**Cold War Readings #2**

**Divisions in Germany**

The fate of Germany also became a source of heated contention between the Soviets and the West. At the end of the war, the Allied Powers had divided Germany into four zones, each occupied by one of the Allies-the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France. Berlin, located deep inside the Soviet zone, was also divided into four zones.

The foreign ministers of the four occupying powers met repeatedly in an attempt to arrive at a final peace treaty with Germany but had little success. By February 1948, Great Britain, France, and the United States were making plans to unify the three Western sections of Germany (and Berlin) and create a West German government.

The Soviets opposed the creation of a separate West German state. They attempted to prevent it by mounting a blockade of West Berlin. Soviet forces allowed neither trucks, trains, nor barges to enter the city's three Western zones. Food and supplies could no longer get through to the 2.5 million people in these zones.

The Western powers faced a dilemma. No one wanted another war, but how could the people in the Western zones of Berlin be kept alive when the whole city was blockaded inside the Soviet zone? The solution was the Berlin Airlift-supplies would be flown in by American and British airplanes. For more than 10 months, more than 200,000 flights carried 2.3 million tons of supplies. The Soviets, who wanted to avoid war as much as the Western powers, finally gave in and lifted the blockade in May 1949.

In September 1949, the Federal Republic of Germany, or West Germany, was formally created. Its capital was Bonn. Less than a month later, a separate East German state, the German Democratic Republic, was set up by the Soviets. East Berlin became its capital. Berlin was now divided into two parts, a reminder of the division of West and East.

**A Wall in Berlin**

Nikita Khrushchev, who emerged as the new leader of the Soviet Union in 1955, tried to take advantage of the American concern over missiles to solve the problem of West Berlin. West Berlin remained a "Western island" of prosperity in the midst of the relatively poverty-stricken East Germany. Many East Germans, tired of Communist repression, managed to escape East Germany by fleeing through West Berlin.

Khrushchev realized the need to stop the flow of refugees from East Germany through West Berlin. In August 1961, the East German government began to build a wall separating West Berlin from East Berlin. Eventually it became a massive barrier guarded by barbed wire, floodlights, machine-gun towers, minefields, and vicious dog patrols. The Berlin Wall became a striking symbol of the division between the two superpowers.

**Berlin airlift**

Stalin's resentment at western moves to rebuild Germany triggered a crisis over Berlin. The former German capital was occupied by all four victorious Allies even though it lay in the Soviet zone.

In 1948, Stalin tried to force the western Allies out of Berlin by sealing off all railroads and highways into the western sectors of the city. The western powers responded to the blockade by mounting a round-the-clock airlift. For almost a year, cargo planes supplied West Berliners with food and fuel. Their success forced the Soviets to end the blockade. The West had won a victory in the Cold War, but the crisis deepened the hostility between the two camps.

**Military alliances**

In 1949, as tensions grew, the United States, Canada, and nine Western European countries formed a military alliance. It was called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Members of NATO pledged to help one another if anyone of them was attacked.

In 1955, the Soviet Union responded by forming its own military alliance, the Warsaw Pact. It included the USSR and seven satellite states in Eastern Europe. Unlike NATO, however, the Warsaw Pact was a weapon used by the Soviets to keep its satellites in order.

**The arms race**

Each side in the Cold War armed itself to withstand an attack by the other. At first, the United States, which had the atomic bomb, held an advantage. But Stalin's top scientists were under orders to develop an atomic bomb. When they succeeded in 1949, the arms race was on.

For four decades, the superpowers spent fantastic sums to develop new, more deadly nuclear and conventional weapons. They invested still more to improve “delivery systems” - the bombers, missiles, and submarines to launch these terrifying weapons of mass destruction. Soon, the global balance of power became, in Churchill's phrase, a “balance of terror.”

