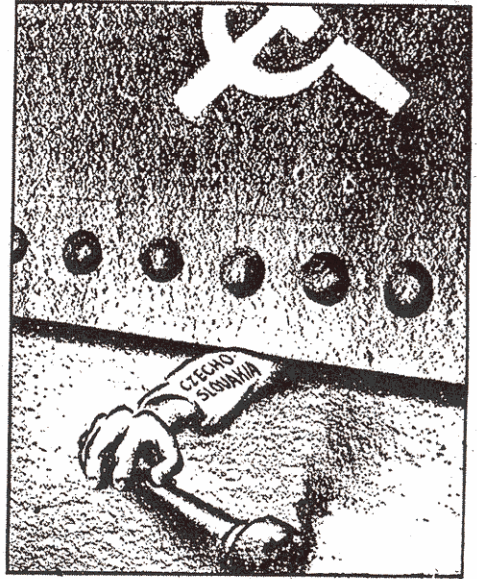


# The Cold War Balance of Power

## Section Overview

During World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union had joined forces to fight against the Germans. The Soviet army marched west; the Americans marched east. When the Allied soldiers met at the Elbe River in Germany in 1945, they embraced each other warmly because they had defeated the Nazis. Their leaders, however, regarded each other much more coolly. The United States' coolness turned to alarm when the Soviet Union installed or secured Communist governments in Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Poland, and Yugoslavia following the war.

As the "iron curtain" of communism dropped on Eastern Europe, the United States and the Soviet Union entered a nearly half-century of hostility called the Cold War. The Cold War dictated U.S. and Soviet foreign policy, as each side tried to stop the other from extending its power. It also influenced world alliances. The United States, Canada, and ten western European nations formed a defensive military alliance called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The Soviet Union and its satellite nations formed the Warsaw Pact. Other nations of the world struggled to remain independent, or nonaligned.



The iron curtain drops on Czechoslovakia, 1948

## MAIN IDEAS

**ECONOMICS** Two conflicting economic systems, capitalism and communism, competed for influence and power after World War II. The superpowers in this struggle were the United States and the Soviet Union.

**EMPIRE BUILDING** The United States and the Soviet Union used military, economic, and humanitarian aid to extend their control over other countries. Each also tried to prevent the other superpower from gaining influence.

## TERMS AND NAMES

- United Nations
- iron curtain
- demilitarization
- democratization
- Marshall Plan
- containment
- Truman Doctrine
- Cold War
- NATO
- Warsaw Pact
- nonaligned nations
- Third World
- brinkmanship
- Nikita Khrushchev
- Leonid Brezhnev

## PREPARING FOR THE REGENTS

As you read this section, consider

- what impact the Cold War conflict between the superpowers had on other nations of the world.
- why nations like Greece and Turkey were important in the struggle.

## TIME LINE

- 1945  
United Nations formed.
- 1948  
United States launches the Marshall Plan.
- 1948  
Soviets begin the Berlin blockage.
- 1949  
NATO is formed.
- 1955  
Warsaw Pact is formed.
- 1958  
Hungarian Revolt begins.
- 1959  
Soviets launch *Sputnik*.
- 1968  
Soviets invade Czechoslovakia to end revolt.

# The World in 1945: The Physical and Human Setting

The war was not yet over in February 1945. But the leaders of the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union met at the Soviet Black Sea resort of Yalta. There, they agreed to divide Germany into zones of occupation controlled by the Allied military forces.

Germany also would have to pay the Soviet Union to compensate for its loss of life and property. Stalin promised that Eastern Europeans would have free elections.

**Creation of the United Nations** In June 1945, the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union joined 47 other countries in forming the United Nations (UN).



This international peacekeeping organization, which was to be based in New York, was intended to protect the members against aggression. The charter established a large body

called the General Assembly. There, each UN member nation could cast its vote on a broad range of issues. An 11-member body called the Security Council had the real power to investigate and settle disputes, though. Its five permanent members were, Britain, China, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Each could veto any Security Council action. This provision was intended to prevent any members from voting as a bloc to override the others.

