

## YMCA Model UN 2011 – Historical Simulation Committee

### Topic Overview

Between 1985 and 1988 the world of international politics, ever-influenced by the two superpowers – the United States and the Soviet Union – endured a period of warming tensions and uncertainty. US President Ronald Reagan was riding an economic boom for most of his term with the exception of the Dow Jones crash (he assumed the presidency in 1981) while General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party Mikhail Gorbachev took office in early 1985 after the previous leader died following thirteen months in office. The first four years of Gorbachev's rule were marked by warming tensions with the Western world in an attempt to modernize his obsolete nation and its satellite states. This came as the Soviet Union was fighting a war in Afghanistan and the US (along with the entire modern world) was becoming increasingly dependent on oil. This dependency, despite sparse attempts to make the world aware of the warming climate, was primarily due to increased technology in virtually every area of life.

However, this technology did not necessarily make life easier as new ideas continued to surface and debate continued more rapidly than ever. One of the main issues in the US was the development of both the HIV/AIDS diseases (first discovered in 1981) and the gay community, which was especially affected by the virus. Despite the publicity, Reagan did not speak publically about AIDS until 1987. At one point, Reagan said, "My criticism is that [the gay movement] isn't just asking for civil rights; it's asking for recognition and acceptance of an alternative lifestyle which I do not believe society can condone, nor can I." Yet, he did prove to be relatively tolerant of the movement throughout his political career. Tolerance also proved to be an issue in South Africa, where Nelson Mandela had been in jail since 1964; but beginning in 1985, Mandela engaged in talks with the South African National Party government about release and the apartheid issue in the country.

The era was one of questions – would the Soviet Union survive or collapse? If it collapsed, when, and what would become of the satellite states? What would happen to Germany and the Berlin Wall? Who would win the war in Afghanistan? What was this mysterious HIV/AIDS disease? How long would the American economic boom continue? How would space capability affect international relations? These are all questions that we will seek answers to during our three days at conference. The following events and background about the time period will be some of our biggest challenges at Hershey.

The *instability of the Soviet Union* was a result of growing disapproval with the communal system of ownership and a lagging economy compared to that of the US. A virtual economic standstill began in the mid-1970s and was compounded by the war in Afghanistan, because the Soviet government considered military buildup paramount to domestic advancement. GDP remained stagnant during these years as well. Furthermore, calls for managers to have greater freedoms in dealing with supplies were also frequent, which speaks to the growing discontent about the bureaucracy. Compared to the US, the Soviet state also granted much less freedom of speech, which was also beginning to agitate the lower classes. After Reagan called the USSR an "evil empire" in 1982 and began to build up the US defense forces, it seemed that talks were far away. During this time, the Western and Eastern allies sided with their respective superpowers.

The weakening of the USSR also brought questions about the future of the *Berlin Wall*, which separated the Eastern and Western sections of the city. On June 12, 1987, US president Reagan commemorated the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city, and he proclaimed “Tear down this wall!” This statement proved Reagan wanted increased freedom for the Eastern bloc and he was relatively willing to call on Gorbachev to do usher in a new era.

The *Chernobyl* disaster further aggravated tensions between the two superpowers. In July 1986, at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, a series of explosions occurred which caused a fire that sent a radioactive cloud into the atmosphere over parts of the USSR and Europe. Over 330,000 people in the area were evacuated, and this focused attention on the Soviet nuclear program and nuclear weapons in general. This also forced the USSR to become less secretive about its nuclear program.

Disaster struck not only on the ground but also in the skies. On January 28, 1986, the United States space shuttle *Challenger* broke into flames after a minute in flight, causing all seven crew members aboard to die. The shuttle disintegrated over the Atlantic Ocean, and caused a two and a half year hiatus of NASA’s space program. Furthermore, the Rogers Commission, a committee organized to assess the accident, concluded that the disaster may have been avoidable, had engineers working on the spacecraft recognized and informed their superiors of certain conditions that were potentially unsafe. The disaster was widely publicized because the first individual to take part in the Teachers in Space program, Christa McAuliffe, was aboard.

