

**Discuss how the United States dealt with the Soviet Union during the presidencies of John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon, and Ronald Reagan**

**Document 1**

... Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty....

Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our adversary [rival], we offer not a pledge but a request: that both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction.

We dare not tempt them with weakness. For only when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed.

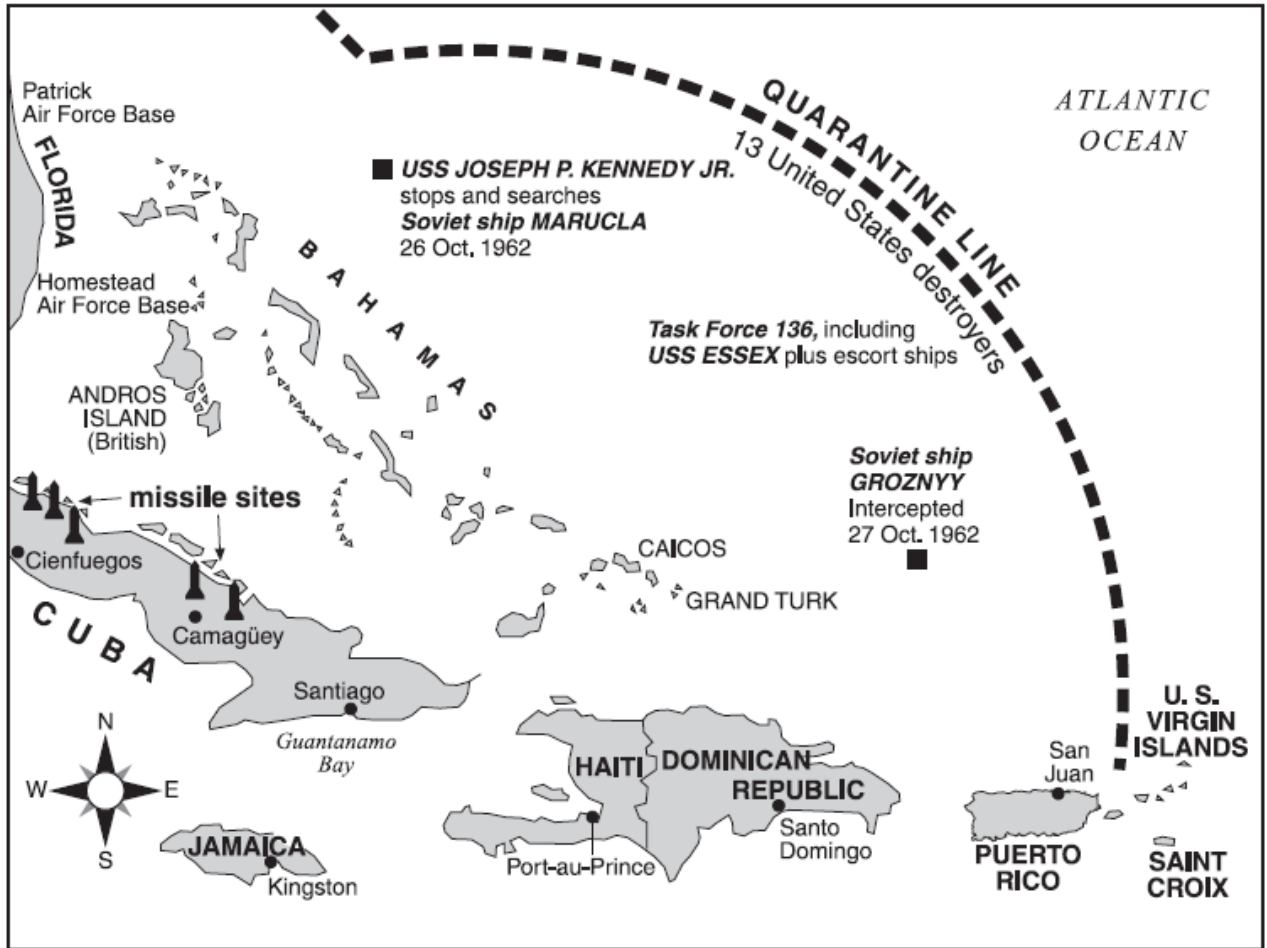
But neither can two great and powerful groups of nations take comfort from our present course—both sides overburdened by the cost of modern weapons, both rightly alarmed by the steady spread of the deadly atom, yet both racing to alter that uncertain balance of terror that stays the hand of mankind's final war.