**Differing U.S. and Soviet Goals** Despite agreement at Yalta and their presence on the UN Security Council, the United States and the Soviet Union had very different goals following the war. A major goal of the Soviet Union was to shield itself from another invasion from the west. After they had pushed the Nazis back across Eastern Europe at the end of the war, Soviet troops had occupied a strip of countries along the Soviet Union's western border. Stalin regarded these countries as a necessary buffer, or wall of protection. Ignoring his Yalta promise, he extended communism's power by installing or securing Communist governments in Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Poland, and Yugoslavia.





## Superpower Aims in Europe

American president Harry S. Truman believed that Stalin's reluctance to allow free elections in Eastern European nations was a clear violation of those countries' rights.

Truman, Stalin, and Churchill met at Potsdam, Germany, in July 1945. There, Truman pressed Stalin to permit free elections in Eastern Europe. The Soviet leader refused. In a speech in early 1946, Stalin declared that communism and capitalism could not exist in the same world. (Clear start of the Cold War).

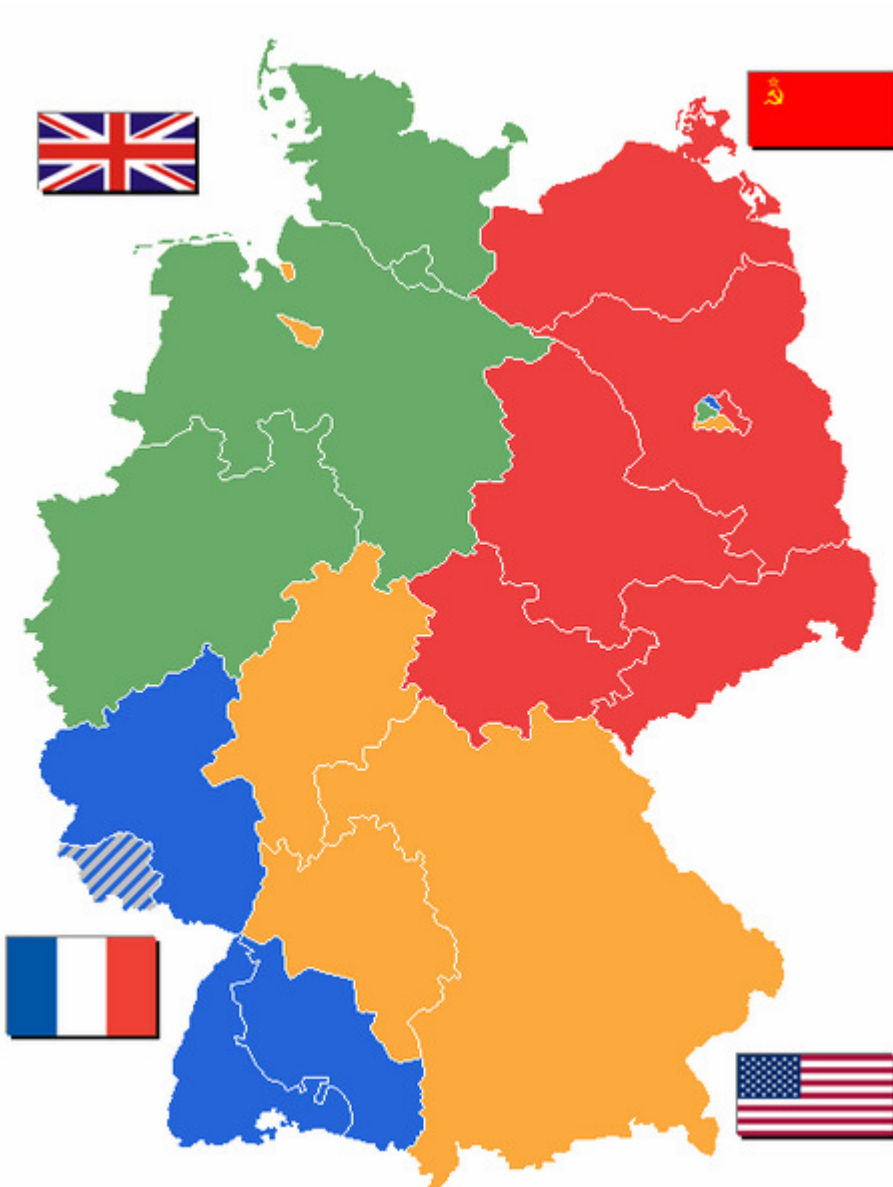
**A Divided Europe** Europe now lay divided between East and West. Winston

Churchill described the division of Europe: "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent. Behind that line lie all the

capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe." Churchill's phrase **"iron curtain"** came to represent Europe's division into mostly democratic Western Europe and communist Eastern Europe.