Later in 1986, political turmoil struck the world, as the *Iran-Contra affair* revealed that United States officials agreed to sell arms to Iran – while Iran was supposed to be the subject of an arms embargo – in return for the release of American hostages being held by Hezbollah and funds to support a Nicaraguan organization known as the Contras. The plan, which may have never even been authorized by President Reagan, was intended to help strengthen Iranian-American relations. To do this, the plan was to have Israel ship weapons to a group of politically influential Iranians, and then the US would resupply Israel with such weapons. In return, the Iranians would attempt to secure the hostages. Eventually, the plan disintegrated to an arms-for-hostages scheme, and a portion of the sales of the arms went towards the anti-Communist Contra group in Nicaragua (which Reagan did support).

In South Africa, Nelson *Mandela* had been jailed since 1964 when South African President P.W. Botha offered him release in 1985 in return for Mandela’s public statement renouncing armed struggle. Mandela refused to comply with the order on the grounds that his mission of gaining equal rights in apartheid-stricken South Africa was more important than his personal freedom, saying, “Only free men can negotiate. A prisoner cannot enter into contracts.” Following this, Mandela had several meetings with the National Party government over the next four years.

Between 1982 and 1987, a period of economic optimism led to record gains in the Dow Jones Industrial Average, the New York Stock Exchange, the S&P, and the NASDAQ. Overall, the nineteen largest markets in the world grew by almost three-hundred percent during the mid-1980s. However, in October 1987, the *Dow Jones Industrial Crash* (specifically on October 19) occurred, during which the index lost 22.6% of its value in one day. Although the cause of the crash is somewhat unknown, one possible reason for the failure is the many delays that stifled trading on the NYSE floor. The Crash caused a ripple effect globally, as all major world markets declined significantly. Austria, with a loss of 11.4% was least affected, while Hong Kong lost almost half of its value.

As the worldwide stock market recovered, terrorism was posing yet another threat to the stability of international politics. On December 21, 1988, a Pan Am flight from London to New York's JFK airport was destroyed by a bomb that killed everyone onboard. However, they were not the only victims. As the aircraft broke up over *Lockerbie*, Scotland, eleven individuals were killed by debris, thus bringing the total number of deaths from the bombing to 270. Prior to the attack, the US government had received at least one anonymous warning about a terrorist threat, and in the days before the attack many European nations, including Britain, had been alerted about a possible bombing by extremists from the Palestine Liberation Organization to stifle recent talks between the PLO and the US.

Evidently, the mid-1980s was an era of both triumph and tragedy, as nations big and small worked to find their niche in the international system that was becoming ever-more connected. World politics were defined by both the secrets and alliances that were held and by the failures and successes of technology and humanitarian causes. The warming of tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States left many questions to be answered, as did the market crash. The events that did – and did not – occur would be imperative in shaping the end of the twentieth century.

## Soviet Union

### *Members:*

General Secretary of CPSU and President of Supreme Soviet – Mikhail Gorbachev  
Chairman of the KGB V.M. – Viktor Chebrikov  
Agriculture Secretary of Central Committee – E.G.Ligachev  
Chairman of the Council of Ministers/“Premier” (economic reforms) – N.I. Ryzhkov  
Foreign Minister of USSR – E.A. Shevardnadze  
Chairman of the Russian Republic Council of Ministers – V.I. Vorotnikov  
First Secretary, Ukraine – V.V. Shcherbitskii  
Soviet President – Andrei Gromyko  
Chief Economic Advisor to Gorbachev – Abel Aganbegyan  
Member of the Council of Ministers/Delegate to the Supreme Soviet (opposition) – Boris Yeltstein  
Minister of Defense (removed in 1987) – Sergey Leonidovich Sokolov  
Minister of Internal Affairs (removed in 1988) – Aleksandr V. Vlasov  
Chairmen of the State Planning Committee (Council of Ministers) – Nikolay V. Talyzin  
Senior Advisor (*glasnost* and *perestroika*) – Alexander Nikolaevich Yakovlev  
First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (removed in 1986) – Dinmukhamed Kunayev  
Lithuania’s First Party Secretary – Algirdas Brazauskas  
Deputy Premier – Leonid Abalkin  
Soviet Politburo member – Alexander N. Yakovlev  
Soviet ambassador to USA/Advisor – Anatoly F. Dobrynin  
First Secretary of the Communist Party of Lithuania – Ringaudas Bronislovas Songaila  
Air Defense Commander Marshall – Aleksandr I. Koldunov  
Commander of the Far East Military District General – Dmitry Yazov

