

THE COLD WAR

1946-1991

THE COLD WAR RESULTED FROM A STATE OF CONFLICT, TENSION, AND RIVALRY BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE SOVIET UNION. IT BEGAN AFTER THE END OF WORLD WAR II WHEN SOVIET TROOPS OCCUPIED EASTERN EUROPE AND ASIA WHILE FORCIBLY IMPOSING TOTALITARIAN COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS IN EACH OF THE COUNTRIES THEY CONTROLLED. IN 1948, THE SOVIETS BLOCKADED BERLIN IN AN ATTEMPT TO FORCE OUT ALLIED FORCES, BUT A U.S. AIRLIFT ENDED THE BLOCKADE BY SUCCESSFULLY DELIVERING FOOD AND SUPPLIES. REVOLTS AGAINST THE SOVIETS IN HUNGARY (1956) AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA (1968) WERE CRUSHED BY SOVIET TANKS. IN 1962, TENSIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND SOVIET UNION PEAKED WHEN THE SOVIETS PLACED NUCLEAR MISSILES IN CUBA. PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY RESPONDED BY ESTABLISHING A NAVAL BLOCKADE AROUND CUBA AND WARNED THAT HE WOULD REGARD “ ANY NUCLEAR MISSILE LAUNCHED FROM CUBA AGAINST ANY NATION IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE AS AN ATTACK ON THE U.S. REQUIRING A FULL RETALIATORY RESPONSE UPON THE SOVIET UNION.” THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS ENDED TWO WEEKS LATER WHEN THE SOVIETS AGREED TO DISMANTLE ITS MISSILES IN EXCHANGE FOR A NO-INVASION AGREEMENT AND A SECRET REMOVAL OF U.S. MISSILES FROM TURKEY. THE COLD WAR ENDED WITH THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION IN 1991. BY THEN, THE WORLD’S TWO SUPERPOWERS HAD ENGAGED IN COSTLY DEFENSE SPENDING, A NUCLEAR AND CONVENTIONAL ARMS RACE, AND NUMEROUS PROXY WARS.

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