## Rebuilding Europe and Japan

Japan and much of Western Europe lay in ruins after World War II. There was also economic turmoil - a scarcity of jobs and food. In addition, the Allies needed to deal with the defeated nations of Germany and Japan.





DENMARK

BALTIC SEA

NORTH SEA

SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN

MECKLENBURG-VORPOMMERN

BREMEN HAMBURG

NETHERLANDS

BREMEN

POLAND

NIEDERSACHSEN

BERLIN

BRANDENBURG

SACHSEN-ANHALT

NORDRHEIN-WESTFALEN

SACHSEN

THÜRINGEN

BELGIUM

HESSEN

CZECH REP.

RHEINLAND-PFALZ

LUXEMBOURG

SAARLAND

FRANCE

BAYERN

BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG

AUSTRIA

SWITZERLAND

**The Occupation of Germany** At the Yalta Conference, the Allies had divided

Germany into four military occupation zones. France, Britain, the United States, and the

Soviet Union each oversaw one zone. The rise of the iron curtain effectively split

Germany into two sections. The Soviets controlled the eastern part. France, Britain, and

the United States controlled the western part.

The United States and its allies clashed with the Soviet Union over Germany. The

Soviets wanted to keep Germany weak and divided. But in 1948, France, Britain, and the

United States decided to withdraw their forces from Germany and allow their occupation

zones to form one nation. The Soviet Union responded by holding West Berlin hostage.

Although Berlin lay well within the Soviet occupation zone, it too had been divided into

four zones. The Soviet Union cut off highway, water, and rail traffic into Berlin's western

zones. The city faced starvation. Stalin gambled that the Allies would surrender West

Berlin or give up their idea of reunifying Germany. But American and British officials

