The early years, 1945-46

- During WWII the Soviet Union had fought on the same side as the USA and other Allies. However, even before the end of the war it became obvious that there were disagreements between them.

- At the Yalta Conference in Feb 1945, attended by Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin, it was agreed that Germany would be divided into four zones. These would be run by the USA, Britain, France and the Soviet Union. Berlin (in the Soviet zone) was also divided into four zones.

- The Potsdam Conference July-August 1945 was attended by Stalin, Attlee (new British PM) and new US President, Truman. Several areas of tension:
  - Stalin wanted to take reparations from Germany but this was opposed by Britain and the USA who did not want to cripple Germany.
  - Truman did not tell Stalin about the atomic bomb before the USA first used it in August 1945.
  - Stalin had set up a communist government in Poland despite promised free elections.

Key word—distrust. Why did the Soviets and Americans distrust each other?

- Completely different political beliefs. Soviet Union was communist, with few rights and little freedom for its citizens, and a state-controlled economy with no free enterprise. USA was a democracy, with elections and greater freedom for its citizens. It also had a capitalist economy.

- Each side was convinced that the other wanted to spread its beliefs at the expense of the other.

- During the early twentieth century the Soviet Union had become convinced that the West was happy to see it attacked. For example the West had sent help to the Whites during the Russian Civil War 1918-21.

- The Soviet Union also thought that the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima was really a warning to them from the USA.

- At the end of the War the Soviet Union set up a communist ‘buffer zone’ on its western border. The Soviets said this was a defensive barrier. The Americans saw it as the first step towards communist world domination.

- Truman was much more suspicious of the USSR than Roosevelt. He was determined to prevent the spread of communism.

Questions:

1) Name the two Allied conferences of 1945
2) Who were the three leaders who attended each of these conferences?
3) What was the ‘Iron Curtain’?
4) Why did Stalin want to control the countries of Eastern Europe?
5) What was the Truman Doctrine?
6) What was Marshall Aid?
7) Which European countries did not receive this aid?
8) What happened to Berlin in 1945?
9) Why did Stalin decide to blockade Berlin in 1948?
10) What happened to Germany after the Berlin Crisis of 1948-49?

Reasons for the Cold War

Developments in the Cold War, 1947-48

- After WWII the Soviet Union set up communist ‘puppet’ governments in Poland, Albania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Hungary. In a speech at Fulton, Missouri in March 1946 Churchill said an ‘Iron Curtain’ had fallen across Europe.

- The Soviets said this gave them protection against the West, but the US feared that as one country became communist so would the next, and so on—Domino effect.

- Truman feared the spread of communism into Greece. In 1947 the USA supplied Greece with arms, supplies and money: the communists were defeated. Truman made a speech setting out how his country would support people against communist aggression—this was called the Truman Doctrine.

- Truman believed that poverty and hardship provided a breeding ground for communism and so he wished to make Europe prosperous again. Under the Marshall Plan, set up in June 1947, the Americans gave economic aid to European countries. S13 billion poured into Europe in the years 1947-51. This worsened the Cold War because Stalin accused the Americans of trying to control the trade and economy of Europe. He refused to allow the countries of Eastern Europe to accept this aid.

The Berlin Crisis, 1948-49

- After WWII Germany and its capital had been divided into four zones of occupation. In 1948 the French, US and British zones merged to become West Germany. With the help of Marshall Aid, West Germany and West Berlin recovered and began to prosper. It was a different story in East Germany and East Berlin. Here there was poverty and hunger. Many East Germans were leaving the East because West Germany seemed more attractive.

- In Stalin’s eyes it seemed that the Allies were building up West Germany in order to attack him. When they introduced a new West German currency, the Deutschmark, this was the last straw. He tried to blockade Berlin. In June 1948 Stalin closed all road and rail connections from Berlin to West Germany hoping he could force the Western Allies out of Berlin.

- Stalin could not block the air corridors to West Berlin without provoking war so the Allies decided to airlift supplies to West Berlin to prevent its people from starving. The airlift was a great success. Every day thousands of British and American planes flew supplies to overcome the Blockade. By May 1949 the USSR lifted the Blockade.

- This was a victory for the West but relations with the USSR hit rock bottom and Germany would now remain divided. The Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) was decreed in August 1949; in October 1949 the Soviet zone became the German Democratic Republic (East Germany).

The Cold War

Why did the USA and the USSR become rivals in the period 1945-1949?
THE COLD WAR
How did the Cold War develop in the period 1949 to 1963?

Results of the Crisis
- Leaders of both the USSR and the USA realised that nuclear war had been a real possibility and that it was vital that such a crisis should not happen again.
- The US and USSR decided to set up a telephone link (hot line) so that in future, communications could take place immediately between Moscow and Washington during a crisis.
- Nuclear arms limitation talks began and, in 1963, a Test Ban Treaty was signed between the USA, the USSR and Britain.

