UNIT 1
THE COLD WAR

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of history is to research, analyze and interpret documents and other important historical evidence to learn why significant historical developments occurred. Often there is no absolute right or wrong because history is opinion based on fact. Although evidence is often available, it is never complete. The fascinating thing about history is that new evidence is always being uncovered. This means that history is constantly being interpreted and reinterpreted as historians try to understand why important historical movements and events took place.

To understand the present, it is important that we examine and try to understand the past. One of the most important political and military developments since the end of World War II was the Cold War.

Read Viewpoints, pages 27-42.

THE COLD WAR REMEMBERED: A PERSONAL ACCOUNT

“Growing up in the 1950s and 1960s in Canada meant living with the Cold War, especially if you lived near the border between the United States and Canada. I can remember the government erecting an air raid siren in the school yard as part of an early warning system. I lived in fear of the Russians invading.

The precautions were frightening for children. Our mothers had to time how long it took us to get home from school. If we could reach our house in under five minutes, without running, we would be allowed to go home if there was a nuclear attack. Those poor children who lived further away had to stay at school, crouched under a desk. Each child was given a list of all the things that our parents should have in the basement in the event of a nuclear attack—water, food, cooking supplies and plumbing facilities.

My parents, who had both fought in World War II, just laughed and said we’d never hear the bomb that hit us so it didn’t matter. I tried to explain how scared I was, but they didn’t take the whole thing seriously. So I went elsewhere to find someone who would share my fears. Two houses up from my parents lived a crazy widow who actually built a real bomb shelter. My sisters and I raked her leaves, shovelled her snow, and picked her dandelions in the belief that she would let us share her bomb shelter.”
**What was the Cold War?**

The Cold War began in 1945 after the end of World War II. The term, Cold War, described the intense rivalry that pre-occupied the world’s two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States of America. Both countries wanted to be the most powerful and they spent more than 45 years arguing, threatening each other, and supporting allied countries in skirmishes and local conflicts (fringe wars) in almost every quarter of the globe. It also led to an **arms race**, an intense competition between the two superpowers to accumulate advanced military weapons. This policy of pursuing a dangerous course of action to the brink of catastrophe before pulling back is called **brinkmanship**. But, because the two superpowers never directly fought each other, it was called the Cold War.

**How did the Cold War Start?**

**Ideological Differences**

The two superpowers’ ideologies or beliefs were totally different. The Soviet Union was a communist state that directly owned all land, labour and capital. Prices in the country were fixed by the state. Renting an apartment, for example, would ideally cost the same anywhere in the Soviet Union. Also, the production of goods was predetermined by fixed quotas.

In contrast, the American government promoted capitalism where prices were decided by supply and demand. This meant that, when there were plenty of goods and services, prices dropped but, when there weren’t enough goods and services, prices increased. Government was not supposed to interfere with industrial production.

For more information on the differences between the two economies, read the chart on page 30 of *Viewpoints*.

**Propaganda and Conspiracy Theories**

Throughout the decades of the Cold War, the leaders of both superpowers let off steam by spouting propaganda in the media and inventing conspiracy theories. When the Korean War broke out in 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy manufactured a “witch hunt” against supposed communist infiltrators in American society. He invented the existence of a nation-wide communist conspiracy and accused anyone who disagreed with his right-wing views of being a communist. People who had been to communist party meetings in the 1930s were accused of being communists. Some people, including Hollywood movie actors and directors, were asked to spy on their friends, to see if they were participating in any communist activities.

McCarthy was backed by prominent government officials in President Truman’s administration. The Attorney General at the time stated in a speech in 1950, “There are many
communists in America. They are everywhere, in factories, offices, butcher shops, on street corners, in private business, and each carries with him the germs of death for society.”

During the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the Soviet newspaper, Pravda, accused the “American imperialists of confronting the world with the threat of a global thermonuclear war.” After the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, American President Ronald Reagan said that the Russians couldn’t be trusted because “they reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat,” in order to achieve world domination. Later, in a speech in Orlando, Florida in 1983 he referred to the Soviet Union as an “evil empire.” He also blamed the Soviet leadership for all the unrest in the world.

