



International Relations – The Cold War

History – Junior Cert

Quick Notes

International Relations – The Cold War

The US and the USSR were the only countries to emerge from the war in a stronger position than before. This was because these countries were large with large populations, large armies, large workforces and large quantities of natural resources. A war of ‘words and warnings’ began between the US and the USSR that became known as the ‘Cold War’. The main areas of dispute were that the USSR wanted Communist governments while the US wanted democratic, capitalist ones. The USSR wanted to keep lands they took off Poland in 1939, but the US disagreed. And the USSR wanted Germany to remain weak, whereas the US wanted to rebuild a ‘friendly Germany’. Tensions heightened in 1949, when the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was formed – a military alliance between the western powers. The USSR responded by forming the Warsaw Pact Alliance.

In January 1942, 26 nations signed the Declaration of the United Nations and in June 1945, 50 nations signed the United Nations Charter. The aim of the UN is to maintain global peace and security. Its two head-quarters are in New York and Geneva. In 1949, the three western zones in Germany reunited, as did the three western sectors of Berlin. Russia blockaded West Berlin cutting off all supplies but the blockade stopped when the allies airlifted in supplies. As a result of the Berlin Blockade, Germany was permanently divided into the Federal Republic of Germany (West) and the Democratic Republic of Germany (East). The West’s economy developed rapidly whilst the East’s economy was poor and the standard of living was low. In 1961, the Russians built the Berlin Wall to prevent East Berliners fleeing into West Germany. The Korean War was spurred on by the USSR occupying the north and the US occupying the south, following World War 2.

In 1950, North Korean forces invaded the south with the support of Stalin and China. The UN responded immediately to restore peace, with the help mainly supplied by the US. China responded by sending 300,000 troops into North Korea so the Korean War was now between America and China. In July 1951, peace talks began between the two sides and two years later, a peace treaty was signed. In 1962, the Cuban Missiles Crisis occurred whereby the USSR constructed missile sites on Cuba that were capable of launching nuclear attacks on US cities. President John F.K. demanded their removal so when the USSR refused, he blockaded Cuba to prevent Russian supplies and weapons arriving. The USSR eventually backed down so the crisis passed. After the Cuban crisis, the superpowers made efforts to reduce the

stockpile of arms in a period known as 'détente'. In 1985, Gorbachev became Soviet leader and his two aims were to improve the living conditions of the Russian people and to end the Cold War.

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