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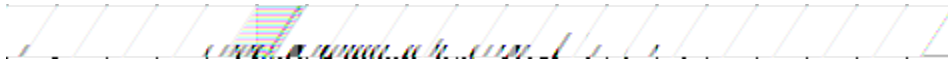
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## **LIST THREATS TO USE NUCLEAR WEAPONS:**

The Sixteen Known Nuclear Crises of the Cold War, 1946-1985 by  
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Vancouver, Canada  
06 March 1996

This e-mail version and its Word-Perfect equivalent, available in hard-copy, were copy-edited by Eric Fawcett, Founding President of Science for Peace, and typed by Pat Woodcock, Scarborough College, University of Toronto. e-mail version from: [fawcett@physics.utoronto.ca](mailto:fawcett@physics.utoronto.ca)

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## **LIST INTRODUCTION**

During the 39 years of the Cold War, the United States of America led the nuclear arms race, repeatedly threatened to use nuclear weapons, and brought civilization to the brink of destruction on several occasions.

This is an appalling record, but there is no reason to believe that any other great power having the same advantages as the USA would have acted any better. The human race is ill-equipped to deal with nuclear weapons. The Cold War and the Soviet nuclear threat to the USA was ended by Mikhail Gorbachev. It is now widely believed, however, that the USA "won the Cold War." The very dangerous crises of the Cold War, their threats distorted by propaganda at the time, are now almost totally forgotten. The role of the military establishment that led us into these crises remains unquestioned, its prestige untarnished. The public remains in ignorance.

This paper is an attempt to inform the public simply and clearly about the very dangerous nuclear crises of the Cold War. Until these are widely understood, the great dangers of present policies will not be questioned and discussed. The USA, with its Freedom of Information Act, is the least secretive of all the world's great powers. Much of the information in this paper has been made available by the benefit of this Act. Members of the public have thus been able to inform themselves of the way that nuclear weapons have threatened world security over the years.

There are 36,000 nuclear weapons in the world in 1996 and the threat of the destruction of civilization by these weapons remains very great. The more that nuclear weapons increase military power, the more they decrease national security. The only escape from this paradox is by the balanced reduction and eventual total abolition of these weapons on a rigid schedule. This is a matter of great urgency; the present lull in great power rivalry may not last long.

## **LIST Table I. Sixteen Nuclear Crises of the Cold War: Dates and Weapons**

Crisis	Year	Length	Threat	Nuclear STRATEGIC WEAPONS	
				U.S.A	U.S.S.R
			by		
#1 IRAN I	1946	One day	USA	40	0
#2 YUGOSLAVIA	1946	One day	USA	40	0
#3 BERLIN I	1948	15 months	USA	120	0
#4 KOREA	1950	36 months	USA	400	?
#5 VIETNAM I	1954	3 months	USA	1200	?
#6 CHINA I	1954	8 months	USA	1200	?
#7 SUEZ	1956	7 days	USSR & USA	2100	60
#8 CHINA II	1958	2 months	USA	3000	110
#9 BERLIN II	1959	4 months	USA	3200	175
#10 BERLIN III	1961	4 months	USA	* 3600	* 240
#11 CUBA	1962	2 weeks	USSR & USA	* 3900	* 300
#12 VIETNAM II	1969	3 months	USA	* 4000	* 1400
#13 JORDAN	1970	2 weeks	USA	* 4000	* 1800
#14 ISRAEL	1973	19 days	USA	* 6800	* 2200
#15 IRAN II	1980	6 months	USA	* 10312	* 6846
#16 FIRST STRIKE	1983-85	24 months	USA	*	*
Total Threat	1945-85	107 months	of nuclear crisis	* Nuclear Winter Threat	

Table I shows, in summary, that during the 39 years of the Cold War (more precisely 476 months, from the start of Crisis #1 in March 1946 to the end of Crisis #16 in November 1985), there was:

1. a serious threat of nuclear weapons use for 107 months (23% of time);
2. a serious threat of nuclear war that would destroy most of the USA, USSR and Europe during these major crises: VIETNAM I, CHINA I, SUEZ, CHINA II, BERLIN II, BERLIN III, CUBA, VIETNAM II, IRAN II and FIRST STRIKE, a total of 55 months (12% of time);
3. a serious threat of the extinction of much of life on the globe from the effects of Nuclear Winter during all major crises after Crisis #9, BERLIN II: a total of 38.5 months (8% of time).

## **LIST Table II. Principal Events of the Cold War, 1945 to 1991**

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### **PERIOD 1. 1945-49: U.S. NUCLEAR-WEAPON MONOPOLY**

- 1945 WW-II ends with atomic-bombing of Hiroshima (6 Aug), Nagasaki (9 Aug)
- 1946 Iran I and Yugoslav Crises #1 and #2
- 1948-49 Berlin I Crisis #3
- 1949 Soviets explode atomic bomb (September) and China goes communist

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### **PERIOD 2. 1949-62: NUKE THEM BEFORE THEY CAN NUKE US**

- 1950 Korean War Crisis #4: strong pressure on President Truman (and - later on

President Eisenhower in 1954) to use the atomic bomb

- 1953 USA tests the first hydrogen bomb (31 October)
- 1954 Vietnam I Crisis #4: USSR tests hydrogen bomb

1955 China I Crisis #6

- 1956 Suez Crisis #7
- 1957 USSR launches Sputnik, the first satellite (4 October)
- 1958 China II Crisis #8
- 1959 Berlin II Crisis #9

1960 USA launches the first Polaris nuclear submarine

- 1961 Berlin III Crisis #10
- 1962 Cuba Crisis #11

---

### **PERIOD 3. 1962-69: SCARED STRAIGHT**

- 1963 Test Ban Treaty (4 August); Kennedy assassinated (22 November)
- 1964 Khrushchev ousted (15 October); China tests atomic bomb (16 October)

1965

- 
- 1967 China tests hydrogen bomb (17 June)
- 1968 Tet offensive in Vietnam (31 January)

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### **PERIOD 4. 1969-83 : RELENTLESS ARMS RACE**

- 1969 Vietnam II Crisis #12 (August-October)

1970 Jordan Crisis #13; USA MIRVs land-based ICBMs (multiple warheads)

- 1971 USA MIRVs its submarine-launched Ballistic Missiles
- 1972 last U.S. combat troops leave Vietnam (11 August)
- 1973 Israel Crisis #13 (Yom Kippur); Soviets first MIRV an ICBM
- 1974 India tests atomic bomb

1975 fall of Saigon to the communists (29 April)

- 1976 secret funding of SDI (Star Wars) begins
- 1979 USSR invades Afghanistan (December)
- 1979 Shah of Iran flees (16 January) and U.S. Embassy seized (4 November)

1980 Iran II Crisis #15, President Carter sanctions First Strike, PD59

- 1981 Reagan launches the biggest arms drive in history: \$1.6 trillion
- 1982 Swedish Academy Report says that a massive nuclear war will cause a Nuclear Winter, thus threatening life on the whole earth.

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### **PERIOD 5. 1985-91: GORBACHEV ENDS COLD WAR**

1985

- 1986 "Year of Peace"; nuclear-tests: USA fifteen, USSR zero
- 1987 Secretary Gorbachev and President Reagan sign INF Treaty (8 December)
- 1988 Gorbachev allows Polish Elections (June)
- 1989 Gorbachev allows demolition of Berlin Wall (9 November)

1990 - 1991 USA launches "Desert Storm" (17 January); Gorbachev ousted (19 August); Yeltsin and leaders of Ukraine and White Russia meet and abolish the USSR without any mandate (8 December).

