Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship on February 14, 1950.

### April 1950: NSC-68

In April 1950, Truman signed National Security Council Paper 68 (NSC-68) outlining U.S. justifications for a rapid and massive U.S. military build-up. NSC-68 cited Soviet consolidation of power in Eastern Europe, Soviet expansionist tendencies, and the need for the West to contain the Soviet Union as the justifications for the United States to pursue a significant buildup of its conventional military and nuclear resources.

### 1950-1953: Korean War

Following World War II, the United States administered the southern occupation zone in Korea, while the Soviets administered the northern zone. Plans to unify the two zones never materialized. On June 25, 1950, North Korean forces crossed the 38th parallel into South Korea. U.S.-led United Nations forces responded and battled the North Korean and Communist Chinese armies. The Soviet Union supplied North Korea and China. On July 27, 1953, the warring parties concluded an armistice that restored the 38th parallel but failed to unite North and South Korea.

### November 1952: U.S. Hydrogen Bomb

On November 1, 1952, the United States announced it had successfully detonated a hydrogen bomb.

### March 1953: Stalin's Death

The Soviet Union's hard-line leader, Joseph Stalin, died on March 5, 1953, and the Soviet Union entered a period of collective leadership under which a handful of leaders from within the Presidium of the Communist Party shared leadership responsibilities. First Secretary of the Communist Party, Nikita Khrushchev, ultimately consolidated power and became the de facto leader of the Soviet Union.

### August 1953: Soviet Hydrogen Bomb

On August 8, 1953, the Soviet Union announced it had hydrogen bomb capabilities.

**Note: The Official Dep't. Of State Chronology failed to include:**

### March 1, 1954: U.S. Castle Bravo test

United States detonates a 15 megaton nuclear bomb at Bikini Atoll in Marshall Islands

### August 1954: Atomic Energy Act

President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Atomic Energy Act in August 1954 to authorize the international exchange of information on the peaceful uses of atomic energy and endorsed the development of commercial nuclear power.

**May 1955: Creation of the Warsaw Pact**

In response to NATO actions in the West, including the rearming of West Germany and the expansion of the treaty organization, on May 1, 1955, the Soviet Union concluded a military defensive alliance known as the Warsaw Pact with Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania.

**May 1955: Austrian State Treaty**

The United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and France signed the Austrian State Treaty on May 15, 1955. This officially ended the four-power occupation of Austria and enabled the Austrians, who had pledged to remain neutral, to receive diplomatic recognition as an independent nation.

**July 1955: Big Four Geneva Summit**

Eisenhower met with Soviet Premier Nicolai Bulganin, British Prime Minister Anthony Eden, and French Premier Edgar Faure at a summit in Geneva in July 1955. Eisenhower offered an "Open Skies" proposal, calling for a U.S.-Soviet exchange of military blueprints and mutual aerial inspection of one another's military installations. The participants also discussed disarmament, German reunification through free elections, European security, and the need for East-West cultural and scientific exchange.

**February 1956: Twentieth Congress of Soviet Communist Party**

At the Twentieth Party Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in February 1956, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev publicly denounced aspects of Stalin's regime, including Stalin's harsh political purges and his "cult of personality." Khrushchev also reversed Stalinist policy by urging "the peaceful coexistence between states with differing political and social systems." This marked the beginning of a brief loosening of the most stringent forms of censorship in the Soviet Union.

**June 1956: Polish Uprising**

Riots against the Communist regime in Poland broke out at Poznan in June 1956, after workers demonstrated for better social and economic conditions. The revolt led the Polish Communist leadership to allow some reforms.

**Autumn 1956: Suez Crisis**

After the United States reneged on a deal to finance the building of the Aswan Dam, Egypt seized and nationalized the Suez Canal, through which the West received its oil supplies. This led to Israeli, British, and French military action against an Egyptian military supplied by the Soviets in the fall of 1956. While Western Europe focused on the Middle East, the Soviets moved to squash anti-communist rebellions in Poland and Hungary. Eisenhower, fearing that the Soviets would provide large-scale assistance to Egypt, convinced Britain, France, and Israel to retreat.