Read another example of propaganda in Viewpoints, pages 14-15. These are two versions of the same story, one from a North American perspective and one from the Soviet newspaper, Pravda.

POWER STRUGGLES

The Soviet Union and the United States each wanted to be the most powerful country in the world. Both countries came out of World War II as major victors. After the war, the Soviet Union invaded many of the countries in Eastern Europe, annexed them, and became a colossal empire geographically, economically and militarily. The United States also profited from being on the winning side of the war by economically controlling most capitalist countries. This was partly accomplished by the Marshall Plan which lent war-torn countries capital to rebuild their economies in return for an agreement to purchase American goods.

Both nations possessed the atomic bomb. In 1945 the United States dropped a uranium bomb called Little Boy on Hiroshima, Japan. It instantly killed 100,000 people. That explosion was followed by a plutonium bomb that was detonated over Nagasaki, Japan. The destructive capacity of these two bombs effectively ended the war between the United States and Japan. In 1949 the Soviet Union tested their first atomic bomb. The Soviets’ success challenged the monopoly that the United States had enjoyed for four years. No longer was the United States the only producer of atomic power.
The ability of these two countries to mass produce nuclear weapons gave them military superiority in the early post-war period. Even when other countries joined the nuclear club, notably Britain (1952), France (1960), and China (1964), no one was ever able to challenge the technological lead of the USA and the Soviet Union. During the next three decades the United States and the Soviet Union stockpiled nuclear weapons and were aptly called superpowers.

**The Cold War Heats Up**

**Nuclear Power**

People were afraid that, if a direct conflict occurred, it would have devastating results. Not only did the USA and the Soviet Union develop huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons, but they produced sophisticated delivery systems in the form of guided missiles. Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) with nuclear warheads could travel at supersonic speeds, could be programmed to travel across continents, and could land on cities with deadly accuracy. A nuclear confrontation between the USA and the Soviet Union would have been devastating to both sides.

**Fringe Wars**

While the superpowers never directly went to war against each other, they both supported wars that developed on the fringes or outskirts of their empires. Notable examples were the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Afghanistan War. In each case, when one power was directly involved, the other power always supplied war materials to the opposition. Both American and Soviet citizens became worried that these limited wars could easily spread and develop into a nuclear war.

**Alliance Systems**

The Cold War was further complicated by the development of two hostile alliance systems. One of the primary causes of both World War I and World War II was that countries had joined together to support each other. When one country went to war against another, all its allies or friends came to help. When similar alliances started to form in the post-war period, it represented another threat to world peace. Two of the most important alliances were the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Warsaw Pact. These were defensive military alliances based on the understanding that, if one member was attacked, the others would join in to protect its ally.

Twelve countries signed NATO in 1949: United States, Canada, Britain, Norway, Belgium, France, Portugal, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Denmark and the Netherlands. The Warsaw Pact was formed in 1955 and included the Soviet Union, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Albania, Bulgaria, Poland and Romania.

These two heavily armed camps faced one another across the barbed
wire fence of the Iron Curtain. The Iron Curtain was a metaphor used by Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister, to describe the division of Europe between the communist and capitalist countries. It was an imaginary line that extended from Stettin in the Baltic Sea to Trieste in the Adriatic Sea. As time went on the Iron Curtain became a barbed wire border between East and West Germany with restricted access. The Berlin Wall was part of the Iron Curtain.

**HIGH ANXIETY LEVELS AND PROTEST**

People lived in fear and anxiety as nuclear weapons stockpiled, fringe wars and hostile confrontations broke out around the world, and political leaders flung antagonistic propaganda at one another. In the 1950s, many North American families, particularly those who lived near military installations, built bomb shelters in their basements and stocked the shelves with food. In the 60s and early 70s, peace rallies were held in the United States and Western Europe to “Ban the Bomb” and stop the war in Vietnam.

In the Soviet Union protest was effectively suppressed. Critics of the government fled to Western Europe or were sent to work camps in Siberia. In Poland, a satellite of the Soviet Union, a strong anti-government trade union called Solidarity used strikes as a weapon of protest.

