Crises Across Borders

Trace how local confrontations deepened Cold War tensions.

MWH.C.7.1.C "Explain how tensions escalated, fueled by the Berlin Blockade, Suez Canal Crisis, and subsequent uprisings by people in Soviet-dominated satellites (e.g., Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Read the passage. In each paragraph, underline one action that raised tensions, circle a response to it, and draw an arrow from the action to the response.

When Crises Spread

1. In 1948, the Soviet Union cut road, rail, and canal access to West Berlin, a Western-held area inside Soviet-occupied eastern Germany. Soviet leaders hoped the blockade would push the United States, Britain, and France out of the city. Instead, Western planes delivered food and fuel for nearly a year. In May 1949, the Soviet Union ended the blockade without forcing a Western withdrawal. The West kept its position in Berlin, while Soviet leaders retained control of their occupation zone. The failed blockade deepened mistrust: each side now saw the other as willing to test how far it could go.

2. In 1956, unrest spread through Soviet-dominated eastern Europe. After workers protested in Poland, Soviet leaders accepted limited changes under a new Polish leader, but Poland remained a Soviet ally. In Hungary, protesters demanded free elections and an end to Soviet control. At nearly the same time, Egypt took control of the Suez Canal, and Britain, France, and Israel attacked Egypt. The United States and Soviet Union both pressed for a withdrawal from Egypt, but the crisis consumed international attention. As the world watched Suez, Soviet forces crushed Hungary's revolt in November, sharpening fears that Moscow would use force to hold its allies.

3. That fear resurfaced in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Communist leader Alexander Dubček loosened censorship and proposed reforms known as the Prague Spring. Soviet leaders worried that these changes might weaken their hold on another allied state. In August, troops from the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact countries invaded, ending the reform effort. Western governments condemned the invasion but did not send troops to reverse it. The episodes formed a pattern, not a single battle: Soviet leaders sometimes accepted limited change but used force against challenges to their control. Western states, meanwhile, faced limits on how they could respond. These crises made Europe's division harder to bridge.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Western response defeat the Berlin Blockade's immediate goal, and why did tensions remain high?

2. How did the Suez Canal Crisis affect world attention as Soviet forces moved into Hungary?

3. How did the different outcomes in Poland and Hungary show both the limits of change and the risk of challenging Soviet control?

4. How did Soviet concerns about the Prague Spring lead to a confrontation with Western governments?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- or five-sentence museum label comparing the Berlin Blockade with the crisis in Czechoslovakia. Explain one difference in how Western governments responded and what that difference suggests about why Cold War tensions lasted.

ANSWER KEY

Crises Across Borders

HIGH SCHOOL · MWH.C.7.1.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Read the passage. In each paragraph, underline one action that raised tensions, circle a response to it, and draw an arrow from the action to the response. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Western response defeat the Berlin Blockade's immediate goal, and why did tensions remain high?	**Western planes supplied West Berlin, so the Soviet Union ended the blockade without forcing a Western withdrawal. Both sides kept their broader positions, and the confrontation deepened mistrust.**
2	How did the Suez Canal Crisis affect world attention as Soviet forces moved into Hungary?	**The attack on Egypt and demands for a withdrawal consumed international attention while Soviet forces crushed Hungary's revolt.**
3	How did the different outcomes in Poland and Hungary show both the limits of change and the risk of challenging Soviet control?	**Poland gained limited room for change but remained a Soviet ally. Soviet forces crushed Hungary's revolt after protesters demanded free elections and an end to Soviet control.**
4	How did Soviet concerns about the Prague Spring lead to a confrontation with Western governments?	**Soviet leaders feared the reforms would weaken their hold on Czechoslovakia, so Soviet and other Warsaw Pact troops invaded. Western governments condemned the invasion but did not send troops.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In West Berlin, Western governments answered the Soviet blockade by flying in food and fuel. The blockade ended without forcing them out of the city. In Czechoslovakia, Western governments condemned the Warsaw Pact invasion but did not send troops to reverse it. The different responses show that Western leaders could resist some Soviet moves directly but faced limits when the Soviet Union used force in an allied state. Those limits left Europe's division unresolved and tensions high.

Accept explanations that distinguish the blockade's failure from the broader rivalry that continued. For the museum label, look for an accurate comparison of Western responses and a reason those responses did not end Cold War tensions.