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### **PERIOD 6. 1991- : POST-COLD-WAR REGROUPINGS**

Similar to PERIOD 3 (Scared Straight); effective nuclear-arms control is desperately needed or else PERIOD 4 (Relentless Arms Race) may repeat with dire results.

### LIST PERIOD 1. 1945-49: U.S. NUCLEAR-WEAPON MONOPOLY

1945 was a pivotal year in world history:

- May: WW-II ends with the defeat of Germany mainly by the USSR, USA and UK
- 16 July: First atomic test explosion,
- 6 August: Hiroshima destroyed by an atomic bomb,

- 9 August: Nagasaki destroyed by an atomic bomb.

The USA had thus rapidly shown that it was prepared to use this new ultra-destructive weapon, with its lingering poisonous effects, in the same way as conventional weapons. President Truman believed that the Soviet Union would never be able to make an atomic bomb. He did not hesitate to use the threat of the U.S. atomic bomb against the Soviet Union. The first such threats came only ten months after the end of WW-II, in disputes over the Soviet-Iranian border area (Crisis # 1, IRAN I) and the Balkans (Crisis #2, YUGOSLAVIA I) Crisis #3, BERLIN I, was much more serious and lasted for 15 months. The terminal event of this period came on 3 September 1949, when the Soviets exploded their first atomic bomb. The U.S. monopoly of nuclear weapons had lasted barely four years.

#### LIST Nuclear Crisis #1 in Year: 1946

Name of Crisis: IRAN I (Azerbaijan)

Threatened use of nuclear weapons by: USA

Target: USSR

Crisis starts: March 1946

Crisis ends: 48 hours after Truman's ultimatum

Threat of nuclear attack: Stated

At issue in Crisis: British pre-war domination of Iran was challenged after the war by the Soviets.

**BACKGROUND:** During WW-II there was a USA and Soviet wartime agreement to occupy Iran jointly. This denied it to the Germans and allowed aid convoys to enter the USSR through Iran. After WW-II, the Soviets demanded oil concessions equal to those of the British, as previously agreed. To enforce this claim Soviet troops remained in northern Iran and supported a revolutionary movement in Azerbaijan Province adjoining Soviet territory. The Soviets moved tanks to the border and showed no sign of removing their troops from Iran by 2 March 1946 as agreed by them at the London Conference of the Council of Foreign Ministers.

**CRISIS EVENTS:** President Truman meets personally with Soviet Ambassador Gromyko and delivers an ultimatum: Remove Soviet troops in 48 hours or the USA will drop the atomic bomb. "We're going to drop it on you," Truman is reported to say to Gromyko.

**OUTCOME:** Soviets removed their troops in 24 hours. This threat of an atomic bomb attack on the Soviet Union by Truman came only 10 months after the end of WW-II. Three months after this crisis, on 14 June 1946, the USA presented the Baruch Plan for the international control of nuclear material for the production of atomic energy. Soviet rejection of this plan must now be viewed in the light of their experience of USA "atomic control" in the IRAN I crisis over Azerbaijan.

#### LIST Nuclear Crisis #2 in Year: 1946

Name of Crisis: **YUGOSLAV**

Threatened use of nuclear weapons by: USA

Target: Yugoslavia?

Crisis starts: November 1946

Crisis ends: November 1946

Threat of nuclear attack: Implied

At issue in Crisis:

1) U.S. military aircraft shot down over Yugoslavia; USA right to over-fly Yugoslavia; Greece, a strategic base in the Balkans.

**BACKGROUND:** During WW-II, left wing guerrilla groups in Yugoslavia and Greece were the most active in fighting the German occupation and received British support. Yugoslavia was the only European country to free itself from the German invaders

without help, and emerged from WW-II, as an independent, communist state. Neighboring Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria were freed by the Red Army from German occupation and then became communist states under Soviet control. In neighboring Greece to the south, however, a civil war raged from 1945-1949 in which the left-wing ELAS guerrillas were opposed by right-wing Greek groups. With the German army gone, the British switched their support and, until they withdrew in early 1947, helped these right-wing groups. The USA replaced the British and provided major military aid to the Greek right-wing forces in an increasingly severe civil war. Yugoslavia gave aid to ELAS forces and was considered hostile to U.S. interests, as the USA became increasingly involved in the Greek civil war.

**CRISIS EVENTS:** 1946 November: A U.S. military aircraft is shot down over Yugoslavia. Six B-29s deployed to Germany and then flown across the Yugoslav border, in a show of force.

**OUTCOME:** No more U.S. military aircraft were shot down over Yugoslavia.

### LIST Nuclear Crisis #3 in Year: 1948

Name of Crisis: **BERLIN I**

Threatened use of nuclear weapons by: USA

Target: 24 Soviet cities (Operation BROILER)

Crisis starts: 24 June 1948, Berlin blockaded

Crisis ends: 30 September 1949, access restored

Duration: 15 months

Threat of nuclear attack: Stated

At issue in Crisis: Control of Berlin, Germany and Europe

**BACKGROUND:** 1945, 2 May: Red Army took Berlin, losing 100,000 men.

-7 May: Germany surrendered. The Red Army met the American and British armies 100 miles west of Berlin along the Elbe, as agreed. Soviets allowed U.S., British and French forces to share control of Berlin, also as agreed. Total Soviet WW-II losses: 26 million, or one out of every 7 Russians; total American losses: 292,000, or one out of every 513 Americans. Destruction in USSR: 17,000 towns, 70,000 villages, 31,000 factories, 84,000 schools, 40,000 miles of railroad track; destruction in USA: nil.

Soviet aims after WW-II were: to neutralize Germany; to build a "wall" of friendly states on the USSR western frontier; to recover and rebuild the USSR

The Soviets built their "wall" by imposing harsh communist governments on Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. A steady breakdown of relations between the USSR and the Western powers then followed.

1946, March: IRAN I Crisis #1, when Truman first threatened to use A-bomb.

-5 March: Churchill first spoke of the "Iron Curtain" in Fulton Missouri.

-September: Elections in Berlin showed no support for Soviets in West sectors.

1947, 12 March: Truman Doctrine of U.S. Military support for West Europe.

-5 June: Marshall Plan for U.S. economic support for West Europe.

1948, February: communist coup in Czechoslovakia so that, in Central Europe, only the status of Germany was still undecided.

**CRISIS EVENTS:** 1948, 24 June: Russians cut land access to Berlin

-July: Emergency airlift to West Berlin by the USA and UK begins

-28 July: Forrestal (Secretary of Navy), George Marshall (Secretary of State) and Mar Bradley (Army Chief of Staff) meet to decide if Operation BROILER should be executed in response to the Berlin blockade.

-9 September: Forrestal asks British Admiral Sir Frederick Dalrymple about British willingness to see the atomic bomb used.

-10 September: Forrestal asks Marshall to give authority to use the atomic bomb to commanders in the field. This meeting concludes with production of NSC 30, which gives the President alone power to order an atomic-bomb attack.

-13 October: Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) send a top secret memorandum to the National Security Council (NSC) demanding to know whether the USA should launch atomic war on the USSR

-14 October: JCS and NSC meet but JCS fail to get permission to launch war.

1949, 30 September: access to Berlin restored and airlift and crisis ends.

**OUTCOME:** In September 1949 the Soviets tested their first atomic bomb, so this was the last crisis in which the USA had a monopoly of nuclear weapons.