The Hungarian Rising, 1956
- In July 1956 a reforming government led by Imre Nagy took power in Hungary after repeated rioting by students in Budapest. The new government planned to increase personal and political freedom and even talked of taking Hungary out of the Warsaw Pact.
- The Soviet response to the reforms was harsh. On 4 November Khrushchev sent 6000 tanks into Hungary to overthrow the rebel government and crush any further protest. The Soviets arrested Nagy and installed a loyalist communist, Kadar, to set up a new government. Nagy was later shot for his part in the rebellion. Soviet troops remained in Budapest until the crisis was over.
- An estimated 30,000 Hungarians were killed during the crisis and 200,000 fled to the West. The Western powers protested about the Soviet interference but did little else.

The Cuban Missile Crisis 1962—how close to war did the world come?

Causes:
- The island of Cuba had once been under US control, but in 1959 Fidel Castro had seized power and set up a pro-communist government. The US disliked having a communist regime so close because they feared it would spread to Central and South American countries. In addition, Castro developed very good relations with the USSR.
- The new President of the USA, Kennedy, approved an invasion of Cuba in April 1961 designed to overthrow Castro and restore the previous leader Batista. The ‘Bay of Pigs’ operation was a disastrous failure and worsened relations between Cuba and the USA.
- Cuba now allowed the Soviet Union to station nuclear weapons on Cuba, within firing range of the USA.

The Crisis:
- In Oct 1962 US planes identified nuclear missile sites being built on Cuba.
- After much debate Kennedy decided on a naval blockade around Cuba to stop Soviet ships landing nuclear weapons on the island. Also threatened to invade Cuba and remove the missiles by force.
- Next 10 days very tense—if the Soviet ships had ignored the blockade and sailed to Cuba, there would have been war between the two countries.
- It was Khrushchev who broke the deadlock. 24th Oct he ordered his ships to turn back, and on 28th he agreed to remove the missiles.

THE COLD WAR
Fluctuating relations, 1949-56

- By 1955 there were two rival alliances. In 1949 Western Europe, Canada and the USA set up the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). Its main purpose was to defend each of its members. If one member was attacked, all the others would help to defend this member. In 1955 West Germany joined NATO. The Soviet response was to set up the Warsaw Pact—a communist version of NATO.
- As relations between the USA and the Soviet Union worsened, both sides began to develop their weapons so as to be able to ‘outgun’ their opponents. By 1949 both the USA and the Soviet Union had nuclear weapons. The in 1952 the Americans developed the hydrogen bomb (H-Bomb) which was capable of destroying Moscow. Within a year the Soviet Union had developed a similar bomb. In 1957 the Soviet Union devised a means of attaching nuclear warheads to rockets.
- Stalin died in 1953 and was eventually replaced by Nikita Khrushchev. He was a less aggressive leader and talked of peaceful coexistence with the West. In 1956 he made a secret speech attacking Stalin for being a dictator. He also began the process of ‘destalinisation’.
- The West began to see hopeful signs from the new Soviet leader which led to a “thaw” in relations. Khrushchev seemed to be encouraging greater freedom within the USSR and its allies. In a visit to Warsaw in 1956 he indicated that Polish people should be allowed more freedom. This was short-lived due to events in Hungary.
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The Berlin Wall;
- August 1961 Khrushchev decided to build a wall around West Berlin. This was to prevent more East Germans moving to the West. Between 1945 and 1960, an estimated 3 million people had crossed from East to West Berlin, many of whom were skilled workers—"brain drain."
- The wall had immediate effects: the flow of refugees stopped instantly. Few people tried to escape, but many of those who did were killed in the attempt. 86 people are known to have died attempting to cross the Berlin Wall between 1961 and 1989. The British and US claimed that having to build the Wall was proof of the poor lifestyle in Eastern Europe.
- John F Kennedy visited West Berlin in 1963 and declared that the city was a symbol of the struggle between the forces of freedom and the communist world—“ich bin ein Berliner.”

The U2 Crisis;
- 1st May 1960 the Soviets shot down a US spy plane over the USSR and captured the pilot, Gary Powers. According to the Soviets he admitted he was on a spying mission.
- The US denied that spying flights took place over Soviet territory and claimed that the plane had accidentally strayed into Soviet territory. The Soviets showed that the US were lying by developing the film that Powers had taken on his mission. Eisenhower, the President of the USA, refused to apologise.
- This was a diplomatic defeat for the USA. It had lost a U2 spy plane and the Soviets had scored a propaganda victory.

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The Korean War, 1950-53
- At the end of WWII, Korea was split into two along the 38th parallel: the USSR took control of North Korea and set up a communist state. In the South, the Americans set up a democracy. The South Korean President, Syngman Rhee, and the North Korean President, Kim Il Sung, each claimed to be President of Korea. Relations were tense. In June 1950 North Korea invaded South Korea.
- At first the South Korean forces were pushed back. President Truman asked the United Nations Organisation to help. (USSR were boycotting the UN so did not vote). UN forced from many countries, but mainly the USA, drove the communists back until they were close to the Yalta River on the border with China.
- This worried China, which did not want a non-communist neighbour supported by UN troops. China joined the war. The UN forces were driven back and the UN commander, General MacArthur, called for the use of nuclear weapons. Truman rejected MacArthur’s aggressive stance and sacked him.
- Once again UN troops began to push the communists back. By June 1951 the fighting had settled around the 38th parallel. In 1953 Stalin died, which made the communists want to end the war as quickly as possible. A truce was agreed at Panmunjom.

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