**October-November 1956: Hungarian Uprising**

Anti-Soviet popular uprisings began in Budapest and spread throughout Hungary in the autumn of 1956. On November 2, Hungarian Premier Imre Nagy, who had already

promised the Hungarians free elections, denounced the Warsaw Pact and asked for United Nations support. On November 4, Soviet forces moved into Hungary and suppressed the revolt. The United States sponsored UN resolutions condemning the Soviet invasion and called for the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops. The U.S. Government also took measures to assist the many refugees who fled Hungary following the invasion.

### **1957-1958: Sputnik and the Space Race**

On October 5, 1957, the Soviets beat the United States into space by successfully launching the first man-made earth satellite, Sputnik I, into orbit. A month later, the Soviets sent up another satellite, this time carrying a dog. The United States did not launch its first satellite, Explorer I, until January 31, 1958. U.S. politicians warned of the dangers of Soviet superiority in technology and science and speculated that the Soviets might possess superior missile stockpiles.

### **1958: Suspension of Nuclear Tests**

Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko announced the suspension of Soviet nuclear weapons tests on March 31, 1958. On October 25, the United States and Great Britain agreed to suspend nuclear weapons testing for one year. Three-power talks on a more permanent ban of nuclear testing began at Geneva on October 31.

### **November 1958: Khrushchev's Berlin Demands**

Motivated by fears that the West planned to arm West Germany with nuclear weapons, in November 1958, Khrushchev demanded the termination of the four-power occupation of Berlin. The Soviets also threatened to conclude a separate peace treaty with East Germany, giving Soviets control over access to Berlin, unless negotiations began within 6 months.

### **September 1959: Khrushchev Visits the United States**

Following brief meetings with Eisenhower upon his arrival in Washington on September 15, 1959, Khrushchev embarked on a 10-day trip to New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, farm communities in Iowa, and Pittsburgh, arranged to acquaint him with the American way of life. Eisenhower and Khrushchev then engaged in substantive talks for 2 days at Camp David. Khrushchev also visited Eisenhower's farm at Gettysburg. Just before he left, Khrushchev addressed the American people on national television. This was first visit to the United States of a Soviet leader since the establishment of U.S.-Soviet relations in 1933.

### **September 1959: Khrushchev-Eisenhower Meeting at Camp David**

Khrushchev met with President Eisenhower at Camp David, on September 26-27, 1959. The two leaders agreed to expand exchanges and to remove the Soviet deadline for a Berlin settlement, but no progress was made on disarmament or the reunification of Germany. They agreed to meet again at a four-power summit in Paris in May 1960.

### **December 1959: Antarctic Treaty**

On December 1, the United States, the Soviet Union, and ten other countries signed a treaty to internationalize and demilitarize the Antarctic continent.

### **1960-1969**

#### **May 1960: The U-2 Incident**

On May 1, 1960, the Soviets shot down an American U-2 reconnaissance jet flying over Soviet territory. Since June 1956, Eisenhower had approved secret overflights of Soviet territory, and gained valuable proof that the Soviets had not gained missile superiority over the Americans. Not knowing that the Soviets had captured the pilot and gotten a confession confirming the spy mission, Eisenhower claimed the aircraft was merely a weather plane. Khrushchev presented the pilot as proof that the American President had lied.

#### **May 1960: Paris Summit**

Eisenhower, Khrushchev, British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan, and French President Charles de Gaulle met from May 16-17, 1960, in Paris. However, the meetings collapsed when Khrushchev walked out after Eisenhower refused to apologize for the U-2 incident.

#### **May 1960: United States Unveils "Great Seal Bug" at the United Nations**

On May 26, 1960, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. unveiled the Great Seal Bug before the UN Security Council to counter Soviet denunciations of American U-2 espionage. The Soviets had presented a replica of the Great Seal of the United States as a gift to Ambassador Averell Harriman in 1946. The gift hung in the U.S. Embassy for many years, until in 1952, during George F. Kennan's ambassadorship, U.S. security personnel discovered the listening device embedded inside the Great Seal. Lodge's unveiling of this Great Seal before the Security Council in 1960 provided proof that the Soviets also spied on the Americans and undercut a Soviet resolution before the Security Council denouncing the United States for its U-2 espionage missions.

**Note: The Official Dep't. Of State Chronology failed to include:**

**Nov 1960: JFK elected President**

**April 1961: Bay of Pigs Disaster**

#### **June 1961: Vienna Meeting**

President John F. Kennedy and Khrushchev met in Vienna in June 1961, primarily to discuss the status of Berlin. Other topics of discussion included the conflict in Laos and disarmament. The leaders were unable to resolve the most vexing questions pertaining to Berlin but agreed that further discussions on Laos should be continued at the Foreign Minister level.