In October China becomes communist with the victory of Mao Tse-Tung. Also in October, the "Admirals' Revolt" with Admirals Ostie, Burke and Denfield testifying to the House Armed Services Committee that an atomic blitz is "morally wrong," was quelled by Truman firing Denfield, a warning to all U.S. officers that open criticism of nuclear policy meant dismissal. The division of Berlin and Germany hardened for the duration of the Cold War.

#### LIST PERIOD 2. 1949-1962: NUKE THEM FIRST

The detonation of the first Soviet atomic bomb on 3 September 1949 was a great shock to the U.S. leadership in Washington, who had expected at least a ten-year lead. This was followed almost immediately, in October 1949, by the victory of Mao Tse-Tung's communist forces in China. If China's neighbors Indonesia and India also became communist, most of the world's population would then be in the communist camp.

These were major strategic setbacks for Washington and NSC 68 (14 April 1950) was the policy response by the U.S. National Security Council. It called for:

a) containment of the socialist bloc (USSR and China) with a 6,000 mile chain of nuclear bases, extending from Europe, through the Middle East and South-East Asia to Japan and Alaska;

b) massive re-armament, building the hydrogen bomb, stockpiling atomic bombs and building a long-range bomber fleet.

"The date the Soviets possess an atomic stockpile of 200 bombs would be a critical date for the United States." (NSC 68) This anticipated date was 1954. The nuclear arms race was now launched. Presidents Truman and Eisenhower came under very heavy pressure in the National Security Council, especially from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to launch nuclear war against China and the USSR, especially during the Korean War and after the USSR exploded its first hydrogen bomb on 12 August 1953.

The eight nuclear crises, starting with the Korean Crisis in 1950 and culminating with the Cuban crisis in 1962, make this thirteen years the second most dangerous period in human history. The most dangerous period occurred during the First Strike Crisis #16 when nuclear stockpiles and destructive potentials were enormously greater.

#### LIST Nuclear Crisis 4 in Year: 1950

Name of Crisis: KOREAN

Threatened use of nuclear weapons by: USA

Target: North Korea, China, USSR

Crisis starts: June 1950, North Korea invades South Korea

Crisis ends: July 1953, Armistice at Panmunjon.

Duration: 3 years

Threat of nuclear attack: President Truman states, "There has always been consideration of its use." President Eisenhower, "To keep the attack from becoming costly, it was clear we would have to use atomic weapons." The War Plan was Operation SHAKEDOWN, with plans 6 days after the start of WW-III for:

-bombers from Maine to drop 20 atomic bombs in Moscow-Gorki area;

-bombers from Labrador to drop 12 atomic bombs in Leningrad area;

-bombers from UK to drop 52 atomic bombs in Volga and Donets Basin;

-bombers from the Azores to drop 15 atomic bombs in Caucasus area;

-bombers from Guam to drop 15 atomic bombs in Vladivostok and Irkutsk areas.

At issue in Crisis: threat to South Korea by North Korea backed by China, the new

communist power in the area.

**BACKGROUND:** 1949, September: the communists, under Mao Tse-Tung, won control of China.-October: Soviets tested their first atomic bomb. There was soon great pressure within the U.S. leadership to destroy the Soviet Union before it gained nuclear equality. Whether China, now under communist control, was to be a priority for atomic destruction was a hotly contested issue among the JCS and the NSC as the Korean war ran its course.

**CRISIS EVENTS:** 1950, June: North Korea invades South Korea. UN Security Council, with the Soviets absent, sends UN forces to South Korea. UN retreat to Pusan.

-15 September: Inchon landings by USA, traps the North Korean army.

-7 October: U.S. troops cross 38th-parallel into North Korea.

-10 October: China warns it will enter the war if UN forces advance further into North Korea.

-24 November: Chinese arrive at UN to negotiate. USA begins a big offensive the same day.

-28 November: Rear-Admiral Lalor asks JCS for permission to use atomic bomb to discourage intervention by China and thus allow UN forces to leave.

-6 December: Chinese army attacks and rapidly drives U.N.-U.S. forces from North Korea.

1951, 11 January: Symington (chair of NSC) presents NSC-100 calling for a surprise atomic attack on China with an ultimatum to USSR to avoid any "aggressive" moves.

-1 February: NSC meeting calls for preparations for total war.

-10 April: Truman fires General McArthur for his insubordinate demands for immediate attacks on Chinese bases.

-20 April: McArthur given hero's welcome in New York.

-14 August: JCS prepare study of use of the new Mark IX and W-19 tactical atomic weapons in Korea. These could be used without depleting the SHAKEDOWN stockpile for Europe.

1952, 31 October: USA tests the first hydrogen bomb

-November: Eisenhower elected President.

1953, 11 February: Eisenhower at NSC meeting says, "We should consider the tactical use of atomic weapons in the Kaesong area." (Korea)

-19 May: JCS calls for a major offensive that will expand the war effort outside Korea and include use of nuclear weapons.

-20 May: JCS present their plans to the NSC. Eisenhower is finally persuaded to use nuclear weapons in Korea if negotiations fail.

-July: Armistice at Panmunjon ends the Korean War

-27 November: At meeting with French Prime Minister Laniel and British Prime Minister Churchill, President Eisenhower find both strongly opposed to use of nuclear weapons in Korea if war breaks out again.

**OUTCOME:** South Korea was secured, with the USA committed to defend it and maintain large forces there, which are in South Korea up to present.

#### LIST Nuclear Crisis #5 in Year: 1954

Name of Crisis: VIETNAM I (Dien Bien Phu)

Threatened use of nuclear weapons by: USA

Target: Vietnam; later, China and USSR

Crisis starts: 8 March 1954, 3,000 French surrounded at Dien Bien Phu

Crisis ends: 19 June 1954

Duration: 3 months

Threat of nuclear attack: Implied; U.S. nuclear-armed navy carrier force near Vietnam to launch Operation VULTURE, using atomic bombs against Viet Minh forces. The Strategic Air Command BASIC PLAN will use 735 bombers to attack the USSR and China using 1750 atomic bombs.

At issue in Crisis: "A-Day", the last day on which the USA could launch a nuclear attack on USSR without fear of a response, is the probably the real issue, with the threatened fall of the Vietnam "domino" only a pretext.



**BACKGROUND:** In WW-II the Japanese easily captured the French colony of Vietnam, and the only opposition was from the Communist Viet Minh under Ho Chi Minh. In 1945 Japanese surrendered Vietnam to the British, and the French resumed control, but the Viet Minh opposed the return of their run-away colonial masters. France waged a long, failing war against Viet Minh guerrillas. In January 1954 French established a key base at Dien Bien Phu, deep in Vietnam, but the Viet Minh "do the impossible" and bring in heavy artillery.

**CRISIS EVENTS: 1954,** March: Dien Bien Phu under siege, heavy Viet Minh shelling.  
-8 March: French General Ely in Washington asks for U.S. help.  
-25 March: U.S. Army G3 Section proposes use of atomic weapons in Vietnam.  
-7 April: Eisenhower's "Domino Theory": If Vietnam is lost, all Asia follows.  
-10 April: President Eisenhower sends Secretary of State Dulles and Admiral Radford to Europe to push Operation VULTURE, which Prime Minister Churchill opposes (and disagrees with the Domino Theory).  
-23 April: French Foreign Minister Bidault refuses Dulles' offer of 2 atomic bombs  
-27 April: Dulles falsely hints to French that Eden of UK supports Operation VULTURE  
-30 April: Eisenhower to Cutler of NSC, "We might give the French atomic bombs."  
-8 May: Viet Minh capture Dien Bien Phu.  
-25 May: NSC and Admiral Radford advise atomic bombing China if Chinese troops support the Viet Minh drive on Hanoi.  
-19 June: Eisenhower, "atomic bombing China means atomic bombing the USSR What would the USA do with destruction extending from the Elbe to Vladivostok?". China does not intervene and the Crisis ends.  
**OUTCOME:** The USA first became involved in Vietnam.

