

Student instructions

- ❖ During this activity you will be split into groups representing: the American government, the Soviet Union leadership and the leadership of East Germany.
- ❖ You will experience a series of events between 1957 and 1960 and will be asked to put forward statements in response.
- ❖ You will have to create two statements for each event – one will be a **public statement**, and one will be a **private statement** to be given only to members of your own government.
- ❖ Think carefully about your interests in preparing each statement, and also about how other governments will react. Read your context cards and think about your priorities.

Context cards

Context for the American government

In 1954 Frank Wisner of the CIA placed Richard Bissell in charge of developing and operating the U-2 spy plane. It was essentially a glider with a jet engine. It was so light it could fly at an altitude of 70,000 feet and travel over 4,000 miles. It took two years and \$19m to develop.

President Eisenhower gave permission for the U-2 to fly over Moscow and Leningrad for the first time on 4th July, 1956. The U-2 was a great success and within two years Richard Bissell was able to say that 90% of all hard intelligence about the Soviet Union coming into the CIA was 'funnelled through the lens of the U-2's aerial cameras'. This information convinced Eisenhower that Khrushchev was lying about the number of bombers and missiles being built by the Soviet Union. Eisenhower now knew that the United States had a major advantage in the arms race with the Soviet Union and allowed him to control defence spending.

Context for the Soviet Union leadership

After the death of Stalin, Khrushchev made a secret speech in 1956, attacking the excesses of Stalin's reign. He wanted to have 'peaceful co-existence' with the West.

However, control over the Soviet Union's satellite states in Eastern Europe was weakened by the speech. In 1956 there was an uprising in Hungary. This was encouraged by the West but not given direct support. Khrushchev put down the rebellion successfully and restored order, but many Hungarians fled the country (200,000) and the USSR's pride was damaged by the rebellion.

It is now 1957 and there are problems in communist East Berlin with people leaving the country via West Berlin (about 25,000 a year). The communist hardliners within the leadership are urging action and demanding that the West get out of Berlin.

Another problem area is the nuclear arms race with the USA. Although the USSR are doing their utmost to appear ahead in the arms and space race, the USA has vastly more nuclear warheads and launchers. Khrushchev wants to keep up, but is aware that spending so much money on missiles could lead to further troubles in the satellite states.

Context for the East German leadership

You are part of the East German communist party. The recent rising in Hungary has had an effect on the citizens of East Germany. A rising occurred in Berlin itself in 1953 and over 30,000 people left through West Berlin. Since then, others have been leaving the country (about 25,000 a year) and many of them are skilled workers. America's Marshall Plan has led to better standards of living in West Berlin which act as an advertisement for capitalism.

The presence of the West in Berlin is an embarrassment to you and you don't think your country can survive for much longer if the Western capitalists remain. You have urged the USSR to act and demand that the West get out of Berlin.

Event cards

It is November 1957.

The USSR launched the first Satellite in space in October. They have now followed up on their success and put the first dog in space.

The USA has yet to launch a satellite, but they are working on it.

It is 10 November 1958.

Khrushchev demands that the West remove their troops from Berlin. He gives a six month ultimatum.

It is 25 September 1959.

Khrushchev is visiting the USA as part of his policy of 'peaceful coexistence'. He calls for a summit meeting of the wartime allies to be held the following year in Paris. Together they would aim to solve some of the Cold War problems (e.g. Berlin), and discuss a potential nuclear test ban treaty.

Khrushchev invites Eisenhower to visit the USSR.

It is 1 May 1960 (15 days before the Paris summit).

A plane has been shot down over Sverdlovsk, near Turkey. The American pilot ejected from the plane and it is not known if he survived. The plane itself seems to have been brought down by a missile.

It is 7 May 1960.

The USSR announces they have found the U-2 pilot, Gary Powers, and that he is being questioned about his activities over Russia. They also announce that there were cameras on the plane and that they have developed the films. These show photographs of Soviet military sites.

It is 15 May 1960.

At the Paris summit meeting, Khrushchev accuses the USA of spying and lying about it. He demands an apology from the USA, as well as a promise to stop any further flights and punish those responsible.

It is 16 May 1960.

Eisenhower refuses to apologise. Khrushchev withdraws his invitation to visit the USSR. The summit ends in disarray.

It is 23 May 1960.

Khrushchev convened a meeting of the UN security council but fails to win a vote on a resolution to condemn the US incursions into USSR airspace.

It is 19 August 1960.

Gary Powers is on trial in the USSR, accused of spying. He is found guilty and sentenced to 10 year's imprisonment.

Teaching notes

A possible start to this lesson would be to show a rather eerie clip of the U-2 in flight (available at http://www.coldwar.org/articles/60s/u2_incident.asp). It is without commentary (it has a rather 80s soundtrack!) and could be played on repeat while students enter the room.

'How did this plane escalate the Cold War?' would make a good enquiry question.

For the decision making simulation you will need to divide the class into three groups – the American government and Soviet and East German leadership. There are then nine event cards to be distributed over the course of the lesson. After each new event the groups need to prepare two statements – a public and a private response. The public response should be read out to the other group.

Plenary discussion

You could ask the class to discuss the following:

- ❖ What factors influenced your decision making?
- ❖ Did you always make the decision because you really believed it was right?
- ❖ Who had the upper hand?
- ❖ How did this incident escalate the Cold War?