**THAWS IN THE COLD WAR**

To counteract the Cold War tension, the two superpowers often made genuine efforts to appear peaceful. The Soviet Union granted Austria independence in 1955. That same year, US President Eisenhower and Soviet Premier Khrushchev met in Geneva to discuss the possibility of an “open skies” agreement that would prevent a surprise attack by either side. This thaw in Soviet-US relations was called the “Spirit of Geneva.” Shortly after the meeting, Khrushchev announced 640,000 soldiers would be cut in his army; the next year he called for _peaceful coexistence_ or competition without war.

In the 1960s these peaceful intentions did not continue because of numerous confrontations between the Soviet Union and the United States. In the 1970s, there was a period of _detente_, where the strained relations or tensions between the two superpowers again relaxed. The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I) was signed in 1972, limiting anti-ballistic missile defence to one site for each country, and SALT II was signed in 1979. Later that year, _detente_ came to a halt again when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan.
THE END OF THE COLD WAR

The mid-1980s saw Mikhail Gorbachev emerge as Premier of the Soviet Union. Although Gorbachev remained a committed communist, he wanted to end the Cold War. He introduced glasnot (openness) and perestroika (economic reforms) that prepared the country for democratic reforms and an easing of tensions with the West. Gorbachev and U.S. President Reagan agreed to eliminate a whole class of their countries’ nuclear missiles—those capable of striking Europe and Asia from the USSR and vice versa. The Soviet government began to reduce its forces in Eastern Europe and in 1989 it pulled its troops out of Afghanistan. Also in 1989, the Berlin Wall, the symbol of East-West animosity since 1961, was torn down. Germany once again became a unified country. In 1991 the USSR dissolved, and Russia and some of the other Soviet republics emerged as independent states. The Cold War was over.
IMPORTANT COLD WAR CONFRONTATIONS OF THE 1960S INCLUDED:

**Construction of the Berlin Wall**

A concrete wall built in 1961 that divided the German city of Berlin into east and west. The eastern part was controlled by the Soviet Union and the western part was democratic.

**Bay of Pigs Invasion**

American-supported Cuban exiles attacked Cuba in 1961 in an attempt to overthrow Castro.

**Cuban Missile Crisis**

A confrontation in 1962 that brought the Soviet Union and the United States to the edge of nuclear war. It is discussed in detail in Unit 2.

**Vietnam War**

A war between communist North Vietnam and non-communist South Vietnam began in 1954. From 1961, South Vietnam was helped by the US. The communist forces won in 1975.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Events of the Cold War</th>
<th>Thaws in the Cold War</th>
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<tr>
<td>Berlin blockade complete</td>
<td>1948</td>
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<td>Korean War occurs</td>
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<td>1952</td>
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<td>1955</td>
<td>Stalin dies</td>
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<td>Hungarian Revolution</td>
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<td>is crushed by the Soviets</td>
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<td>Russian satellite, Sputnik,</td>
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<td>Vietnam War occurs</td>
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<td>U-2 incident angers Soviet Union</td>
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<td>Bay of Pigs invasion occurs</td>
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<td>Berlin Wall is built</td>
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<td>Cuban Missile Crisis occurs</td>
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<td>Soviets invade Czechoslovakia</td>
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<td>Soviets invade Afghanistan</td>
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<td>Star Wars is endorsed</td>
<td>1983</td>
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<td>1963</td>
<td>Hot line, a direct telephone link between the USA and the Soviet Union, is established</td>
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<td>1964</td>
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<td>Direct flights between Moscow and NY are established</td>
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<td>1968</td>
<td>Soviets and Americans agree to discuss peaceful uses of outer space</td>
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<td>1969</td>
<td>SALT talks begin</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>Disarmament Treaty is ratified</td>
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<td>1972</td>
<td>SALT I is signed</td>
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<td>1979</td>
<td>SALT II is signed</td>
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<td>1983</td>
<td>Berlin Wall comes down</td>
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<td>1989</td>
<td>Germany is reunited</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Soviet Union collapses</td>
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(Timelines are used throughout this course for reference only. No one is expected to memorize all the dates and events.)
**ACTIVITY 1: COLD WAR CRYPTOGRAM**

There are 26 terms and names in the cryptogram that relate to the Cold War. The words may be written horizontally, vertically, diagonally, forwards or backwards. Find the words in the puzzle that answer the statements below. Circle or draw a line through the letters and write the words in the spaces provided. The seven letters that remain at the end form two words that relate to the unit.

