

The Cold War

Traveling Exhibition Guide

Developed by

THE GILDER LEHRMAN
INSTITUTE *of* AMERICAN HISTORY

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Contents

GENERAL INFORMATION

EXHIBITION CONTENT

Panel One: The Cold War

Panel Two: The Cold War Begins

Panel Three: The Cold War Heats Up

Panel Four: The Cold War Abroad

Panel Five: The Cold War at Home

Panel Six: Detente

Panel Seven: The End of the Cold War

GENERAL INFORMATION

This exhibition was developed by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

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- Writer: William Schmadeke, Grant Community High School
- Curator: Sandra Trenholm, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History
- Curatorial Intern: Taylor Williams, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

Format

The exhibition is composed of seven retractable vinyl banners. Each panel measures 81 inches in height and 33 inches wide. It requires a total of 21 running feet and can be displayed separately or together. Detailed setup instructions are provided to the venue's coordinator upon shipment. Setup instructions can also be found on the [FAQ page of the GLI Traveling Exhibitions website](#).

Rental Security

Exhibitions may be displayed in any open areas, but preferably not in a hallway. No exhibition is to be displayed outdoors or in a tent or other temporary structure. It is preferable that a staff member is in the room with the exhibition when it is open to students or guests.

If a borrower is determined to be at fault for damage or loss of any part of the exhibition, then the institution will be responsible for paying the replacement or restoration costs. The value of the *Cold War* exhibit is \$2,250. Some institutions chose to add a rider to their insurance policy.

Shipping

The exhibit is shipped in a wheeled, plastic case measuring 38 inches x 18 inches x 14 inches and weighing approximately 75 pounds. GLI will be responsible for arranging shipping via FedEx. A week before the end of your loan period, we will reach out with a return label and instructions.

Reporting

Each site is required to complete a condition report upon receipt of the exhibition and again after the exhibition has been packed for return. Condition reports will be sent to the venue coordinator via email.

Questions

If you have questions, please contact

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EXHIBITION CONTENT

Panel One: The Cold War

Introductory Text

Between 1945 and 1991, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (also known as the USSR) battled for global dominance. The Cold War was a confrontation between two different economic and political systems: The US, a capitalist democracy, emphasized individual liberty and privately owned farms and businesses. The USSR was communist, emphasizing the collective good and state-controlled businesses. Although there were few direct battles, the US and the USSR engaged in political maneuvering, built up arms, provided economic and military aid to rival factions, and supported proxy wars in other nations, dividing the world into American or Soviet spheres of influence. This exhibition examines some of the Cold War's major events.

A Brief Timeline of the Cold War

- July 17 to August 2, 1945: Allied leaders meet in Potsdam, Germany, to formalize a structure for postwar Europe.
- February 9, 1946: Joseph Stalin declares capitalism and communism incompatible.
- March 5, 1945: Former British Prime Minister decries an “Iron Curtain” dividing Europe.
- June 24, 1948–May 12, 1949: The Soviet Union blockades West Berlin.
- April 4, 1949: NATO is formed by Western nations.
- August 29, 1949: The Soviet Union detonates its first atomic bomb.
- October 1, 1949: Mao Zedong establishes the People's Republic of China as a communist country.
- June 25, 1950–July 27, 1953: The Korean War
- May 14, 1955: The Soviet Union establishes the Warsaw Pact.
- October 4, 1957: The Space Race begins.
- 1960–1980s: US and the USSR become involved in proxy wars.
- August 13, 1961: Soviets begin construction of the Berlin Wall.
- October 16–28, 1962: Cuban Missile Crisis
- July 1965 –April 1975: Vietnam War - US combat forces in Vietnam
- 1985: Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev promises a new era of perestroika (reform) and glasnost (openness).
- November 9, 1989: The Berlin Wall falls.
- December 26, 1991: The Soviet Union is officially dissolved.

Panel Two: The Cold War Begins

Introductory Text

In the summer of 1945, US president Harry Truman, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, and British prime minister Winston Churchill (replaced on July 26 by Clement Attlee) met in Potsdam, Germany, to discuss the end of World War II. The United States and its allies wanted to see Europe rebuilt around the principles of democracy and capitalism. They were also concerned that the Soviets would dominate the parts of Eastern Europe conquered during the war, building a security buffer of satellite states at the expense of freedom. The militarized border between the capitalist-oriented West and the communist-oriented East became known as the “Iron Curtain.”

Citations

2.1 Map of Germany, Zones of Occupation, ca. 1947. (National Archive, 245255954)

Winston Churchill, Harry Truman, and Joseph Stalin at Potsdam, US Army Signal Corps, July 1945. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04457)

2.2 George Kennan, chargé d'affaires at the US embassy in Moscow, to the US State Department, February 22, 1946

“In summary, we have here a political force committed fanatically to the belief that with the US there can be no permanent *modus vivendi*, that it is desirable and necessary that the internal harmony of our society be disrupted, our traditional way of life be destroyed, the international authority of our state be broken, if Soviet power is to be secure.”