So let us begin anew—remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate.

Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems which divide us....

Source: President John F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961

### Cuban Missile Crisis



Source: "Flag Plot Cuban Missile Crisis," October 28, 1962, U.S. Naval Historical Center, National Security Archive, George Washington University (adapted)

### Document 3a

#### President John F. Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev



Source: Herblock, *Washington Post*, November 1, 1962 (adapted)

### Document 3b

... I speak of peace because of the new face of war. Total war makes no sense in an age when great powers can maintain large and relatively invulnerable nuclear forces and refuse to surrender without resort to those forces. It makes no sense in an age when a single nuclear weapon contains almost ten times the explosive force delivered by all the allied air forces in the Second World War. It makes no sense in an age when the deadly poisons produced by a nuclear exchange would be carried by wind and water and soil and seed to the far corners of the globe and to generations yet unborn....

In short, both the United States and its allies, and the Soviet Union and its allies, have a mutually deep interest in a just and genuine peace and in halting the arms race. Agreements to this end are in the interests of the Soviet Union as well as ours — and even the most hostile nations can be relied upon to accept and keep those treaty obligations, and only those treaty obligations, which are in their own interest....

Source: President John F. Kennedy, Commencement Address at American University, Washington, D.C., June 10, 1963

### Document 4

... You have to give both [President Richard] Nixon and [National Security Advisor Henry] Kissinger the credit—Nixon because he is the president. It was his clear feeling that we ought to move toward China. I think that he also understood that because of his anti-communist credentials, it would be easier for him than, say, for [Senator] Hubert Humphrey. More importantly, he knew that China would become an important country; our approach to China would give the Soviet Union an incentive to have better relations with us, in that they might get a bit nervous about our dealings with the Chinese. Indeed, within months after the announcement of Kissinger's secret trip, we had an agreement on a summit meeting with the Soviets, as well as a breakthrough on SALT [Strategic Arms Limitation Talks], and on the Berlin negotiations. Kissinger had, independently, come to the same conclusions, for the same reasons....

Source: Winston Lord in Gerald S. and Deborah H. Strober, *Nixon: An Oral History of His Presidency*, HarperCollins, 1994



## Document 5

... Many of those who watched the week unfold in Moscow concluded that this summit—the most important since Potsdam in 1945 and probably the most important Soviet political event since Stalin's death—could change world diplomacy. It was all the more impressive because it seemed not so much a single, cataclysmic [momentous] event but part of a process, part of a world on the move....

The meeting underscored [emphasized] the drive toward detente based on mutual self-interest—especially economic self-interest on the part of the Soviets, who want trade and technology from the West. None of the agreements are shatterproof, and some will lead only to future bargaining. But the fact that they touched so many areas suggested Nixon's strategy: he wanted to involve all of the Soviet leadership across the board—trade, health, science—in ways that would make it difficult later to reverse the trends set at the summit....

Source: "What Nixon Brings Home from Moscow," *Time*, June 5, 1972

## Document 6

... As far as our relations with the Soviets are concerned, we shall continue. We shall continue to negotiate, recognizing that they don't like our system or approve of it and I don't like their system or approve of it. Mr. Brezhnev [Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev] knows that, and I know it, and we have discussed it quite bluntly and directly.

However, it is essential that both nations, being the super powers that we are, continue to make progress toward limiting arms, toward avoiding confrontations which might explode into war, as it might have in the Mideast if we had not had this period of negotiation, and also continuing those negotiations for reduction of forces in Europe and reduction of arms, or certainly the limitation of arms, and the various other initiatives that we are undertaking with the Soviets.

In a nutshell, this is what we have to consider: Do we want to go back to a period when the United States and the Soviet Union, the two great super powers, stood in confrontation against each other and risk a runaway nuclear arms race and also crisis in Berlin, in the Mideast, even again in Southeast Asia or other places of the world, or do we want to continue on a path in which we recognize our differences but try to recognize also the fact that we must either live together or we will all die together?...