### *USSR Bloc Questions:*

1. What is your role? What is your position in the Soviet government? What power/influence do you have? What were some of your achievements between 1980 and 1985?
2. Describe the relationship between the US and the USSR at this time. What were the critical issues causing tension between the two governments? What actions were taken to help the situation between the two countries and were they effective?
3. Describe the global economic situation at this time. What factors were contributing to the mounting financial crisis in the USSR and how did this affect its political involvement and situation?
4. Describe the system and formation of government in the Soviet Union in the 1980’s. What were the political powers of the Council of Ministers? the Supreme Soviet? the Politburo?
5. Describe the economic reform of *perestroika*. What changes were made? How did this impact the country? What is your opinion on these reforms?
6. What was *glasnost*? How did it affect the country? How did it impact Soviet doctrine and the power of the government?

7. Describe the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl and the earthquake in Armenia in 1988. How did the USSR deal with these disasters?
8. Discuss nationalist tension in the USSR at this time. What was the situation of Soviet satellite countries and their relationship with the Soviet Union? Discuss the change in Soviet doctrine (Brezhnev Doctrine vs. “Frank Sinatra Doctrine”).
9. What were USSR relations like with China and other European countries? What was the current international situation and how did this affect the USSR?
10. Describe the conflict in Afghanistan. What caused the Soviets to invade? What was the outcome of the war? How did the conflict impact foreign relations and what caused the Soviets to finally withdraw?
11. Describe the shift in foreign policy under Gorbachev. How did his approach differ from his predecessors and both negatively and positively impact the USSR?

## United States

### *Members:*

President – Ronald Reagan

Vice President – George H. W. Bush

Chief of Staff – Donald Regan

Attorney General – Edwin A. Meese III

Secretary of State – George P. Shultz

Secretary of Defense – Caspar Weinberger

Secretary of Treasury – James A. Baker III

Secretary of Commerce – Howard M. Baldrige

Secretary of Energy – Donald Paul Hodel

Secretary of Health and Human Services – Otis R. Bowen

Under Secretaries of State for Economic and Agricultural Affairs – W. Allen Wallis

Deputy Secretary of State – John C. Whitehead

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs – Michael Hayden Armacost

Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – William J. Crowe, Jr.

Director of Central Intelligence – William J. Casey

Director of the Office of Management and Budget – James C. Miller III

National Security Advisor – Robert MacFarlane

US Ambassador to the UN – Vernon A. Walters

US Ambassador to the USSR – Arthur A. Hartman

Chairman of the Federal Reserve – Paul Volcker (Alan Greenspan is appointed in '87)

### *US Block Questions:*

1. Who are you? What is your role in the US government? What does your main political platform address?
2. What are some of the major US domestic problems during the 1980s? How do these issues affect the Reagan Administration? What is your personal involvement in any domestic events or policies?
3. How does the AIDS epidemic affect the American people? The Reagan administration?
4. What is the economic policy of the Reagan administration? What are your views on this policy? How does this policy affect the economic climate in the US? Are there any major economic issues during this time period?
5. What does the Reagan administration do that the public approves of? What do they disapprove of? Are there any major events that distress the public? Are you involved in any of these events?
6. What are US/Soviet relations like during this time period? Do tensions escalate or deescalate? What factors contributed to this change?
7. What other international conflicts is the US involved in? Why? What role does the US play in these conflicts?