#### LIST Nuclear Crisis #6 in Year: 1954

Name of Crisis: CHINA I (Quemoy and Matsu)  
Threatened use of nuclear weapons by: USA  
Target: China, USSR  
Crisis starts: September 1954  
Crisis ends: 1 May 1955  
Duration: 8 months  
Threat of nuclear attack: Stated  
At issue in Crisis: 1) Threatened end of the U.S. nuclear monopoly, since new Soviet Bear and Bison bombers now put the USA within range of attack; 2) Communist control of China.  
**BACKGROUND:** 1935: Mao Tse-Tung and his communist guerrilla army arrived in North China after the 6,000 mile Long March. Japanese aggression in China began again.  
1935-45: Mao's guerrillas tied up large Japanese forces in North China and offered the only effective resistance to the invaders. All U.S. aid, however, went to Chiang Kai-Shek's forces holed up in Chungking and avoiding battle.  
1945, August: Japan defeated and USA supplied Chiang's 4.3 million man army with arms, ammunition and air power for its anti-communist drive. Mao's 1.2 million guerrillas controlled only the countryside of North China, but Mao's forces had something that Chiang's far bigger and better-equipped army lacked: support from the peasants who had experienced the brutality of their rule.  
1949, October: Chiang Kai-Shek and his armies were defeated by Mao's armies and driven into exile in Taiwan. Chiang fortified two islands, Quemoy and Matsu, just 8 miles from the coast of China as bases for his re-conquest of China. Chiang provoked China on two occasions by moving large numbers of troops to these Islands, and both times the USA went to the nuclear brink in support of Chiang's provocations.  
1953, 2 February: President Eisenhower ordered the U.S. Navy no longer to prevent Chiang's forces on Taiwan from attacking mainland China.  
**CRISIS EVENTS:** 1954, August: Chiang moves 58,000 troops to Quemoy and 15,000 to Matsu.

- September: China begins shelling the islands.
- 12 September: Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) recommend atomic bombing China.
- 23 November: China sentences 13 U.S. airmen, shot down over China during the Korean War; again the JCS call for nuclear strikes against China. (Note that this marks the 6th time in 1954 that almost the entire U.S. leadership, the JCS and NSC, called for nuclear war: VIETNAM Crisis #5, three times; May, in response to Soviet bomb tests; Quemoy and Matsu; Airmen's Trials.)
- 1955, 15 February: Churchill advises against U.S. atomic defence of Quemoy and Matsu.
- 10 March: Secretary of State Dulles at a National Security Council (NSC) meeting states that the U.S. people and the world have to be prepared for probable U.S. atomic war against China.
- 15 March: Dulles states that USA is seriously considering use of atomic bombs in Quemoy and Matsu area.
- 16 March: President Eisenhower, "Atomic bombs can be used...as you would use a bullet." This sparks International uproar .. NATO foreign ministers oppose atomic attack on China.
- 25 March: Admiral Carney, "The President is planning "to destroy Red China's military potential." He predicts war on April 15.
- 23 April: China at Afro-Asian Conference say ready to negotiate on Taiwan,
- 1 May: Shelling of Quemoy and Matsu ceases, Crisis ends.
- 1 August: China releases 11 U.S. airmen.

OUTCOME: Chiang, having almost provoked war between USA and China, will use this gambit again, and no effective USA moves were made to prevent this; crude provocations by Chiang (and his U.S. allies) brought China close to atomic destruction and the Chinese leaders certainly remember these events.

#### LIST Nuclear Crisis 7 in Year: 1956

Name of Crisis: **SUEZ**  
 Threatened use of nuclear weapons by: U.S.S.R and then USA  
 Target: London, Paris, USSR  
 Crisis starts: 29 October 1956, Israel invades Egypt  
 Crisis ends: 6 November 1956, Britain and France obey UN cease-fire.  
 Duration: 7 days  
 Threat of nuclear attack: Stated  
 At issue in Crisis: Egypt's right to control the Suez Canal. Britain and France see Egyptian control of canal as a threat to their oil supply.

**BACKGROUND:**  
 1868: Canal concession granted to France by Egypt's Turkish rulers.  
 1859-69: Canal built by French Co.  
 1875: Britain bought major interest.  
 1882: Britain occupied Egypt and remains in effective control until 1956.  
 1936: Britain signed treaty agreeing to withdraw forces by 1956.  
 1954: Col. Nasser became President of a strongly nationalistic Egypt.  
 1956: Last British forces left very large bases on the Canal.

- 19 July: USA withdrew from plan to finance Aswan Dam.
- 26 July: President Nasser of Egypt announced Suez Canal nationalized.
- 10 August: Joint British-French military planning to attack Egypt began.
- 2 September: President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Eden: "...American public opinion flatly rejects the thought of using force." (USA then imported only 4% of its oil from Middle East, compared to Europe's 75%). Also, with approach of U.S. Presidential election, Eisenhower wanted no crises.
- 14 October: French and British met at Chequers and planned to invite Israeli attack on Egypt as a pretext for their seizure of the canal.

**CRISIS EVENTS:** 1956, 29 October: Israel invades Sinai and advances to the Suez Canal. Britain and France demand a cease-fire.

- 30 October: USA in the UN Security Council leads the attack against this invasion, to the dismay of France, Britain and Israel. Britain demands that Egypt

allow British forces to re-occupy Canal Zone.

-5 November: Egypt's refusal is then used as a pretext for the seizure of Port Said by British and French troops, as planned. Khrushchev makes crude threats to ... "use force to crush the aggressors," and hints that London and Paris might suffer atomic bombing. This causes a U.S. counterthreat that any such Soviet attack would be met by a U.S. nuclear response.

-6 November: Britain and France agree to UN cease fire demand.

**OUTCOME:** A strategic disaster for the West in the Middle East: 1) The Suez Canal was blocked and Europe's oil cut off; 2) Soviet influence rapidly expanded in the Middle East; 3) U.S.A showed that it would not back imperial adventures by UK and France; the USA became the master of western strategy now.

#### LIST Nuclear Crisis 8 in Year: 1958

Name of Crisis: CHINA II (Quemoy and Matsu)

Threatened use of nuclear weapons by: USA

Target: China, USSR

Crisis starts: 24 August 1958, China begins shelling Quemoy and Matsu

Crisis ends: October 1958, Shelling ends

Duration: 2 months

Threat of nuclear attack: Stated, U.S. 7th fleet off Chinese coast.

At issue in Crisis: Chiang's right to mobilize armies on Quemoy and Matsu, 8 miles from the coast of China, a crude provocation permitted by the USA

**BACKGROUND:** (See CHINA I Crisis #6) In August 1958 Chiang Kai-Shek moved 100,000 troops to Quemoy and Matsu. This was over one third of his army. Nuclear-capable U.S. howitzers were moved to Quemoy Island.

**CRISIS EVENTS:** 1958 24 August: China begins shelling Quemoy and Matsu.

-6 September: USA hears Chinese Premier Chou en Lai ready to negotiate with General Twining of Joint Chiefs of Staff, who asks President Eisenhower to give 7th Fleet Commander authority to order nuclear strikes against China. Eisenhower refuses.

-7 September: Soviets inform Eisenhower that in the event of a U.S. nuclear attack on China they will come to China's aid.

