**How Ronald Reagan Won the Cold War**

From [Harry Truman](http://www.conservapedia.com/Harry_Truman) to [Jimmy Carter](http://www.conservapedia.com/Jimmy_Carter), the policy when dealing with the [Soviet Union](http://www.conservapedia.com/Soviet_Union) was [containment](http://www.conservapedia.com/Containment). Containment failed. The ultimate goal of the Soviet empire was a global [communist](http://www.conservapedia.com/Communism) revolution, therefore the Soviets could never have been contained. When [Ronald Reagan](http://www.conservapedia.com/Ronald_Reagan) came into office, he initiated a policy of confronting the Soviet Union, marking a sharp departure from the "détente" policy of the 1970s.

Reagan advocated a radical agenda: challenge the Soviets everywhere. Economically, politically, militarily, and especially psychologically. Not just coexist with the Soviets, but defeat them. His strategy for an endgame to the [Cold War](http://www.conservapedia.com/Cold_War) was that there would be no coexistence with the Soviets. From beginning to end, the goal was the destruction of the Soviet Union.

He realized that a planned economy could not compete against a market economy in a renewed arms race and so he made the Cold War hot in an economic and rhetorical sense. Reagan and his team devised a plan. The secret plan was to dismember the Soviet Union brick by brick. It would be coercive. Confront the Soviet head on to fight and win a protracted four part war.

The first part was a war of action. The Reagan administration used paramilitary ops, covert action, small unit combat, and simply taking the torch to the enemy. The instruments were anti-communist [Nicaraguan](http://www.conservapedia.com/Nicaragua) freedom fighters, anti-communist [Afghan](http://www.conservapedia.com/Afghanistan) freedom fighters and anti-communist [Polish](http://www.conservapedia.com/Poland) freedom fighters.

The second part was a war of materiel. Reagan began a massive re-armament based on high-technology that obsoleted a generation of Soviet weaponry. Before Reagan took office, U.S. defense technology had fallen badly behind the Soviets during the Jimmy Carter administration. The defense upgrade would include a 600 ship [Navy](http://www.conservapedia.com/United_States_Navy), new [Army](http://www.conservapedia.com/United_States_Army) divisions, tanks, planes, and missiles. Under the orders of Reagan, Secretary of Defense [Caspar Weinberger](http://www.conservapedia.com/Caspar_Weinberger)cleared out the Carter [Defense Department](http://www.conservapedia.com/Department_of_Defense" \o "Department of Defense), instilled an esprit de corps within the ranks, and rebuilt the military as an instrument for the Soviets to fear. The method was unpredictable. Incursions into [Russian](http://www.conservapedia.com/Russia) airspace, sending B-52s in attack formation over the North Pole, disrupting naval exercises. The weapons build-up forced the Soviet Union to increase its military spending, freeing the [CIA](http://www.conservapedia.com/CIA) to inflict massive damage to the Soviets in [Afghanistan](http://www.conservapedia.com/Afghanistan) and[Central America](http://www.conservapedia.com/Central_America) without obvious U.S. involvement.

The third part of the plan was a war of ideas. Reagan recognized that mass communications was the new most important instrument. He used Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Marti; bombarding the captive nations with broadcasts, embedding coded messages for the leaders of resistance movements, secretly distributing [Korans](http://www.conservapedia.com/Koran) and pamphlets and that detailed the ongoing Soviet abuse of [Muslims](http://www.conservapedia.com/Islam). Reagan knew that the struggle against communism was not simply between two political ideologies, but it was fundamentally about core beliefs and values and faith in a higher power. So when he changed the radio stations and made them voices of advocacy, he also added religious programming. Particular the [Catholic](http://www.conservapedia.com/Catholic) mass was provided to listeners in [Poland](http://www.conservapedia.com/Poland) and that was a very energizing and mobilizing influence in a country where Catholicism and resistance to communism worked well together. They were also providing information and spiritual food to Muslims in Soviet Central Asia. They were printing brochures and they were having radio programs that talked about the incompatibility between [Islam](http://www.conservapedia.com/Islam) and the forced militant [atheism](http://www.conservapedia.com/Atheism) of communism.

The fourth and final part of the plan was a war of [money](http://www.conservapedia.com/Money). Reagan devised a plan to bankrupt the Soviet Union. He had always known that the Soviet economy was no more than the size of [California](http://www.conservapedia.com/California)'s and CIA analysis proved him right. Their 500 billion dollars paled in comparison to the 2.5 trillion dollars of the [United States](http://www.conservapedia.com/United_States). Reagan used this discrepancy to America's advantage with economic warfare on a scale never seen before. One fought with a new weapon. Reagan made the dollar a weapon for the first time in Soviet history. The Soviet system had been in crisis since 1917, but they had always figured out a way in the [Kremlin](http://www.conservapedia.com/Kremlin) to have the West bail them out. Reagan saw to it that that was not going to happen this time. So it was a struggle about dollars and credits as much as it was about tanks and missiles. The means Reagan used was [oil](http://www.conservapedia.com/Oil) through a partnership with [Saudi Arabia](http://www.conservapedia.com/Saudi_Arabia). The Soviet Union's hard currency came from a single source: its mineral wealth of [oil](http://www.conservapedia.com/Oil) and [natural gas](http://www.conservapedia.com/Natural_gas). Reagan secretly sent William Casey, the Director of Central Intelligence, to Riyadh to strong arm the Saudis into tripling oil production, cutting prices by fifty percent. Casey was successful and got the Saudis to go along. Reagan's objective was an economic boom in the West and a crippling blow to the struggling Soviet economy. The desperate Soviets needed hard cash, so they resorted to gas fields in western [Siberia](http://www.conservapedia.com/Siberia). There solution was a 4,000 mile pipeline connecting the fields to the markets in Western Europe. They believed the prize would be billions of cubic feet of gas flowing from Siberia and therefore tens of billions in hard currency flowing back to[Moscow](http://www.conservapedia.com/Moscow).