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1. President of the United States assassinated in 1963 (7 letters) _ _ _ _ _ _ _
2. Russian leader who died in 1952 (6 letters) _ _ _ _ _ _
3. A period of peaceful coexistence (7 letters) _ _ _ _ _ _ _
4. The _ _ _ _ _ Missile Crisis (5 letters)
5. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (4 letters) _ _ _ _
6. Premier of the USSR during the Cold War (10 letters) _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

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7. The Warsaw (4 letters) _ _ _ _
8. The first satellite in orbit (7 letters) _ _ _ _ _ _ _
9. A military reconnaissance plane (1 letter, 1 number) _
10. A superpower (3 letters) _ _ _
11. A superpower (4 letters) _ _ _ _
12. Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (4 letters) _ _ _ _
13. Khrushchev used this article of apparel in the United Nations (4 letters) _ _ _ _
14. An economic plan (8 letters) _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
15. A shelter in your basement (4 letters) _ _ _ _
16. A relaxation of tension (4 letters) _ _ _ _
17. The Bay of _ _ _ _ (4 letters)
18. Camp _ _ _ _ _ , a retreat for presidents of the United States (5 letters)
19. Used to bomb Hiroshima (3 letters) _ _ _
20. Communication line, 1963 (3 letters) _ _ _
21. The opposite of love (4 letters) _ _ _ _
22. Protesters wanted to _ _ _ the bomb (3 letters)
23. What happened in Korea, 1950 (3 letters) _ _ _
24. The opposite of lose (3 letters) _ _ _
25. A war in Asia (7 letters) _ _ _ _ _ _ _
26. Two words formed from the letters left over _ _ _ _ _ _ _
ACTIVITY 2: REVIEW QUESTIONS

Answer the following questions in paragraph form using the information you have read in this manual and your textbook, Viewpoints.

1. Define Cold War in your own words.

2. Why did the Cold War occur in the aftermath of World War II?

3. Explain why the Cold War was a struggle between two opposing political and economic ideologies.

4. Explain why the United States and the Soviet Union were the only two countries that became superpowers during the Cold War. Why were other countries unwilling to challenge their political, economic and military power?

5. How strong was public opposition to the Cold War in both the Soviet Union and the United States? Do you think public opposition made any difference to the leaders of either country during the Cold War? Explain.

6. Explain why alliance systems intensified the threat of nuclear war.

ACTIVITY 3: DESIGNING A BOMB SHELTER

In the post-war period many families in the West became terrified of the possibility of a nuclear war. This fear was reinforced when the US military released photographs showing the horrible effects of radiation in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Many families, especially those in large cities and those near military installations, felt they were particularly vulnerable. They thought that they might be able to withstand a nuclear bombing more successfully if they had one-foot thick concrete walls in their basements.

1. Draw a diagram of a bomb shelter, including the walls and the rooms, as it might have existed in the early 1960s. Label your diagram and give the dimensions of the rooms.

2. Prepare a list of food and other supplies that a family of four would need to last one week.

3. Choose one of the following activities to complete.

   EITHER

   a) Explain how you would deal with each of the following as they occurred:

      □ Air system contaminated with radiation
b) The world was a different place during the Cold War. There were real concerns about nuclear war and the effects it would have. In about 150 words, discuss the following question.

Do you think Canada is in any danger from nuclear war now? Why? If you answer yes, discuss: Where does the danger come from? What precautions should each person, each family and each city take? If you answer no, discuss: Why is there no danger? Why is Canada now safe from nuclear war?
ACTIVITY 4

Tear out and send to your marker with Unit 1.