-11 September: Eisenhower on TV presents "Domino" view of crisis. U.S. public reaction: very strong opposition to this risky policy. "As much as two thirds of the world and 50% of U.S. opinion opposes the course which we have been following," wrote Eisenhower to Dulles.

-19 September: Soviets repeat their warning of 7 September. Shortly after, Neil McElroy, Secretary of Defence, suggests to Eisenhower that Chiang Kai-Shek be assassinated and replaced, but Eisenhower rejects this plan. A face saving formula is worked out: China shells Quemoy and Matsu on odd dates of the month and Chiang's troops re-supply on even dates(!) This eventually leads to a cease-fire and the end of the crisis.

**OUTCOME:**

1) First time a large section of the U.S. public denied Washington its support in a nuclear crisis;

2) Losing U.S. support, Chiang quit his crude provocations. 3)

#### LIST Nuclear Crisis 9 in Year: 1959

Name of Crisis: **BERLIN II**

Threatened use of nuclear weapons by: USA

Target: USSR

Crisis starts: November 1958

Crisis ends: 20 March (?) 1959

Duration: 4 months

Threat of nuclear attack: Stated

At issue in Crisis: Status of Berlin

**BACKGROUND:** 1954, 2 October: Western European Union agreement signed by France, Britain, USA and West Germany provided for West German re-armament. The Soviets who had paid such a heavy price to defeat Germany (one Russian in 7 was killed) saw this as a major threat and provocation, also a breach of the Potsdam agreement to "completely and finally abolish" German military structures of all types. U.S. investment in West Berlin had turned it into the top manufacturing city in West Germany. Each year 300,000 East Germans escaped to the West via Berlin and from 1949-58 3 million East Germans had escaped this way. Western radio propaganda and spy operations used West Berlin as a major base. Berlin remained a smoldering fuse to war.

**CRISIS EVENTS:** 1958, 10 November: Khrushchev proposes that control of Berlin be turned over to East Germany in 6 months. The western allies rejected this since it meant granting de facto recognition to East Germany. Post-war agreements on Berlin appear threatened and a new blockade of Berlin possible.

1959, 11 March: As Khrushchev's deadline approached Democrats urge Eisenhower to mobilize. At press conference he heatedly rejects this: "We are certainly not going to fight a ground war in Europe", and refuses to escalate the Crisis.

-15 March: Air Force General Chief of Staff Thomas White's testimony to Senate is released: the Berlin crisis can lead to war with the Soviet Union and "nuclear weapons may have to be used."

-20 March: Khrushchev deny any rigid deadline and the Crisis subsides.

**OUTCOME:** Khrushchev and Eisenhower met at Camp David, Maryland, in September 1959. Each wished a reasonable solution on Berlin, but their moderate positions were heavily opposed by belligerent Democrats in the USA and hard-liners in Moscow, with Mao in China calling for wars of national liberation and accusing Khrushchev of "appeasement". The status of Berlin remained unclear and dangerous.

#### LIST Nuclear Crisis 10 in Year: 1961

Name of Crisis: **BERLIN III**

Threatened use of nuclear weapons by: USA & USSR

Target: USA & USSR

Crisis starts: 13 July 1961

Crisis ends: 17 October 1961

Duration: 4 months

Threat of nuclear attack: Implied, with war plan SIOP-62 having 3,423 targets and a stockpile of 18,500 nuclear weapons.

At issue in Crisis: Status of Berlin.

**BACKGROUND:** Germany was seen by the West as a NATO ally and by the Soviets as a foe defeated at enormous cost and now re-armed. Western presence in Berlin, deep in East Germany was always a Cold-War trigger. Kennedy, a young president, lacking Eisenhower's experience, skill and prestige, turned a problem into a Crisis by acting tough. His tough posture was helped by new intelligence reports. During 1961 the U.S. Samos satellite sent the first sharp photos of the Soviet Union. They showed that instead of having 200 missiles (the CIA estimate) the Soviets had FOUR! Also shown were the exact locations of all 190 Soviet strategic bombers. A disarming "first strike" by the USA was therefore possible. This strengthened Kennedy's hand in the BERLIN III and CUBA Crises #10 and #11.

**CRISIS EVENTS:** 1961 April and June: Kennedy meets Khrushchev in Vienna over the German issue (see BERLIN I, Crisis #3) and the possibility of a new blockade of Berlin.

-13 July: At a National Security Council Meeting Dean Acheson and Lyndon Johnson call for "proclamation of national emergency over Berlin".

-25 July: Kennedy on TV, "We cannot permit the Communists to drive us out of Berlin by force", boosts defence budget, calls up reserves and enlarges civil defence measures (atomic bomb shelters)

-July: 30,000 refugees flood into West Berlin from East in July.

-7 August: Khrushchev on TV echoes Kennedy's determination.  
-13 August: Soviets seal Berlin crossings to refugees.  
-17 August: Construction of Berlin Wall begins. Its intent was unclear to Kennedy, who says that there is "one chance in five of a nuclear exchange" (Schlesinger, 1965). Kennedy orders 1,500 U.S. troops to move by land through East Germany to Berlin. They are unopposed.  
-24 August: Soviets accuse West of flying "revanchists, extremists, saboteurs and spies" into Berlin.  
-30 August: Soviets resume nuclear testing.  
September: A full scale surprise nuclear attack plan by U.S. B47 and B52 bombers is considered by Kennedy, McNamara, Maxwell Taylor and Bundy. When McNamara probes Lord Mountbatten, Chief of British Defence staff on this plan, Mountbatten says, "My God, anybody who thinks of that is mad!"  
-17 October: Khrushchev at the 22nd Party Congress says West understands the German and Berlin issues and is willing to negotiate and the Crisis ends.  
**OUTCOME:** Berlin issue de-fused again. Kennedy and Khrushchev's improved contact is critical in the much more serious CUBA Crisis #11 of 1962.

#### LIST Nuclear Crisis 11 in Year: 1962

Name of Crisis: CUBA  
Threatened use of nuclear weapons by: USA and USSR  
Target: USA and USSR  
Crisis starts: 14 October 1962, Kennedy gets U-2 photos of missile bases  
Crisis ends: 28 October 1962, Khrushchev agrees to remove the missiles  
Duration: 2 weeks  
Threat of nuclear attack: Stated  
At issue in Crisis: 1) Security of Cuba; 2) Security of USA; 3) Right of USSR to match U.S. medium range nuclear-missile threat.  
**BACKGROUND:** 1961, 17 April: 1400 Cuban exiles invaded Cuba at Playa Giron (Bay of Pigs) with U.S. support. Cubans defeated invaders in two days. President Kennedy then approves Operation MONGOOSE: several attempts to kill Castro, sabotage, arson, crop poisoning and murder of Cuban civilians. Target date for Cuban "revolt" with U.S. military support was (ironically) October 1962. To defend Cuba, Khrushchev offered Castro nuclear-armed missiles to be installed secretly.  
**CRISIS EVENTS:** 1962, 14 October, Sunday: Kennedy gets U-2 photos of Soviet missile bases in Cuba.  
-17 October, Wednesday: 16 missiles installed and would be ready to fire by October 24. All of JCS call for immediate attack. General Le May, USAAF Chief of Staff, tells Kennedy an attack is essential and that Soviets will not respond. Secretary of Defence McNamara and Robert Kennedy favour a blockade. Late p.m.: Soviet Ambassador Gromyko visits Kennedy, who chooses not to confront him with the missile evidence. This could have avoided the more dangerous public challenge and demand for a humiliating withdrawal that Kennedy made two days later. This also excludes U.S. allies from consultation, and leads France later to quit NATO.  
-22 October, Monday: Kennedy on TV reveals the Crisis to Americans (but not U.S. provocations, e.g., Operation MONGOOSE). 42 medium range N-missiles are in Cuba already (Schlesinger) and 25 Soviet cargo ships heading for Cuba towards 180 U.S. navy ships, 68 aircraft squadrons and 8 aircraft carriers. Missile crews are on full alert. The B-52 bomber force is ordered into the air fully loaded with nuclear weapons. In Florida the largest U.S. invasion force since WW-II is gathering.  
-23 October, Tuesday: Khrushchev: "If U.S. navy interferes with Soviet ships, necessary measures will be taken." OAS gives USA full support.  
-24 October, Wednesday: Quarantine goes into effect. Soviet ships approach the 500 mile zone. U-2 photos taken on October 23rd show that the missiles will be ready in a few days. Twenty Soviet ships stopped or turned around and six Soviet submarines approach Cuba.  
-26 October, Friday: First ship stopped and boarded (Marucla, Panamanian). Kennedy