George Kennan’s telegram to James Byrnes, February 22, 1946. (Harry S. Truman Library & Museum)

2.3 President Harry S Truman, General George Marshall, Paul Hoffman, and Averell Harriman in the Oval Office discussing the Marshall Plan, November 29, 1948. (Photo by Abbie Rowe, Harry S. Truman Library & Museum)

President Truman’s Message to Congress [the Truman Doctrine], March 12, 1947

“The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms. If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world—and we shall surely endanger the welfare of our own Nation.”

2.4 People watching a Berlin Airlift plane land at Tempelhof Airport in West Berlin, August 15, 1948.

(Photo by E & O/ullstein bild via Getty Images)

“Berlin Airlift” trading card from the *Fight the Red Menace: The Children’s Crusade Against Communism* series, published by the Bowman Gum Company in 1951. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09627.28)

2.5 Mao Zedong proclaiming the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, October 1, 1949.

(World History Archive, Alamy)

2.6 Barrack at the Vorkuta Gulag (Vorkutlag), one of the major Soviet labor camps, ca. 1930s. (Photo by Laski Diffusion/Getty Images)

Testimony of Mieczysław Gigiera (Kresy-Siberia Virtual Museum)

“This is not a period in my life that I like to recall. The work was hard manual labour. The food we received was poor in quality and quantity. The conditions we lived in were inhumane. There was much illness caused by malnutrition and lack of sanitation. I was a young fit man and fared better than some of the older men.”

“Concentration Camp” trading card from the *Fight the Red Menace: The Children’s Crusade Against Communism* series, published by the Bowman Gum Company, 1951. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09627.37)

Panel Three: The Cold War Heats Up

Introductory Text

With the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, a new generation of leaders looked to move past their differences and build toward the future. Nikita Khrushchev became the Soviet premier and Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected US president. The two leaders met to discuss disarmament and peaceful resolutions to political problems. However, events like the American refusal to recognize the Geneva Accords for Vietnam in 1954, the Soviet crackdown in Budapest in 1956, the growing space race, and the U-2 Crisis in 1960 dashed those hopes.

Citations

3.1 RDS-1 (Joe-1), August 29, 1949. Photo from Peter Kuran's film "Trinity and Beyond: The Atomic Bomb Movie," used with permission of Peter Kuran.

3.2 John F. Kennedy, Speech at Rice University, September 12, 1962

"We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard."

Front page of the New York Mirror with the headline "Destined to Live our Lives in Peril: JFK," October 13, 1961. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC10201)

Astronaut Edwin E. (Buzz) Aldrin Jr. posing on the moon next to the US Flag, July 20, 1969. (National Archives, 593743)

3.3 Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, Vice President Richard Nixon and others, toasting each other with drinks, during Nixon's visit to the Soviet Union photographed by Thomas J. O'Halloran, 1959. (U.S. News & World Report Magazine Photograph Collection, Library of Congress)

3.4 A woman at the barbed wire fence separating East and West Berlin talking to relatives on the opposite side, September 26, 1961. (Popperfoto/Getty Images)

3.5 Members of Castro's militia in the Escambray Mountain area of Cuba during the ill-fated US-backed Bay of Pigs invasion, 1961. (Photo by Three Lions/Getty Images)

3.6 JFK's address during the Cuban Missile Crisis, October 22, 1962"

"We will not prematurely or unnecessarily risk the costs of worldwide nuclear war in which even the fruits of victory would be ashes in our mouth—but neither will we shrink from that risk at any time it must be faced...But the greatest danger of all would be to do nothing."

Declassified CIA map of the United States showing the range of the nuclear missiles based in Cuba, ca.

1961–1964. According to this assessment, only the Pacific Northwest remained out of missile range. (National Archives, 7065390)

Onlookers gather on George Smathers Beach in Key West, Florida to see anti-aircraft missiles positioned there during the Cuban Missile Crisis. (Underwood Archives / UIG / Bridgeman Images)

Panel Four: The Cold War Abroad

Introductory Text

While the US and USSR never engaged in open warfare during the Cold War, both countries led military conflicts and political interventions around the world to advance their interests. From South America to Asia, Europe, and Africa, the Cold War was covertly “fought” on almost every continent. It also led to new intelligence organizations like the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Soviet KGB, each of which operated all over the world. In 1954, the CIA interfered in Guatemalan elections to ensure that American interests would prevail. In 1956, the KGB brutally repressed political dissent in Hungary and Poland. Similar interventions by both sides continued through the 1980s.