Source: President Richard Nixon, Press Conference, February 25, 1974

## Document 7

... Ronald Reagan entered office [the presidency] as the most emphatically anti-Soviet American chief executive since Harry Truman, who presided over the beginning of the Cold War. The Reagan administration was committed to stepping up the competition with the Soviet Union in the areas where the rivalry was sharpest. It orchestrated the most expensive peacetime military buildup in American history and began the Strategic Defense Initiative, which was designed to free the world from the nuclear stalemate in which each side's society was hostage to the weapons of the other. But the Reagan years have demonstrated the limits to both policies. They have made it clear that the United States, like the Soviet Union, will have to settle for military equilibrium in the great power rivalry....

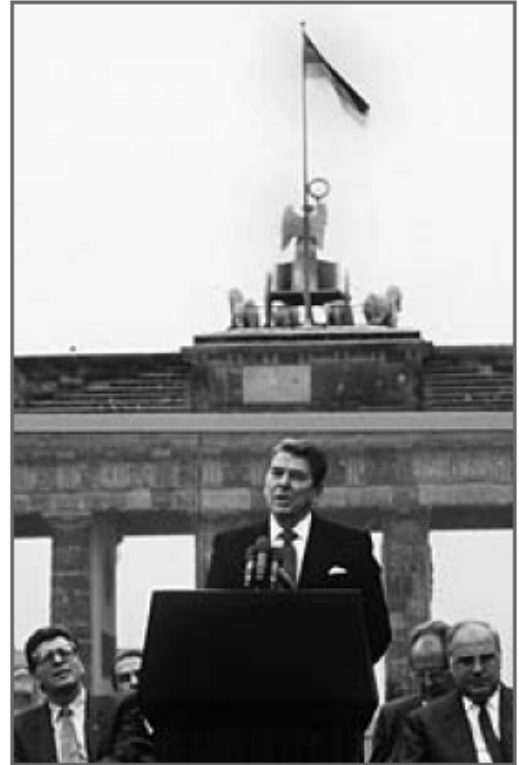
Source: Bialer and Mandelbaum, *The Global Rivals*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1988

## Document 8

... And now the Soviets themselves may, in a limited way, be coming to understand the importance of freedom. We hear much from Moscow about a new policy of reform and openness. Some political prisoners have been released. Certain foreign news broadcasts are no longer being jammed. Some economic enterprises have been permitted to operate with greater freedom from state control. Are these the beginnings of profound changes in the Soviet state? Or are they token gestures, intended to raise false hopes in the West, or to strengthen the Soviet system without changing it? We welcome change and openness; for we believe that freedom and security go together, that the advance of human liberty can only strengthen the cause of world peace.

There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace. 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!...

Source: President Ronald Reagan,  
speech at the Brandenburg Gate,  
June 12, 1987



**President Ronald Reagan speaks on the West Berlin side of the Brandenburg Gate, June 12, 1987.**

Source: German Missions in the United States  
(adapted)

## Document 9

This article was written by former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev following the death of former President Ronald Reagan on June 5, 2004.

... Ronald Reagan's first term as president had been dedicated to restoring America's self-confidence. He appealed to the traditions and optimism of the people, to the American dream, and he regarded as his main task strengthening the economy and the military might of the United States. This was accompanied by confrontational rhetoric toward the Soviet Union, and more than rhetoric—by a number of actions that caused concern both in our country and among many people throughout the world. It seemed that the most important thing about Reagan was his anti-Communism and his reputation as a hawk who saw the Soviet Union as an “evil empire.”

Yet his second term as president emphasized a different set of goals. I think he understood that it is the peacemakers, above all, who earn a place in history. This was consistent with his convictions based on experience, intuition and love of life. In this he was supported by Nancy—his wife and friend, whose role will, I am sure, be duly appreciated...

In the final outcome, our insistence on dialogue proved fully justified. At a White House ceremony in 1987, we signed the intermediate-range nuclear forces treaty, which launched the process of real arms reduction. And, even though we saw the road to a world free of nuclear weapons differently, the very fact of setting this goal in 1986 in Reykjavik [Iceland] helped to break the momentum of the arms race...

Source: Mikhail Gorbachev, “A President Who Listened,” *New York Times*, June 7, 2004