orders State Department to prepare a post-invasion government for Cuba. 6:00 p.m., Khrushchev to Kennedy: Missiles in Cuba defensive and can be withdrawn if USA agrees not to invade Cuba and recalls its fleet.

-27 October, Saturday: A tougher Khrushchev proposal: Missiles out and guarantees in Cuba must be matched with the same for U.S. missiles in Turkey.

JCS proposes air strike on Monday followed by invasion. U-2 is shot down over Cuba by SAM. JCS insists that the SAM sites be bombed on Sunday. Kennedy decides to agree to Khrushchev's Friday proposal.

-28 October, Sunday: 10:00 am, Khrushchev's reply: Missiles will be withdrawn.

OUTCOME: Cuba was secured from U.S. covert attacks and invasion. Both Kennedy and Khrushchev almost lost control of the military forces they set in motion during this Crisis.

### LIST PERIOD 3. 1962-1969: SCARED STRAIGHT

**Crisis #11, CUBA** brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. It was not only the worst Crisis to date but was also the worst Crisis experience. It brought the reality of nuclear war home to the public and to the two superpower leaders. It scared them straight. The Test Ban Treaty, banning atmospheric nuclear tests, was signed by Kennedy and Khrushchev on 4 August 1963.

An opportunity for further improved relations between the leaders of the superpowers was ended 3 months later by Kennedy's assassination on 22 November 1963. Khrushchev was ousted 11 months later on 15 October 1964, the day before China exploded her first atomic bomb. The Vietnam War became a major U.S. involvement, following the Gulf of Tonkin "incident" on 7 August 1964.

The opportunity for improved superpower relations and nuclear arms control and reductions faded during the eight years of the Scared Straight period as the Vietnam War escalated and the development of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems accelerated steadily. The terminal event of this Crisis-free seven year period came with Crisis # 12, VIETNAM II, caused by Operation DUCKHOOK, President Nixon's secret plan to end the Vietnam war by threatening the use of nuclear weapons.

### LIST PERIOD 4. 1969-1985: RELENTLESS ARMS RACE

The 1969 Decision by Nixon administration to MIRV U.S. ICBMs (place multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles [warheads] on U.S. intercontinental ballistic missiles) was a serious arms race escalation. It meant that one ICBM "bus" could now carry as many as 14 warhead "passengers", each of which could be directed to its own target. A submarine with 24 Trident MIRVed missiles could thus hit 336 targets. Warhead accuracy improved greatly also and the possibility of a "First Strike" surprise attack that could knock out all of the enemy's delivery systems seemed within reach.

These developments culminated in Crisis # 16, FIRST STRIKE, 1 December 1983 to 19 November 1985, the most dangerous period in human history.

### LIST Nuclear Crisis 12 in Year: 1969

Name of Crisis: VIETNAM II

Threatened use of nuclear weapons by: USA

Target: Vietnam, USSR

Crisis starts: 4 August 1969, Kissinger threatens Vietnam

Crisis ends: 29 October 1969, DEFCON 1 threat fails

Duration: 87 days

Threat of nuclear attack: Implied (very strongly)

At issue in Crisis: USA failure to conquer Vietnam

**BACKGROUND:** Nixon was elected president in 1968 partly as a result of his claim to have "a secret plan to end the Vietnam War." His secret plan (called DUCKHOOK) was to escalate the war and use nuclear weapons if other escalation measure failed.

**CRISIS EVENTS:** 1969, 4 August: Kissinger meets Vietnamese in Paris: "If no progress by 1 November, USA will take measure of the gravest consequence."

-1 October: Strategic Air Command (SAC) is put on DEFCON 1, the "maximum force readiness" for nuclear war. Nuclear-armed B-52 bombers circle, Minuteman missiles prepared in the highest state of readiness and threat since Crisis #11, CUBA. The clear message to the Soviets is to get North Vietnam to halt operations in the South.

-13 October: William Watts (NSC) to Kissinger, "Use of atomic bombs on North Vietnam could throw USA into turmoil. Need for widespread mobilization of National Guard and U.S. Army could ensue."

-14 October: Nixon: "On October 14, I knew for sure that my ultimatum had failed. A quarter of a million people came to Washington for the October 15 Moratorium (protest)."

-29 October: North Vietnam does not yield. DEFCON 1 ends after 29 days. (The B-52 bombers badly needed servicing, apart from other considerations)

**OUTCOME:**

- 1) A clear defeat by Vietnam for Escalation Dominance theory;
- 2) a measure of the power of massive public protests.

#### LIST Nuclear Crisis 13 in Year: 1970

Name of Crisis: JORDAN

Threatened use of nuclear weapons by: USA

Target: USSR

Crisis starts: 15 September 1970

Crisis ends: 30 September 1970

Duration: 2 weeks

Threat of nuclear attack: Implied

At issue in Crisis: Control of Jordan

**BACKGROUND:** Jordan, a strategic pro-western Arab state was threatened by the pro-Soviet Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

**CRISIS EVENTS:** 1970, 15 September: King Hussein of Jordan orders his 50,000-man army to destroy the strong PLO bases in Jordan. The possibility of a PLO victory in this strategic Middle East country prompts U.S. support.

-17 September: Amman, capital of Jordan scene of heavy fighting. To keep the Soviets out of the crisis Nixon sends 2 aircraft carrier task forces with 14 destroyers, a cruiser, 140 aircraft and 1,200 marines to East Mediterranean. 3 Army parachute battalions in Europe are mobilized and the 82nd Airborne Division in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, is put on full alert. Kissinger orders the U.S. military to send uncoded messages to make the threat of nuclear armed force deployments very clear.

**OUTCOME:** PLO defeated in Jordan; Soviet involvement in the area denied.

#### LIST Nuclear Crisis 14 in Year: 1973

Name of Crisis: ISRAEL (Yom Kippur)

Threatened use of nuclear weapons by: USA

Target: USSR

Crisis starts: 6 October 1973, Egypt and Syria attack Israel

Crisis ends: 25 October 1973

Duration: 19 days

Threat of nuclear attack: Implied

At issue in Crisis: 1) Survival of U.S. ally Israel; 2) U.S. dependence, since 1967, on oil imports, especially from the Middle East

BACKGROUND: U.N. troops had separated Israel and Egypt since Crisis #7, SUEZ of 1956. In 1967, Nasser demanded their removal and then closed Israel's use of the Gulf of Aquaba and blocked the port of Elat. Egypt, Syria and Iraq had been heavily armed by the Soviets and now threatened Israel's survival. Israel attacked, and in the 6-Day War, 5-11 June 1967, defeated Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq and seized Sinai, the Golan Heights, the Jordan West Bank and Jerusalem. Israel had more than doubled its size at the expense of its neighbors, especially Egypt. Egypt and Syria rearmed and prepared to recover their territory and their national pride.