This was an appropriate time to launch a more strategic initiative designed to go after the Soviet Union's domination of Western [Europe](http://www.conservapedia.com/Europe)'s natural gas markets and major American conglomerates really had no stomach for that at all. In the end, there interest in profits oversees. There was enormous pressure that was brought to bare by companies that were going to be damaged by Reagan's economic war against the Soviet empire. This economic warfare would be applied to wherever the Soviets struck.

The first of these was [Poland](http://www.conservapedia.com/Poland), which was the epicenter of the Soviet empire and they considered it the crossroads of Europe. It is where all the historic invasions of [Russia](http://www.conservapedia.com/Russia) had taken place. Tanks rolled onto the streets of Warsaw, road blocks where everywhere, 3.4 million telephones were rendered dead, 250 thousand military personnel were deployed. The Soviets determined that controlling and dominating Poland was vital to protecting the survival of the Soviet empire. Martial law was declared, the Solidarity organization was banned and Lech Wałęsa and five thousand activists were arrested. With the rise of Solidarity, for the first time in the Cold War there was a challenge to their authority in Poland. They installed a puppet government in the country. After the Soviets backed a coup in Poland and declared martial law, Reagan was furious and determined to see Solidarity succeed. The secret funding for Solidarity commenced. It payed for the tools of subversion: printing presses and radio transmitters. Reagan decided that the Soviet sponsorship of martial law in Poland needed to be responded to with economic sanctions. Reagan canceled trade agreements, made grain sales tougher, and restricted credit. The Europeans saw Reagan's tenacity and knew he would not give in. So they fell in line, tightening their lending to the regime in Moscow.

Reagan also went out of his way to deliver Western Europe from being a sitting duck to the Soviet missiles that were aimed directly toward it. One of Reagan's early and most important goals was to station missiles in Europe to provide a defense for the people of Western Europe. In the [United Kingdom](http://www.conservapedia.com/United_Kingdom), Prime Minister [Thatcher](http://www.conservapedia.com/Margaret_Thatcher) mobilized Western Europe to deploy the new generation of nuclear weapons.

Reagan's game plan had been to only meet with the Soviets on his terms, when the power had shifted in America's favor. By the 1985, that was happening. In the Strategic Defense Initiative's embryonic stage, it had new partners: [Japan](http://www.conservapedia.com/Japan), [West Germany,](http://www.conservapedia.com/Germany) [Italy](http://www.conservapedia.com/Italy), [Israel](http://www.conservapedia.com/Israel), and the United Kingdom. In Poland, Solidarity had refused to surrender. In Nicaragua, the anti-communist freedom fighters fought on. In [Africa](http://www.conservapedia.com/Africa) and [Southeast Asia](http://www.conservapedia.com/Southeast_Asia) anti-communist CIA covert operations were underway. In Afghanistan, the simple goal of making the Soviets retreat in disgrace was working. The Reagan war plan was now beginnng to converge; the military build-up, the covert actions, the economic sanctions, and the Strategic Defense Initiative.

The combined effects on the Soviet economy was costing the Soviet empire billions. The Soviets had increased defense spending by 45 percent, billions were lost in hard currency, billions more was spent on bolstering nervous third world communist dictators and all they had to show for it was dead young Russian and other Soviet citizens shipped home from the battlefields of Afghanistan. Reagan's leverage had worked and the Kremlin was now backed into a corner. After less than five years of Ronald Reagan, the hardliners of the Soviet leadership could no longer hide the economic damage of their rule. This gave the reformers an opening. [Mikhail Gorbachev](http://www.conservapedia.com/Mikhail_Gorbachev) was elected by a one vote majority in the [politburo](http://www.conservapedia.com/Politburo) and that vote was by Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, who had met with Reagan six months earlier and told him that he knew that Reagan's goal was the destruction of the Soviet Union. The politburo went with a reformer such as Gorbachev because they knew the only way they could compete with the United States and meet the Reagan challenge is by changing. So Gorbachev was brought into power in response to Ronald Reagan. So Reagan was really responsible for bringing Gorbachev into power.

Eventually, the ten year war in Afghanistan against Reagan-supported Afghan freedom fighters exhausted the resources and morale of the Soviet [socialist](http://www.conservapedia.com/Socialism" \o "Socialism)system. With more than 15,000 Soviet military personnel dead, the Soviets withdrew their forces in 1989 and admitted to a humiliating defeat. It was payback for the [Vietnam War](http://www.conservapedia.com/Vietnam_War). Also in 1989, the Reagan-supported Polish Solidarity organization was legalized and allowed to participate in elections which sparked off a succession of peaceful anti-communist counter-revolutions in Central Europe and [Eastern Europe](http://www.conservapedia.com/Eastern_Europe).

Take the fact that communism drives any country broke, add a Reagan-supported arms build up as well as a Reagan-supported second arms race in space, add a Reagan-supported Vietnam-like quagmire, and mix in Reagan-supported socio-political upheaval in Soviet satellite states. It was more than the Soviet system could take. Especially with a Reagan-supported reformer in charge of the Soviet Union.

And that is how Ronald Reagan won the Cold War.

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