Citations

- 4.1 “Reds Invade South Korea” trading card from the *Fight the Red Menace: The Children’s Crusade Against communism* series, published by the Bowman Gum Company, 1951. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09627.01)
- 4.2 Troops of the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies invaded Czechoslovakia to halt political liberalization in the country called the Prague Spring. Czechs protesting against the invasion climb atop a Soviet tank, photographed by CTK Photo, August 21, 1968. (Alamy)
- 4.3 Soldiers of the 14th Infantry Regiment board helicopters to a new staging area in Vietnam, May 16, 1966. (National Archives, 530610).
National Guard personnel on campus at Kent State. (News Service May 4 photographs. Kent State University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives)
- 4.4 Ronald Reagan to Congressman Carlos J. Moorhead, July 2, 1983. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09613.01.06)

Panel Five: The Cold War at Home

Introductory Text

The Cold War dramatically shaped the domestic life and politics of each nation. In the US, fear of communism led to restrictions in education, politics, and the arts and influenced the US Civil Rights Movement. Fear of nuclear annihilation led to the creation of bomb shelters and shattered the nation's sense of security. In the Soviet Union, political repression and imprisonment continued.

Citations

- 5.1 “Ghost City” trading card from *Fight the Red Menace: The Children's Crusade Against Communism* series, published by the Bowman Gum Company, 1951. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09627.19)
- 5.2 Bert the Turtle Says Duck and Cover Comic Book, Federal Civil Defense Administration, 1951. (National Park Service)
- 5.3 Senator Joseph McCarthy presents to fellow US senators on alleged communist infiltration, ca. 1950s. (CSU Archives / Everett Collection via Alamy)
- 5.4 Eisenhower's Address to the American People on the Situation in Little Rock, September 24, 1957.
- “At a time when we face grave situations abroad because of the hatred that communism bears toward a system of government based on human rights, it would be difficult to exaggerate the harm that is being done to the prestige and influence, and indeed to the safety, of our nation and the world. Our enemies are gloating over this incident and using it everywhere to misrepresent our whole nation.”
- After an angry mob prevented the students from attending Little Rock Central High School, President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent the 101st Airborne to ensure the students' safety and the state's compliance with *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).
- Troops escort Black students through an angry mob and into Little Rock Central High School on September 25, 1957. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09731.04)

Panel Six: Detente

Introductory Text

After twenty years of increasing tensions, by the 1970s the United States and the Soviet Union sought to reduce the risk of an all-out war. Diplomacy led to agreements to protect human rights and stabilize the arms race, while renewed relations between the United States and China further reduced the fear of war in Asia. While the US continued to oppose communism abroad, priorities changed. Economic issues in both countries focused Americans on domestic changes and Western-style reform in the Soviet Union. The mid-1980s policies of perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness) were the first major reforms in the Soviet Union in decades. Protesters throughout Eastern Europe, though wary of repeating the crackdowns of 1956 or 1968, nonetheless pushed democratic reform throughout the Warsaw Pact, leading to greater ties to the West and ultimately the dissolution of communism in Europe.

Citations

6.1 Richard and Pat Nixon visit the Great Wall of China, February 24, 1972. (National Archives, 7268166)

6.2 “SALT II” poster by Richard Correll, ca. 1970s. (Labor Archives of Washington, University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections)

Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev during Brezhnev’s visit to the US, 1973. (Nixon Presidential Library)

6.3 Coalition to Free Soviet Jews poster, printed in New York, ca 1980s. (Yeshiva University Libraries Digital Collections)

6.4 Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry poster printed in New York, ca. 1974. (American Jewish Historical Society)

6.5 Afghans protesting on the ninth anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union outside the Russian Embassy at Woolhara, photo by Doris Thomas, December 27, 1987. (Fairfax Media Archives via Getty)

6.6 "The Day After," movie poster, 1983. Produced by ABC Motion Pictures.

Able Archer 83 was one of at least six NATO exercises included in Autumn Forge 83. September 1983. (Marc Deville / GammaRapho via Getty Images)

Panel Seven: The End of the Cold War

Introductory Text

Perestroika and glasnost in the Soviet Union prompted public calls for even more reform throughout Eastern Europe. In 1989, the Berlin Wall opened for the first time since 1961. Just two years later, the Soviet Union itself broke apart, and the Cold War ended with a speed and civility no one expected. As the sole remaining hyperpower by the 1990s, the United States held unmatched political, military, and economic strength. As the world celebrated the emergence of a peaceful era between former adversaries, the legacy of the Cold War continued to shape the global order.

Citations

7.1 Ronald Reagan, "Tear Down this Wall" Speech, June 12, 1987

"General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"

7.2 West Berliners crowd in front of the Berlin Wall early as they watch East German border guards demolishing a section of the wall on November 11, 1989. (Photo by Gerard Malie via Getty Images)

7.3 The Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine, August 24, 1991. (State Archival Service of Ukraine)

7.4 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty states-parties vote to extend the treaty indefinitely, May 11, 1995, at UN Headquarters in New York. (Jon Levy/AFP/Getty Images)

7.5 The International Space Station (NASA)

George H.W. Bush, November 12, 1989

“It is very difficult to predict with certainty what is going to happen. I am convinced, given not just the events of yesterday but the cumulative set of events that have taken place, that this change is real. . . . The rapidity of change is mind-boggling. The quest for freedom is stronger than steel, more permanent than concrete.”