CRISIS EVENTS: 1973,

6 October: Egypt and Syria make surprise attack on Israel during the Yom Kippur festival. Hard-pressed at first, Israel soon recovers, has a cease-fire with the Syrians and then surrounds the Egyptian Third Army. The Soviets, fearing a total Egyptian collapse, offer Soviet troops to join U.S. troops to enforce a cease-fire.

-20 October: Soviets meet Kissinger who promises safety for the Third Army in return for Egyptian concessions. However, Israel violates this cease-fire and maintains pressure on Third Army.

-24 October: U.S. intelligence reports all seven Soviet airborne divisions on alert for possible aid to Third Army. Brezhnev (to Kissinger) blames Israel for cease-fire violations, repeats offer of joint U.S.-Soviet cease-fire enforcement and warns that Soviets will act alone if any further act of bad faith by USA. An emergency meeting in Washington results in a DEFCON 3 alert that night.

-25 October: U.S. nuclear forces on alert, 50 B-52 strategic bombers fly from Guam to USA; 15,000 troops of 82nd Airborne Division mobilize; aircraft carrier John F. Kennedy leaves Gibraltar heading east. This escalation is designed to be detected by the Soviets and result in U.S. dominance of the situation, without arousing the U.S. public. However, by 7:00 a.m. U.S. media reports war mobilization and speculation begins that Nixon is using a crisis to escape the growing pressures of the Watergate scandal. But, by the afternoon of this day, the crisis eases: Israeli forces relax their pressure on the Third Army and the Soviets drop their insistence on a joint peace-keeping force.

OUTCOME: Soviets soon after describe U.S. response in this crisis as "absurd", and U.S. speculations on Soviet intentions as "fantastic", indicating that the use of Escalation Dominance by the USA always to have its way in any confrontation is a dangerous policy.

LIST Nuclear Crisis 15 in Year: 1980

Name of Crisis: IRAN II

Threatened use of nuclear weapons by: USA

Target: Iran, USSR

Crisis starts: 23 January 1980, Carter's threatening speech to nation on TV.

Crisis ends: June, B-52 Arabian Sea flights end.

Duration: 6 months

Threat of nuclear attack: Implied

At issue in Crisis: U.S. loss of control over Iran as a strategic Cold-War base and major oil producer; 2) Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and possibility of a Soviet move into Iran.

BACKGROUND: Growing USA oil assets in the Gulf were protected by British force since 1919, but in the 1950's the USA began to take over.

1951: Dr. Mossadegh elected to power in Iran and announced the nationalization of the highly profitable British oil industry.

1953: Mossadegh was overthrown by a CIA coup directed by Allen Dulles who sent



General H. Norman Schwarzkopf (Senior) to supervise the job. Shah Pahlevi, backed by the USA, held power for the next 26 years. The USA made Iran its main listening post on the Soviet southern border and its main military base in the Gulf. All opposition was dealt with by the dreaded SAVAK secret police. "Iran had the highest rate of death penalties in the world, no valid system of civilian courts and a history of torture which is beyond belief." (Martin Ennals, Secretary General, Amnesty International)

1973: Coup in Afghanistan by Mohammed Daud. The Shah had good relations with Daud and agreed to send the SAVAK into Afghanistan to root out communist opposition. The Soviets were alarmed to see formerly neutral and stable Afghanistan moving into the U.S. orbit alongside Turkey and Iran. 1978: Coup in Afghanistan puts Amin, a Marxist-Leninist in power. He ignored Soviet "advice" and tried to push rapid reforms. He also made close contact with USA through U.S. Ambassador Adolph Dubbs.

1979, 16 January: Shah fled from Iran after defeat by the one power that he could not crush: the Moslem Mullahs led by Ayatollah Khomeini. USA loses a highly strategic base and listening post on Soviet border, and a world-class oil supplier. No U.S. or British base in Gulf for first time in 65 years.

-September: Amin in Afghanistan survived attempted coup.

-4 November: U.S. Embassy (in its 22 acre grounds) in Tehran seized and 46 hostages taken; Iranians laboriously pieced together shredded U.S. documents.

-December: Soviets invaded Afghanistan; Amin killed; Babrak Karmal installed as their puppet ruler. Start of a long inconclusive guerrilla war.

**CRISIS EVENTS: 1980 (Presidential election year)** -23 January: U.S. President Carter in his State of the Union speech warns that any Soviet move in the Gulf would be "repelled by military force." Defense Secretary Brown makes vague references to nuclear war between USA and USSR

-2 February: New York Times headline, "Study Says Soviet Move in Iran Might Require U.S. Atom Arms," based on leaked "secret" Pentagon report.

-January: First of 12 B-52 flights over the Arabian Sea. These last 6 months

-26 February: Pravda protests these "most extreme measures" fanning the flames in the area and deny Soviet interest in invading Iran.

OUTCOME: 22 September 1980, Iraq attacked Iran with the later-revealed support of USA, Britain and USSR(!) Over one million were killed in this war. No UN action against Iraq's aggression, which suited all the major powers for various reasons. Iran was undefeated and Islamic Fundamentalism gained a powerful base. Confident of Western tolerance, Iraq invaded Kuwait and triggered the Gulf War in 1991.

#### LIST Nuclear Crisis 16 in Year: 1983

Name of Crisis: FIRST STRIKE

Threatened use of nuclear weapons by: USA

Target: USSR

Crisis starts: 1 December 1983, 9 Pershing II's delivered to Ramstein, Germany

Crisis ends: 19 November 1985, Gorbachev and Reagan meet in Geneva

Duration: 2 years

Threat of nuclear attack: Implied (at very great risk)

At issue in Crisis: U.S. preparation for FIRST STRIKE CAPABILITY

BACKGROUND: In the nuclear arms race the USA had always held a 5 to 10-year lead over the Soviet Union and in the 1980's a system for a FIRST STRIKE surprise attack on the USSR was nearly ready. It had 3 parts:

1) Decapitation: the flat trajectory Pershing II missiles were extremely accurate and designed to "decapitate" (behead) the Soviet leadership. Flight time to Moscow from bases in West Germany was 6 minutes;

2) Counterforce: it would be possible by the late 1980's to knock out all known Soviet missiles on land and at sea with MX and Trident-II missiles using the new very precise "Navstar" guidance system. In case a few Soviet missiles survived this First Strike, the USA needed a "shield";

3) Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) or Star Wars, was the "shield", and this

enormously costly and incomplete system was the third part of FIRST STROKE.

These very threatening plans meant that a world nuclear holocaust might result from a faulty Soviet radar warning. Six minutes gave the Soviets little time for analysis of U.S. intentions. The Soviets understood all of these threats very clearly.

CRISIS EVENTS: 1983, 26 October: Soviet Premier Andropov stated Soviets will walk out at Geneva if deployment of Pershing II and Cruise missiles begins.

-15 November: Britain: First shipment of Tomahawk Cruise Missiles arrives.

-30 November: West German parliament votes 286:226 to accept first shipment of 9 Pershing II missiles on German soil, in spite of demonstrations by 400,000 Germans, during 1983, opposed to the deployment of medium range missiles.

-1 December: FIRST STRIKE Crisis #16 begins when U.S. C-5 Galaxy transports deliver 9 Pershing II missiles to Ramstein air base near Mannheim, West Germany, which are then transported to the U.S. Army 56th Field Artillery Brigade base at Mutlangen. In Geneva, Soviet negotiator Yuli Kvitsinsky walks out of a meeting with U.S. negotiator Paul Nitze, ending nuclear arms negotiations and offering no resumption date.