**Wars in Korea and Vietnam**

After World War II, Korea was divided into a Soviet-backed north and an American-supported south. On June 25, 1950, North Korea invaded the South. President Trumanfought this move with United Nations help. The United States and other countries sent troops to' assist South Korea. At first, the North Korean army captured almost all of South Korea. Then the US army began a bold counterattack. In just two months, it had pushed the North Koreans far back, nearly to China. The Chinese then entered the war and drove the US forces back. Bitter fighting continued until 1953. That year, the two Koreas agreed to a cease-fire. The earlier boundary splitting North and South Korea at the 38th parallel remained the same.

North Korea developed as a Communist country following the war. It had a strong army and tight government control, but it also had many economic problems. South Korea's economy grew, in part because it received U.S. aid. However, for more than 30 years, dictators ruled the country. Free elections were held only after a new constitution was accepted in 1987.

The United States faced another war against Communists, this time in Vietnam. That area had been a French colony until Japan invaded it early in World War II. When Japan lost, the French returned. A Vietnamese nationalist named Ho Chi Minhwanted to win independence. First, he drove the French out of Vietnam. A peace conference split Vietnam in two, with Ho taking charge in North Vietnam. He made it a Communist state. Communist rebels - the Vietcong - stayed active in the South.

Seeing that the government of South Vietnam was threatened by Communists, the United States began to send large numbers of soldiers. First it sent advisers, later combat troops. By 1968, more than 500,000 U.S. troops were there. They could not win the war on the ground. The United States also tried bombing or burning forests in the South to drive the Vietcong from their hiding places. These actions made peasants in the South more likely to support the North. Many in the United States came to oppose the war.

In the late 1960s, President Richard Nixon began to cut the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam in order to turn the fighting over to the South Vietnamese. The last American troops left in 1973. Two years later, North Vietnam overran the South and made Vietnam one country again. About 1.5 million people fled Vietnam. Today, Vietnam remains Communist but is looking for other nations to invest in its economy.

**Cambodian Genocide**

In 1975, Communist rebels known as the Khmer Rouge set up a brutal Communist government under the leadership of Pol Pot. In a ruthless attempt to transform Cambodia into a Communist society, Pol Pot's followers slaughtered 2 million people. This was almost one quarter of the nation's population. The Vietnamese invaded in 1978. They overthrew the Khmer Rouge and installed a less repressive government. But fighting continued. The Vietnamese withdrew in 1989. In 1993, under the supervision of UN peacekeepers, Cambodia adopted a democratic constitution and held free elections

**Cuban Missile Crisis**

In 1962, the world narrowly escaped nuclear holocaust during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The United States and the Soviet Union faced each other in a dispute over Soviet placement of nuclear missiles in Cuba, 90 miles off the coast of Florida.

There are several possibilities why the Soviets placed nuclear missiles in Cuba. First, the missiles could protect Cuba from possible U.S. military aggression. Second, the Soviets would gain a strategic advantage on the United States in case of global nuclear war. Finally, the missiles would counter the U.S. installation of missiles in Turkey, near Soviet territory, in 1959.

The U.S. government had an idea Soviets wanted to place missiles in Cuba for some time. However, it was not until August 29, 1962, that a U-2 spy plane confirmed this to President John F. Kennedy. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara proposed three courses of action for the United States. First, it could try to resolve the problem diplomatically by discussing it with the Soviets and the Cubans. Second, it could form an air and naval blockade around Cuba to prevent further shipments of missiles. Finally, it could order an air strike to destroy the missiles and then invade Cuba.

On October 22, Kennedy announced a blockade of Cuba. The United States would seize "offensive weapons and associated materiel" that the Soviets were delivering to Cuba. After six tense days, Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet leader, agreed to halt further shipments of missiles and to dismantle the existing ones in Cuba. He agreed to this only after Kennedy promised not to invade Cuba. Khrushchev also wanted the U.S. missiles removed from Turkey. In formal negotiations, Kennedy refused but then informally agreed to remove them and did so.

Documents released 35 years later reveal that, unknown to both U.S. and Soviet leaders, Soviet field commanders in Cuba had complete authority to fire their missiles. In addition, U.S. military officials undertook several secret sabotage missions in Cuba, and an American aircraft accidentally strayed into Soviet airspace at the height of the crisis. Any of these situations could have triggered a nuclear war.