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# Cold War Negotiations: Reagan's Take on an “Evil Empire”

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Fig. 1

“The issue over which we struggle is very simple: Either we continue the concept that man is a unique being capable of determining his own destiny with dignity and God-given inalienable rights...or we admit we are faceless ciphers in a GODLESS collectivist ant heap.”

- Ronald Reagan, speech to the Pilgrim Society in London on April 7, 1975

# What was the Cold War?



- A forty-five year “silent” battle between United States and Soviet Union (Keese 2012).
  - Began at the end of WWII, ended shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall.
- A potential nuclear weapon showdown.
- A war of wills, ideals, and values.

Fig. 2

# Research Question and Methodology :

“What was it about communism that led Ronald Reagan to believe that the Soviet Union was an ‘Evil Empire’ during the Cold War era, and why did he believe that the United States was responsible to stop its spread?”

- Scholarly journal articles
- History textbooks
- Bibliographies
- Autobiography
- Contemporary Newspaper articles (1945-1990)
- Interviews between Reagan and Reporters



Fig. 3

# Outline for this Presentation:

- 1) Brief History of Soviet Union Expansion and Oppression
- 2) Reagan's Belief about Freedom and the United States' Responsibility
- 3) Reagan's Negotiations

# 1) Brief History of Soviet Union Expansion and Oppression

**The Soviet Union oppressed its own people, including minority populations, such as Jews, Muslims, Christians, Lithuanians, Polish, and more.**

- The “Great Purge” (1936-1938)
  - Eliminate any threat to Stalin’s control
  - 750,000+ people executed
  - A million sent to Gulag camps
- Gulag labor camps (1920’s to 1953)
  - Imprisoned over 18 million people
  - Death by execution, starvation, disease, overwork

**Vladimir Lenin:** “Be prepared to resort to every illegal device to conceal the truth—It would not matter if  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the human race perished; the important thing is that the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  be communist” (Brinkley 2011, 48).



Fig. 4

- The oppression, terror, and extermination of the Lithuanian people intensified after WWII.
  - *New York Times*, April 25, 1946
- At least a million people disappeared from the Soviet Union in the 40’s and 50’s
  - *New York Times*, May 25, 1958
- “The *aim* of the atheists is clear to us, to destroy the church by any means, to destroy belief in God.”
  - Persecuted Christians in the Soviet Union (Kengor 2004)

**Joseph Stalin:** “A single death is a tragedy. A million deaths is a statistic” (Brinkley 2011, 48-9)

## 2) Reagan's Belief about the United States' Responsibility in the Cold War

- Reagan wanted to help new countries embrace democracy, freedom, and individual liberty
  - The Berlin Wall was a symbol against freedom
  - Berlin Wall speech
    - Quoted George Marshall saying, “Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine, but against hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos.”
    - “Freedom and security go together—that the advance of human liberty can only strengthen the cause of world peace.”
- The U.S. Congress made the American people aware of Soviet oppression (Kengor 2004, 143)
  - Congress passed a resolution condemning Soviet persecution of Christians: it passed 381 to 2 (1976)



Fig. 5

“To every man his chance, to every man regardless of his birth his shining golden opportunity. To every man the right to live, to work, to be himself & to become whatever his manhood & his vision can combine to make him. This seeker is the promise of Am[erica].”

- Thomas Wolfe (Brinkley 2011, 33)

## Reagan's Mission:

“Our military strength is a prerequisite to peace, but let it be clear we maintain this strength in the hope it will never be used, for the ultimate determinant in the struggle that’s now going on in the world will not be bombs and rockets, but a test of wills and ideas, a trial of spiritual resolve, the values we hold, the beliefs we cherish, the ideals to which we are dedicated.”

—Ronald Reagan (1982)



Fig. 6



### 3) Reagan's Negotiations



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

#### “Peace Through Strength”

“A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, but before we could persuade the Russians to take their finger off the trigger, we had to make them realize that there was a boundary beyond which the Free World would not accept criminal behavior by another state—and to do that we had to be able to negotiate with the Russians from a position of strength.”

—Ronald Reagan (1982)

- Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START)
  - Goal was “to halve the size of [their] long-range nuclear arsenals” (Keese 2012, 580)
- Reagan’s and Gorbachev positions made clear
  - Reagan believed in being “realistic about their military buildup” and was “not going to let them get to the point of dominance” (1981, A10)
- Relationship marked by mutual respect and optimism
- Gorbachev policies and direction
  - “Perestroika” and “Glasnost”
  - Reagan acknowledged, “Mr. Gorbachev deserves most of the credit, as the leader of his country” (Talbot 2004, B7)

## In Conclusion:

- Reagan's stand based upon personal convictions, values, and empathy
  - Not marked by discrimination
  - Not marked by personal or national gain
- Negotiations marked by strength, integrity, and clarity
  - Honest about his viewpoint
  - Unwilling to compromise

*What good might determination informed by empathy lead us to accomplish today?*



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

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Thank you for attending!