-8 December: Nuclear Winter, that might kill most nuclear war survivors is predicted, even if only half of U.S. and Soviet nuclear weapons used (joint statement by 4 U.S. and 4 Soviet scientists meeting in Washington).

1985, 11 March: Gorbachev elected General Secretary of the Central Committee by a margin of one vote over Grishin, a hard liner who would probably have escalated the arms race. This election may well prove to have been a critical event in world history.

-15 March: Nuclear Winter "that would wipe out all life on earth .. is all the more reason to continue President Ronald Reagan's weapons build-up," Richard Perle, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defence.

-July: Soviets stop nuclear tests

-19 and 20 November, Gorbachev and Reagan meet in Geneva; Cold War tensions ease progressively for the next two years, and the FIRST STRIKE Crisis also abates during this period.

1987, 8 December: Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty signed in Washington by Presidents Gorbachev and Reagan. It will eliminate all medium and short range nuclear weapons.

OUTCOME: With the end of the worst Crisis of all, the Cold War also ended.

#### LIST PERIOD 5: 1985-1991: GORBACHEV ENDS THE COLD WAR

The relentless arms race culminated in Crisis #16, FIRST STRIKE. This was the most dangerous period in human history.

1985, 11 March: Mikhail Gorbachev is elected General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He beats his rival, Victor Grishin, a hard-liner, by one vote. Gorbachev sets to work to end the nuclear arms race and the Cold War in a series of bold and visionary steps:

-July: Gorbachev orders the cessation of Soviet nuclear tests.

-July to December: USA tests 9 nuclear weapons.

-19 and 20 November: GENEVA SUMMIT where Gorbachev meets U.S. President Reagan and tensions between the U.S.A and USSR begin to ease.

1986: "International Year of Peace." Nuclear weapons tests: USA: 15 : USSR: 0

-15 January, Gorbachev, "The Soviet Union proposes that a step-by-step consistent process of ridding the earth of nuclear weapons be implemented and completed within the next 15 years, before the end of this century." Gorbachev proposed three stages for this process:

1) Elimination of all U.S. and Soviet medium range missiles in Europe. All U.S. and Soviet nuclear tests to cease immediately. All U.S. and Soviet strategic weapons to be reduced by one half. All U.S. and Soviet space-strike weapons to be eliminated. (1990-95) Other nuclear powers join in nuclear disarmament, eliminating nuclear tests and space-strike weapons. All tactical nuclear weapons to

be eliminated. A ban on all non-nuclear weapons, based on new physical principles, whose destructive power is close to that of nuclear weapons. 3) (1995-2000) Elimination of all remaining nuclear weapons.

-11 and 12 October: REYKJAVIK SUMMIT: Gorbachev offers 50% reduction in strategic weapons and removal of all U.S. and Soviet medium range missiles in Europe. Reagan, unprepared, flounders and refuses.

-3 November: "Contragate" scandal erupts. The Reagan administration's illegal sale of arms to Iran to finance its illegal covert war in Nicaragua is exposed.

1987 February: Soviets resume nuclear tests after a 19 month halt.

-May to August: Iran-Contra affair is probed by Senate and House committees. The Reagan presidency is increasingly implicated and threatened.

-8 December: Washington: Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty is signed by Presidents Gorbachev and Reagan. It will eliminate all medium and short-range nuclear weapons. This marks the end of the FIRST STRIKE Crisis #16 and is a landmark event in the approaching end of the Cold War.

1989 February: Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan complete.

-March: Part of new Congress is chosen in free elections in USSR

-June: Elections give Solidarity majority in Poland.

-November: Demolition of Berlin Wall.

1991, 17 January: U.S. launches war (Desert Storm) against Iraq.

-June: Yeltsin becomes President of Supreme Soviet after first free national elections.

-19-21 August: Gorbachev is toppled in abortive coup by old guard communist hard-liners. Had they won - and they nearly did - the nuclear arms race could well have resumed its fatal course.

- 8 December: Yeltsin meets with the leaders of the Ukraine and White Russia and abolishes the USSR, with no mandate to do so.

#### LIST PERIOD 6 1991- :POST COLD WAR RE-GROUPING

Following the break up of the Soviet Union, the United States has emerged as the world's number one superpower. A dangerous conclusion is that the USA "won the Cold War" with Ronald Reagan's weapons build up (see the APPENDIX for Pozner's comments in "Eyewitness").

This period is similar to the "Scared Straight" period after Crisis #11, CUBA. It is a time of precious opportunity for nuclear disarmament. In 1996 Russia is in economic and political turmoil, China is rapidly emerging as a world power, there are still 36,000 nuclear weapons in the world. The world situation is not stable. The balanced reduction and total abolition of these weapons, on a rigid schedule is a matter of great urgency; the present lull in great power rivalry may not last long!

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## LIST APPENDIX

Author: Pozner, Vladimir

Author Biography and Other Works: Author of "Parting With Illusions," and co-host of the Pozner and Donahue TV show. On 15 April 1991, he resigned from Soviet State Television, protesting the ban on any criticism of Gorbachev.

Title: Eyewitness

City: New York

Publisher: Random House

Date: 1992

Pages: 220

Dewey #:947.0854 POZ

Topic 1: Soviet Union-History-Attempted coup 1991

"American conservatives love to take credit for the 'fall of Communism'".

It was all thanks to Ronald Reagan, they will tell you, to his policy of getting tough with the Russkies, of launching SDI, more commonly known as Star Wars" - that was what ended the communist empire! What self-serving stupidity; what a misleading, self-indulging understanding of history.

Just one vote, one single vote from a hand up to a hand held down, would have changed the world. Ronald Reagan and the entire American right wing had nothing to do with Grishin's loss to Gorbachev. The men who then made up the Politburo - people like Gromyko and Ustinov- had built their entire careers on not giving a hoot in hell what the rest of the world thought. They were all hard liners in the worst sense of the word. I think that had Grishin been elected, the United States and the Soviet Union would have been at war within two or three years maximum.

Ronald Reagan's ticket to the White House had, among other things, been won on his promise to get tough with the Russians. There are not a few people who attribute the demise of communism (that is how they refer to the events of Perestroika) to President Reagan's military build-up, to his forcing of the Soviets into an arms race they could not match.

What that argument ignores are at least two things. First, that Mr. Reagan had nothing to do with Mr. Gorbachev's becoming General Secretary - that should now be clear to the reader. Second, that by the time Gorbachev was elected General Secretary, Ronald Reagan had been in office for slightly more than one full term. During that period he had more than fulfilled his 'get tough' promise. The net result was that the relationship between the USSR and the United States stood at an all-time low. The danger of military conflict had increased; Soviet defense production was up. Neither Brezhnev, Andropov nor Chernenko had demonstrated the slightest inclination to back down.

Victor Grishin and his supporters were of the same ilk. There is no reason at all to believe they would have been more reasonable. Conversely, there is every reason to think they would have pushed the nuclear button had they been backed into a corner.

We should all thank our lucky stars for Gorbachev's one-vote win. Thank fate,

thank whatever deity or superstition we believe in. But the one group we should not thank is the American conservative establishment, which had the stupidity and arrogance to think it could play chicken with its Soviet counterparts and win." (p 191-192)



## Island Links

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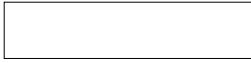
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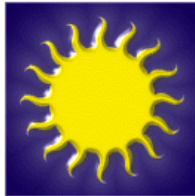


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