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It is 1945, with Hitler defeated and the Nazi regime becoming a power of the past, the world can finally kick off their war boots, slip into some nice slippers and relax. Unfortunately a new threat is slowly simmering in the background. What is to become of Germany now that it has been defeated by the allies? Germany was to be divided between 4 nations. The United States, Soviet Union, Great Britain, France was to get 4 sectors of Germany with Russia demanding to receive East Germany. The Allies agreed only under the condition that they could keep Berlin, the capital of Germany, under the control of the Allies. All the countries agreed not knowing that this was the beginning of another war, the Cold war of 1945-1990.

November 1952 was a cold day in the history of human kind. The reason why I mention this date is because this is the day that the “super bomb” or an explosion that was about five hundred atomic bombs, had successfully been tested. Because the Russians pursued a similar policy to the one of the United States, the superpowers became locked in an every escalating race for nuclear dominance.

There was a race going on, a cold war that both of the countries were aware of. It is 1955 and both of the superpowers have the capabilities of causing complete destruction to the opposite. The Soviet Union and the United States had both developed different foreign policies to keep things from exploding, literally. The United States used its Marshall Plan and containment of communism to battle the expansion of the Soviet Union and its communistic views and the communist regime of the Soviet Union continuously improved their weapon capability and kept spreading communism throughout Eastern Europe and Asia.

Countries were attracted by the rapid economic expansion and the ability of a communistic government to flourish so quickly, until the time came where resistance was not the problem anymore. The United States saw this as a threat and continued to rally against communism and tried to get nations, to take their side. The side of capitalism and prosperity that Stalin once argued inevitably produced war.

There are many incidents that occurred during the timeline of the cold war that we as the human race in general, were on the brink of destruction and extinction. For example, there is Gulf of Tonkin, the Cuban missile crisis, Vietnam, Korea, etc that could have led either government to push the button of total destruction.

The United States foreign policy on communism is to contain it and stop it from expanding under any condition. Vietnam was a similar issue and a major event of the cold war. Where even before the United States became involved in Vietnam, when Ho Chi Minh had proclaimed independence of Vietnam from France. France not being able to handle this situation due to the fact that it just got out of WW2 and there were massive war debts and restorations to be paid, could not cover the war expenses for Vietnam in order to conquer and defeat Ho Chi Minh and take back Vietnam and put it under the control of France. That is where the United States came in and by 1954; the United States was contributing close to 75 percent to France's war. When finally Eisenhower said no to troops and support, the French resistance fell.

It is not a big event in the cold war until the United States comes into play and decides that there is really no way of enforcing the containment of communism and starts to support Ngo Dinh Diem, the South Vietnamese prime minister. The big cause of this terrible war would have to be the Gulf Of Tonkin resolution where apparently North Vietnamese forces attacked two American battle ships. There are two things wrong with what happened at Tonkin. First, the American ships were not attacked by anyone but just randomly "thought" they were and ended up blasting into the night. Second, they were in fact, located in the North Vietnamese territory and even if they were attacked, they were going against the rules which eventually led to the Vietnam War.

The cold war had unfortunately created a warfare state. On October 22, 1962 the world was informed that the Soviet Union was building secret missile bases in Cuba. This was yet again a very dangerous time for the United States that had to be handled with extreme caution and care because Khrushchev authorized his Soviet field commanders in Cuba to launch their tactical nuclear weapons if invaded by U.S. forces. So basically the superpowers were involved in a 7 day staring contest when ultimately the Soviet Union blinked and agreed to remove the missiles from Cuba.

There were a lot of incidents that occurred during the cold war that could have in fact, ended the world because of the horrible, catastrophic weapons capabilities of the two superpowers. There are a couple of good things that came out of the Cold War like for example all the military spending that was done by the United States to upgrade their defenses has helped to stimulate the domestic prosperity in a great way. It has provided jobs for the public and in fact has revolutionized and paved the way into the technological and space exploration age.

The cold war did not only have a significant affect on the technological advances and the economy but also on its society and primarily its people that reside within the United States. Some of the weaknesses that the government had were lowered down into the public that eventually created a rebellious age. New music, new fashion and new industries appeared over night. These effects of the cold war enabled more young people than ever to stay in school, benefit from a higher education and employ a bigger population of more white-collar Americans.

With the United States and the Soviet Union both being capable of destroying each other at any second, people started to become paranoid of the situation at hand. Some just did not care while others benefited from it. The cold war had a huge impact on the society because of its coldness, its constant scare that because of one man's wrong decision, a lot of people could lose their lives. This in return stimulated the youth to become rebellious and explore different angles of society. Young people believed in

having fun and constant recreation while parents were going crazy. The music and movie industry did not aid the public whatsoever in this field because they kept coming up with new music, such as rock 'n roll, jazz and other forms of music. With the music industry came the movie industry where James Dean courageously and without a doubt portrayed a rebel in his movie "Rebel without a cause".

The cold war ended in 1990 or roughly around it when communism fell in the Soviet Union. The scars that have been made by the cold war will always and without a doubt be visible and stay in the eyes and minds of the United States public. By this statement I mean that the public has seen the government's weakness and they realized that change is possible. Woman's rights, rights of homosexuals, civil rights for blacks were all changes that were put into affect during the cold war. The strength to resist and over come by using tactics, brainpower instead of nuclear weapons is what has shaped the United States into the great country that it is today.

"How we survived communism and even laughed" is not something that I would really laugh about because I am Bosnian, I am part of the ethnical cleaning, the war that Slavenka Drakulic was so nicely and innocently talking about. I was a kid when the war that she was talking about was taking place and when it was over, I know for a fact that neither me nor any of my family members laughed, we just bowed our heads, picked up what we had and continued wherever we needed to go. Slavenka comments about the USSR's policies on equipment by saying "There are no appliances, no services, and no agencies in the USSR where they could hire a person to help"¹. This goes back to the famous American National Exhibition in Moscow in July 1959 where Khrushchev and Nixon met to exchange cultural differences. This is the confusing part. Khrushchev during his exchange answered "his country (soviet union) did not have the capitalist attitude for women. They are appreciated for the contributions to the economy, not the domesticity"². If this was really the case then why does Slavenka Drakulic write "...and women are, regardless of class, sentenced to long hours of repulsive housework

¹ Slavenka Drakulic, "How we survived communism and even laughed" ed., Harpet Perennial) 46-47

² Nikita Khrushchev to Nixon in Moscow in 1959

everyday”³. We have two statements from two different perspectives. The working middle class woman or the leader of a communistic nation. Who is right? In my opinion, I think that Khrushchev was right because if Slavenka was really living in a communistic society, she would have not said or written the book in the first place because unlike the democratic United States and the freedom of speech that comes with it, accusations and complaints about the communist government leads to death and extortion, I would know, I lived in one.

My final thoughts on the cold war are that it was a building, recovering and an age of advances. Because of the cold war we as a nation have achieved so much in such a short time. The cold war was like a fire, burning deep within the United States creating and building and improving. One example is NASA, if the cold war never happened, the USSR would never have launched their space experiments with Sputnik and this would have not motivated the United States to do the same. It was a competition that benefited both nations. Russia’s desire for a communist nation has fallen and with it the threats to the United States. If one really thinks this issue trough, one will realize that nothing but good things developed out of the cold war. Well, besides Vietnam and Korea. But if you look at the bright side of the cold war, you will see that communism has fallen, United States has expanded every field from technology to communication to transportation and it has succeeded in its desire to contain the spread of communism.

³ Slavenka Drakulic, “How we survived communism and even laughed” ed., Harpet Perennial) 46