## Security Council

### *Member states:*

United States, Great Britain, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, People's Republic of China, France (Security Council President), Algeria, Egypt, South Africa, Japan, Nepal, Iran, Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Venezuela, Ukraine, Yugoslavia, Finland, Italy, West Germany, Australia

### *Assignment for Delegates:*

- 1) Explain your country's political, economic and social structure during this period in at least three paragraphs. Be sure to include any major events or conflicts your country is involved in, either nationally or internationally. Also note any international treaties or alliances that your country has with other nations (especially other nations in the HSC Security Council).
- 2) Discuss your country's feelings about the Cold War; does your country support nuclear proliferation and/or test nuclear weapons? Does your country support the Eastern or Western allies more? What interaction has your country had with either the US or the USSR and how is your country's economic viability influencing diplomatic decisions?
- 3) Explain your country's views on social issues, including civil and human rights (for example: apartheid, gay rights). How do your country's political and social systems reflect these views?

### *Draft Resolution Prompts*

Directions: Please write two draft resolutions, each a half-page long single-spaced, following the YMUN format found on the ymcamun.org website under the Security Council.

You have been given brief historical backgrounds on the four issues, so choose two to research your country's views on during our historical period.

#### *1) The AIDS Crisis*

In 1979, gay men in the US and Sweden and heterosexuals in Tanzania and Haiti began showing signs of what would later become known as AIDS for the first time. At first, homosexuals were the only ones thought to be able to contract the disease, but soon HIV/AIDS was found in many heterosexuals as well. By 1982, 265 individuals in the US alone had died from the still-unknown disease. The US's Center for Disease Control (CDC) led the world in evaluating the condition; in 1982, it officially named it AIDS. The French Institut Pasteur found the causal virus – HIV – in 1983, and the disease became more recognizable. Still, relatively little was known about the disease, and it was not until 1985 that President Ronald Reagan used the word "AIDS" in public. By that time, more than 10,000 people had been diagnosed with AIDS in the US alone, and the disease was spreading worldwide, especially in Sub-Saharan African and among women.

#### *2) The Cold War Continues*

Between 1963 and 1980 the US and the USSR signed several treaties limiting the use of nuclear weapons (including the Limited Test Ban Treaty and the SALT I treaty), especially under Nixon's policy of détente, which was a loosening of foreign tensions. With Ronald Reagan's presidential election win in 1980, the US began to build up its defense system again to contain

the Soviet Union. However, Reagan did end the grain embargo on the USSR. The US also became involved in the affairs of Third World countries such as El Salvador and Nicaragua because Communism also threatened these countries. In 1985, President Gromyko of the USSR was succeeded by Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev favored the West more than Gromyko did. Friendlier policies towards the West by the Soviet Union led the satellite states to have growing nationalist sentiments.

### *3) The Conflict in Afghanistan*

Two coups in Afghanistan in the late 1970s (one put a pro-Communist government in power, the second put an anti-Communist government in power) provoked the Soviet Union to invade the country. With a force that ultimately grew to 100,000 soldiers despite Afghan resentment, the Soviet forces fought against the mujahidin, the anti-Communists. The mujahidin were supported by the US, China, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Pakistan. The US alone sent billions of dollars worth of aid to the mujahidin during this time. Although the USSR had superior military equipment, the Afghan rebels eluded them successfully. Many Afghans fled their nation during this time to nearby Pakistan, and the poverty that existed this time is said to be partially responsible for the rise of extremist organizations such as the Taliban.

### *4) Apartheid and Human Rights in South Africa*

Apartheid, the system of political and social segregation between whites and non-whites (blacks and Asians) in South Africa, became an international civil rights issue in the 1980s. Apartheid laws dictated where non-whites could go to school and denied them representation in government. In the early 1980s, two large anti-apartheid protest groups, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) and the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) were in full force. Worldwide, some nations boycotted South Africa, and individuals put pressure on private companies to pull out of South Africa, which crippled the South African economy and weakened the government. Despite the creation of a tricameral parliament in 1983, the nation was torn for much of the decade. The growing international resistance to the basic human injustices was compounded by the growing violence in the country.