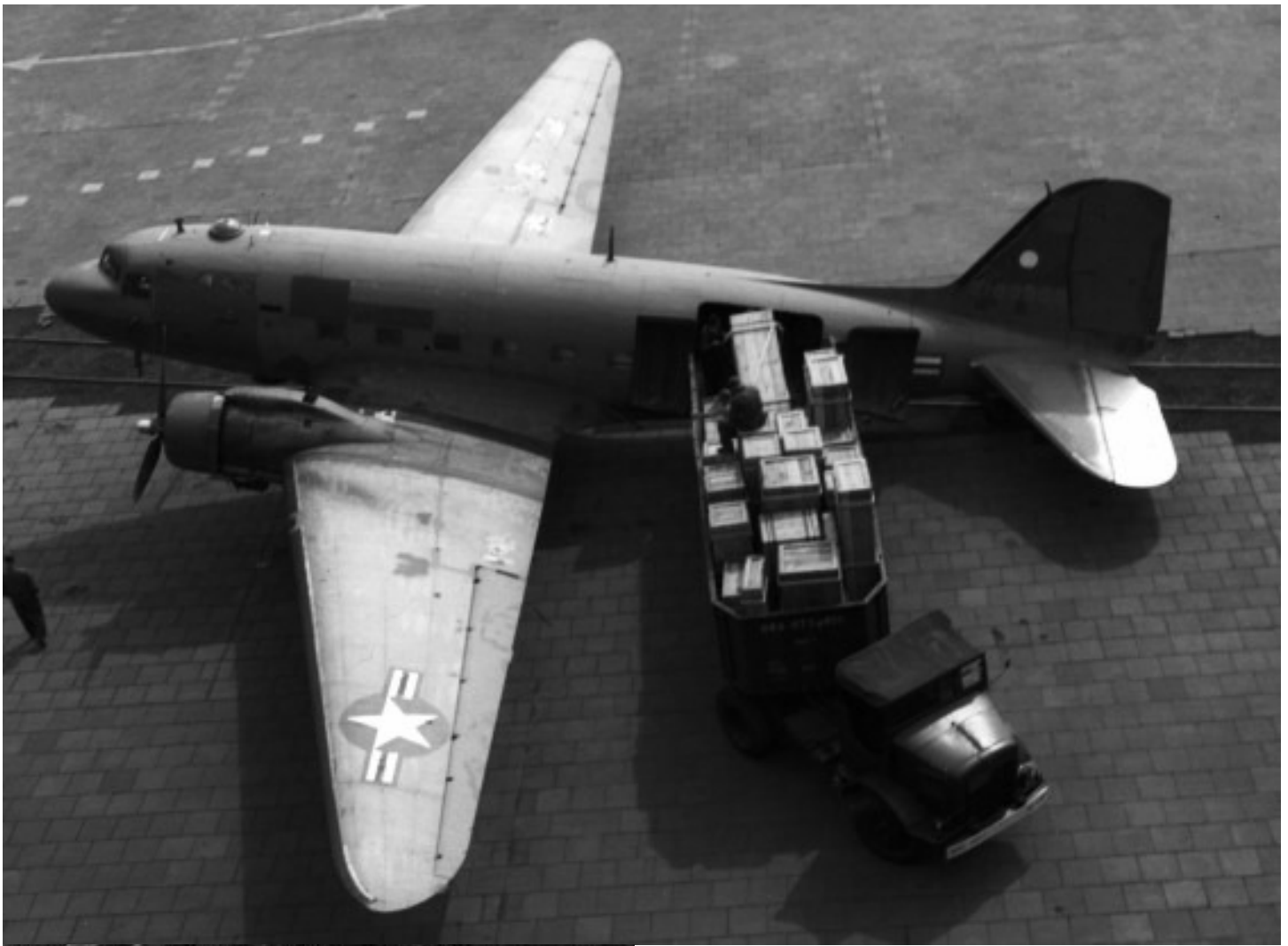
flew food and supplies into West Berlin for nearly 11 months. In May 1949, the Soviet

Union admitted defeat and lifted the blockade. That same year, the western zones became

the Federal Republic of Germany, and Communist East Germany was named the German

Democratic Republic.







**The Occupation of Japan** The United States also took charge of the occupation of postwar Japan. General Douglas MacArthur led the efforts. MacArthur began a process of **demilitarization, or disbanding the Japanese armed forces**, and launched war-crimes trials. He then turned his attention to **democratization, the process of creating a government elected by the people**. In February 1946, he and his American political advisers drew up a new constitution that changed the empire into a constitutional monarchy like that of Great Britain. Like the ruler of Great Britain, the emperor became largely a figurehead—a symbol of Japan. The new constitution, which went into effect on May 3, 1947, guaranteed that real political power rested with the people. The people elected a two-house parliament, called the Diet. All citizens over the age of 20, including women, had the right to vote. The government was led by a prime minister chosen by a majority of the Diet. In addition, Article 9 of the constitution stated that the Japanese could no longer make war. They could fight only if attacked.

MacArthur's objectives included broadening land ownership and increasing the participation of workers and farmers in the new democracy. Thus, he put forward a plan that required absentee landlords with huge estates to sell land to the government. The government then sold the land to tenant farmers at reasonable prices. Other reforms gave workers the right to create independent labor unions.

**The Marshall Plan** The United States also took steps to help rebuild Europe. In 1947, U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall proposed that the United States give aid to needy European countries. This **assistance program, called the Marshall Plan, would provide food, machinery, and other materials to rebuild Western Europe**. As Congress debated the \$12.5 billion program in 1948, the Communists seized power in Czechoslovakia.

Congress immediately voted approval. Under the Marshall Plan, nations like West

Germany, Turkey, and Greece that were under threats from communism received financial aid.

## The Political Climate of the Cold War

The Marshall Plan was part of President Truman's foreign policy of **containment**. The policy aimed to block Soviet influence and stop the expansion of communism.