### **Summer 1961: Berlin Crisis**

In July 1961, the Soviets threatened to take decisive action on Berlin. Kennedy warned that the United States would not tolerate any changes in Berlin's status. He activated 150,000 reservists and advised the American people of the danger of an attack, possibly even a nuclear attack. Both leaders announced an increase in their defense expenditures. East Germans fled in large numbers to West Germany. On August 13, Khrushchev sealed off East Berlin from the West by erecting the Berlin Wall on Soviet-controlled territory.

**Note: The Official Dep't. Of State Chronology failed to include:**

### **October 30, 1961: Soviet Tsar Bomba**

USSR detonates a 50 megaton nuclear bomb north of Matochkin Strait

### **October 18-29, 1962: Cuban Missile Crisis**

After receiving intelligence that the Soviet Union was placing medium-range ballistic nuclear missiles in Cuba, on October 14, 1962, President Kennedy announced a naval quarantine of Cuba to block further Soviet missile deliveries and demanded the removal or dismantling of the missiles already in Cuba. On October 28, Khrushchev agreed to stop work on the Cuban missile sites and to remove the missiles that were already in place. In return, the United States pledged not to follow through on its threat to invade Cuba. **Note: The Official Dep't. Of State Chronology failed to include:** and to remove Jupiter missiles from Turkey.

### **June 1963: Establishment of the "Hotline"**

The United States and the Soviet Union signed a memorandum of understanding in Geneva in June 1963 to establish a direct communications link, or "hotline," between the two governments for use in a crisis.

### **August 1963: Limited Test Ban Treaty**

In August 1963, the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty outlawing nuclear tests in the atmosphere, in outer space, and underwater.

### **October 1964: Fall of Khrushchev**

Communist Party bureaucrats forced Khrushchev from power on October 14, 1964. Alexei Kosygin became Premier, and Leonid Brezhnev became First Secretary of the Communist Party.

### **March 1965: U.S. Troops to Vietnam**

In March 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson committed the first U.S. combat ground troops to Vietnam to aid the South Vietnamese Government in its war against Soviet-assisted North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces.

### **January 1967: Treaty on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space**

The United States and the Soviet Union signed the Treaty on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on January 27, 1967. This agreement banned weapons of mass destruction from orbiting satellites, celestial bodies, or outer space.

### **June 1967: Johnson and Kosygin Meeting**

Following Kosygin's visit to the United Nations, where he supported the Arab nations' proposals for ending the Middle East conflict in the aftermath of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Johnson met with him in Glassboro, New Jersey that same month. The leaders discussed the Middle East, disarmament, and the Vietnam War. During the conference, the Soviet Union served as intermediary in conveying North Vietnamese willingness to negotiate in exchange for a halt to the U.S. bombing.

### **July 1968: Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty**

On July 1, 1968, sixty-two nations, including the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom, signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, designed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and encourage the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

### **August 1968: Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia**

Soviet, Polish, East German, Bulgarian, and Hungarian troops invaded Czechoslovakia on August 20, 1968, and deposed the reformist government of Alexander Dubcek, who had begun a program of economic and political liberalization (the "Prague spring"). The United States co-sponsored a UN Security Council resolution condemning the invasion and calling for the prompt withdrawal of Warsaw Pact forces; it also suspended a number of U.S.-Soviet exchange agreements and delayed ratification of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Brezhnev later justified the invasion with the assertion, known as the Brezhnev Doctrine, that when internal or external forces hostile to socialism sought to restore the capitalist order in any socialist state, all other socialist states had the right to intervene.

### **November 1969: Strategic Arms Limitation Talks**

The United States and the Soviet Union held preliminary Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) in Helsinki on November 17, 1969. Formal SALT negotiations began in Vienna on April 16, 1970.

### **September-October 1969: Soviet Submarine Base in Cuba**

In the fall of 1969, the United States protested the arrival of a Soviet flotilla and the construction of a Soviet submarine base at Cayo Alcatraz in the Bay of Cienfuegos, Cuba. After several diplomatic exchanges, Soviet Ambassador Anatoliy Dobrynin reaffirmed the 1962 understanding that Soviet offensive weapons would not be stationed in Cuba.