

## Soviet Union and the Cold War/Berlin Wall

### Summary

After World War 2, the Soviet Union and the United States did not trust each other. They were in a cold war—that means they were fighting, but not with weapons. Each was trying to be better than the other and they were both worried the other would try to start an actual war. The US was worried about spies. The Soviet Union had a communist government, which the US did not agree with. Finally, in 1985, the Soviet Union had a new leader—President Mikhail Gorbachev. He had 2 new ideas that started to change the Soviet Union. One was to change the way the economy and government worked. The other was called glasnost, which meant openness. He wanted his country to be open with other countries and get along with them. Gorbachev wanted to end the arms race (competing for the best weapons) with the US. Things started to change in the Soviet Union from communism. The Soviet Union controlled many countries. During this time, they started to break away from the Soviet Union to be free countries in charge of themselves. Poland was the first. Then Hungary and East Germany. After World War 2 (wow! That war changed a lot of things in the world!), Germany was divided in half, split through its capital, Berlin. People even built a wall so that people could not go from one side to the other. It was called the Berlin Wall. East Germany sided with the Soviet Union, and West Germany sided with the US and other countries who were similar. The wall stayed up for 28 years! But as things began to change in the Soviet Union, things changed in East Germany, and on November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall was torn down. It was a huge victory for people's freedom there! At the very end of 1991, the Soviet Union (also called the USSR) was no more. All the countries had split apart and could govern themselves. (This is when Russia became Russia again, and not the Soviet Union.)

### Discuss

How do you think the people in Germany felt when the wall came down? Do you think they were excited to see their friends and family living on the other side?

Gorbachev wanted the Soviet Union to be open with other countries. Why do you think this was a good thing?

### Additional Books

Great Escapes Over the Berlin Wall: True stories of cold war, geopolitical struggles, and the people who overcame them...FOR KIDS! by Daniel Goebel

Flight for Freedom: The Wetzel Family's Daring Escape from East Germany by Kristen Fulton

What Was the Berlin Wall? by Nico Medina

### Areas to Study

Cold war

Berlin Wall

Space race

### Mapping

Find Russia on a world map

Find the US on a world map

Find Germany on a world map