Containment policies included forming alliances and helping weak countries resist Soviet advances. As part of this strategy, Congress authorized more than \$400 million in aid to Turkey and Greece prior to the Marshall Plan. This support for countries that rejected communism was called the **Truman Doctrine**.

The United States and the Soviet Union - the world's superpowers - were soon locked in **the Cold War**. A cold war is a struggle over political differences carried on by means short of military action or war. Beginning in 1949, the superpowers used spying, propaganda, diplomacy, and secret organizations in their dealings with each other. Much of the world allied with one side or the other.

**NATO and the Warsaw Pact** The Berlin blockade had heightened Western Europe's fears of Soviet aggression. As a result, in 1949, ten Western European nations joined the United States and Canada to form a defensive military alliance called the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**. An attack on any NATO member would be met with armed force by all members. In 1955, the Soviets responded by forming their own alliance, **the Warsaw Pact**. It included the Soviet Union, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania. In 1961, the East Germans built a wall to separate East and West Berlin. **The Berlin Wall symbolized a world divided into rival camps.** <http://www.dieberlinermauer.de/berlinwallhome/wall1/wall1.html>

**The Role of Nonaligned Nations** Not every country joined the new alliances. Some, like India, chose not to align with either side. And China, the largest Communist country, remained unaligned out of distrust of the Soviet Union. In 1955, Indonesia, a populous island nation in Southeast Asia, hosted many leaders from Asia and Africa at the Bandung Conference. They met to form what they called a "third force" of independent countries, or **nonaligned nations**.

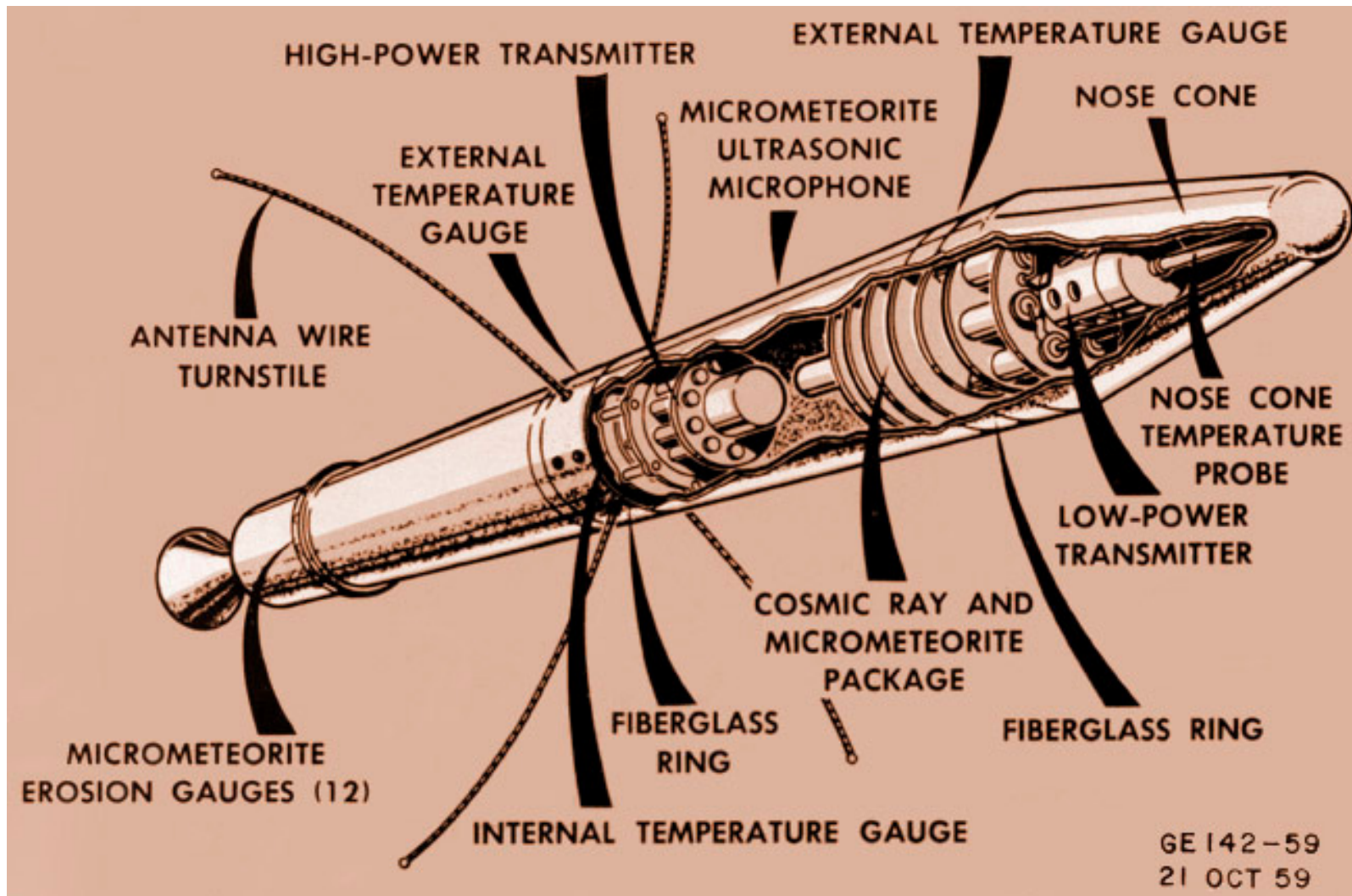
Many of the nonaligned countries were developing nations, often newly independent, in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. They came to be called the **Third World**. (The first world was the United States and the capitalist nations allied with it. The second world was the Communist nations led by the Soviet Union.) To gain influence in the Third World, the superpowers backed wars of revolution, liberation, or counterrevolution. Although the superpowers did not fight each other directly, they fought indirectly by backing opposing sides in these surrogate wars. (Surrogate means substitute.) Their intelligence agencies engaged in covert, or secret, activities, ranging from spying to assassination attempts. The United States also gave military aid, built schools, set up programs to fight poverty, and sent volunteers to many developing nations. The Soviets offered military and technical assistance, mainly to India and Egypt.

