

## Further Cold War Crises

In 1948–49, Stalin's attempt to take control of the entire city of Berlin (despite the Allied presence in the western sectors of the city) failed. The tenacity of the Americans and the British made the Berlin airlift not only possible, but also a success. Russia had taken the Cold War to a new level of confrontation which alarmed Western leaders.

As a direct response to Stalin's blockade of the city of Berlin, Western leaders sought greater security for themselves. To this end, a new military alliance was formed called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This treaty established a mutual military pact between member nations.

The membership of NATO in 1949 was a dozen, including the European nations of Britain, France, Denmark, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Iceland, Italy, Portugal, and the North American nations of Canada and the United States. Under this arrangement, member nations agreed to provide military assistance to any member attacked by an aggressor. Within a few years, two additional Western powers joined NATO—Turkey and West Germany.

Although the East did not immediately form a military alliance to counteract NATO, in 1949, the Soviet Union created an economic alliance called COMECON, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. (A military alliance similar to NATO—the Warsaw Pact—was created in 1955.)

By the fall of 1949, another alarm was sounded. In August, the Soviet Union tested and detonated its first atomic bomb. This was a shock to many of the Allied leaders and scientists around the world, many of whom had predicted that the Soviet Union would not develop such a weapon for, perhaps, another generation. The threat of nuclear war became a reality of the Cold War. Both the East and the West now held atomic bombs in their arsenals.

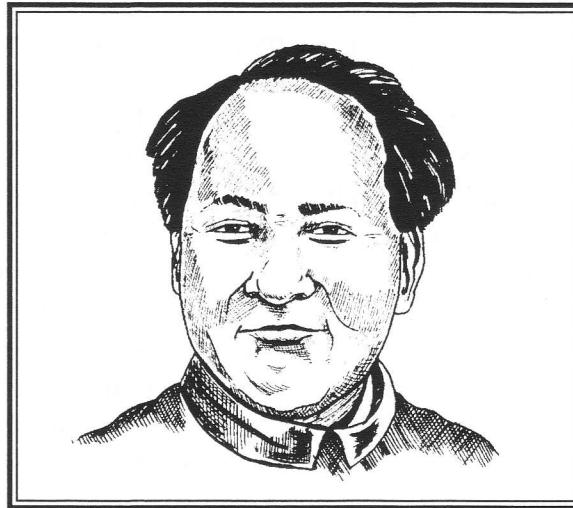
Later that fall, the West faced another loss. On October 1, Communist forces led by Mao Zedong defeated Chinese Nationalist forces for control of China. Mao soon established the People's Republic of China, with Beijing (formerly Peking) as the capital. This represented a serious blow to American foreign policy regarding China. Since World War II, the U.S. had supported the nationalist Chinese under the leadership of Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek),

providing billions in the campaign against communist revolution. This development introduced another major communist power to the equation of the Cold War.

With communist control in China, the United States turned to its former enemy, Japan, as its closest Asian ally. By 1950, the Cold War in Asia developed into a hot war, pitting East against West. On June 25, North Korean Communist forces crossed the border into non-Communist South Korea, setting

off the chain of events known as the Korean War.

President Truman reacted instantaneously. As he ordered American troops to assist the South Koreans, the Security Council of the United Nations met, authorizing UN troops to aid South Korea as well. In all, 19 UN countries provided military assistance to South Korea. The Soviet Union provided support to the North Koreans and, later in the conflict, the communist Chinese sent in troops. By 1953, the conflict was negotiated to an armistice, leaving North and South Korea divided once again.



*Mao Zedong*

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### *Review and Write*

1. What Cold War setbacks did the West experience in 1949?
2. What major nations were involved in the Korean War? How did it start and how did it end?