COLD WAR CARD 8

PRESIDENT REAGAN AND THE COLD WAR

The Fall of the Berlin Wall | November 1989

Background:

November 9, 1989, gates to the Berlin Wall were opened and it was announced that East Germans would be able to travel freely. The actual process of taking down the entire wall took additional time. On October 3, 1990 Germany was officially re-unified and is now led by a democratic government.

While the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War did not occur until after President Reagan had left office, the dismantling of the Berlin Wall has become a symbol for these events.

Prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall the following had already taken place:

President Reagan's commitment to negotiate with the Soviet Union from a position of strength by building up the American military.

Improved relations between the Soviet Union and the United States brought about by the personal and professional relationship between President Reagan and Secretary General Gorbachev.

Secretary General Gorbachev's complete re-thinking of the Soviet system which ultimately led to free elections and the peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Was the end of the Cold War inevitable? Did people living through the Cold War imagine its demise? Many claim credit for the elimination of the specter of a Soviet initiated nuclear attack which hung over the world for generations. Most historians agree that the leadership of President Reagan played a pivotal role in the process of bringing a close to the decades-long conflict between the two superpowers.

Quotes:

"Psychologically and ideologically, the Cold War was over before Ronald Reagan moved out of the White House."

- Jack F. Matlock Jr., *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended*, 2004

"Democracy triumphed in the cold war because it was a battle of values between one system that gave preeminence to the state and another that gave preeminence to the individual and freedom."

-Ronald Reagan, *An American Life: The Autobiography*, 1990

Questions:

- Rank and explain the top three causes of the end of the Cold War.
- Now that the Cold War is over, what do you think is the greatest threat facing the world today? Explain.

Research:

- Which country was the first to develop nuclear weapons?
- How did the Soviet Union obtain the information to create nuclear weapons?
- List the countries which are known to have nuclear weapons today.

Activities:

- Examine the Power Map created during the Cold War Era included in the supplemental materials and a current map of Europe and Asia today.
- List the current independent countries which used to be part of the Soviet Union.
- Describe the governments of each of the countries listed above.

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum 1981 1989

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Photograph courtesy of Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation

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