**Nuclear Weapons and Space** As the alliances were forming, the Cold War threatened to heat up enough to destroy the world. The United States already had atomic bombs. In 1949, the Soviet Union exploded its own atomic weapon. President Truman responded by authorizing work on the hydrogen or H-bomb, a weapon thousands of times more powerful than the A-bomb. In 1952, the United States tested the first H-bomb, The Soviets exploded their own in 1953.

When Dwight D. Eisenhower became the U.S. president in 1953, he appointed the firmly anti-Communist John Foster Dulles as his secretary of state. Dulles issued a warning – if the Soviet Union or its supporters attacked U.S. interests, the United States would "retaliate instantly, by any means and at places of our own choosing." This willingness to go to the brink, or edge, of war became known as **brinkmanship**.

Brinkmanship required a reliable source of nuclear weapons and airplanes to deliver them. The arms race was on as both sides began strengthening their air force and stockpiling nuclear weapons.

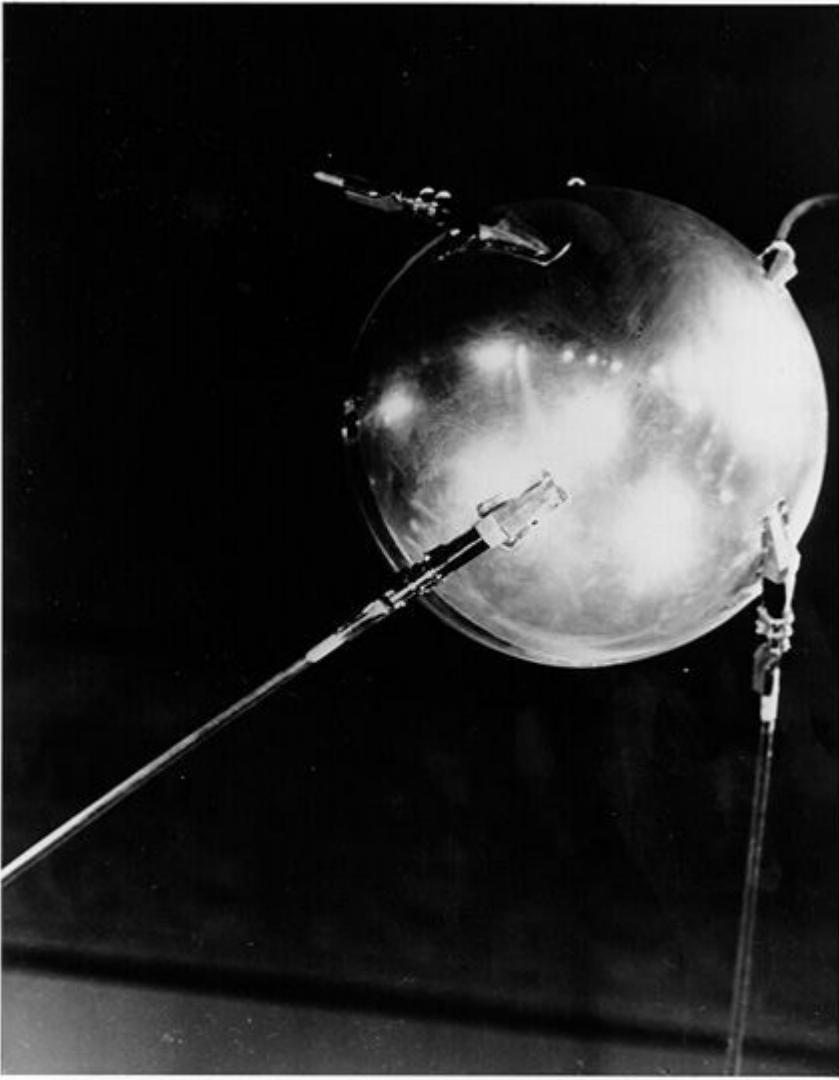
The Cold War also affected space. In August 1957, the Soviets announced the development of a rocket that could travel great distances - an intercontinental ballistic missile, or ICBM. On October 4, the Soviets used an ICBM to push *Sputnik*,



the first unmanned satellite, above the earth's atmosphere. In 1958, the United States



launched its own satellite, *Explorer I*.



The space race had begun.

In 1960, the skies again provided the arena for a superpower conflict. In May 1960, the Soviets shot down a high-altitude U.S. spy plane called a U-2. The plane's pilot, Francis Gary Powers, was captured. **This U-2 incident heightened Cold War tensions.**

## Soviet Policy in Eastern Europe

Joseph Stalin died in 1953. [Nikita Khrushchev](#)



became the dominant Soviet leader. In 1956, Khrushchev denounced Stalin for jailing and killing loyal Soviet citizens. His speech signaled the start of a **policy called destalinization, or purging the country of Stalin's memory**. Khrushchev called for "peaceful competition" with capitalist states.

**But this new Soviet outlook did not change life in satellite countries**. In October 1956, the Hungarian army joined protesters to overthrow Hungary's Soviet-controlled government. A popular and liberal Hungarian Communist leader named Imre Nagy (IHM\*ray nahj) formed a new government. **Nagy promised free elections and demanded Soviet troops leave. In response, Soviet tanks and infantry entered Budapest in November, overwhelming the freedom fighters. A pro-Soviet government was installed, and Nagy was eventually executed.**

In 1964, Khrushchev was replaced by Leonid Brezhnev.



Brezhnev quickly made clear that he would not tolerate dissent in Eastern Europe.

His policy was put to the test in early 1968 when Czech Communist leader Alexander Dubcek (DOOB\*chehk) loosened controls on censorship to offer his country socialism with "a human face." This period of reform, when Czechoslovakia's capital bloomed with new ideas, became known as Prague Spring. However, it did not survive the summer. On

August 20, armed forces from the Warsaw Pact nations invaded Czechoslovakia.

Brezhnev justified this invasion by claiming the Soviet Union had the right to prevent its satellites from rejecting communism, a policy known as the Brezhnev Doctrine.

