

# 8.01 The Roots of the Cold War

## Option B

**Name:** Robert Smith

**Year of Birth:** 1942

**Places of Residence:** Hackensack, New Jersey and New York, New York

**Time of Interview:** December 16th, 2021 at 12:00 PM

Question	Answer
What was the first time you remember hearing about the conflict between the Soviet Union (or the USSR) and the United States? Tell me about it.	Well, let me tell you, that was an interesting time. I remember, must have been around May or June of 1950, my dad telling about something he saw in the Times about it one morning. At the time, he worked in the city, and was on the corner of 36th and Madison when he was reading the story in the paper. The story was about Northern Korea invading Southern Korea. This was also the start of the Korean War too, but this had rippling effects within America, as there was fear all over that they were looking for world domination.
What does the term "Cold War" mean to you? What do you remember seeing or reading in the news about the Cold War, or conflict between the USSR and the United States?	To me the term " <i>Cold War</i> " means a war in which there is hostility between two countries, not per se like a traditional war that involves people on battlefields. The biggest thing I remember was the threat of the Soviets nuking America. They had been testing around with bombs, and people were scared that they were going to drop them on America. It freaked everyone out, and almost felt worse than a regular war, as nobody knew when or if it was even going to happen. It could have happened at any second, on any day.
What books, movies, cartoons, or posters did you see that villainized either country, capitalists, communists, or dealt with the Cold War? How did they shape your impressions at that time?	During this time, the theme in movies, and other forms of entertainment, sure definitely changed. More movies were being made that touched on these topics, and that also had underlying messages that per se "villainized" communism.
What were you taught in school and at home about the conflict? What did your school and family teach about nuclear threats and nuclear war?	"Duck and cover." That was the one phrase in school that every kid knew. The principal would come on the loudspeaker saying that, obviously being a drill, "Atomic bomb attack, duck and cover." Within 2 seconds, everyone in the classroom was under their desks covering their heads and necks until they heard the "all clear" signal. At home, we had a shelter area that we would go to if anything were to happen, and we would duck and cover there as well.
Were you or any of your family members ever afraid that there would be a hot war or nuclear war between the two countries? When did you feel that way? If yes, did you do anything to prepare or get ready for it?	We always prepared ourselves incase that were to ever be the case, and of course it was scary to us all. That way, we were prepared if an all-out nuclear war was to suddenly erupt. We did the drills in school, practiced what we would do at home, and what to do if we were outside at any given area.

Question	Answer
What aspects of the Space Race, or competition to explore space, do you remember? Was "Space Race" a phrase that you remember using at the time? What did it mean to you?	Of course I remember that, everyone knew what it was. The Space Race was a quite interesting time. Nobody really thought about space before this time, so it was a new thing to the world. They also started pushing out space related things on TV and the radio around the same time. I knew that America was always trying to beat the Soviets at everything, and space was one of them, a big one.
Can you think of any specific examples of rivalry between the USA and USSR in other areas of life, such as sports?	Well, to be honest, America and the Soviets were rivals at everything. Space, sports, even chess. In 1972, there was a big chess match between America's Bobby Fischer and the Soviets' Boris Spassky that was held in Iceland. It was a huge deal, with Fischer winning in the end.
Do you remember the Berlin Wall coming down? How did it make you feel? How have your feelings about that era changed since 1989 and the Berlin Wall coming down?	Yes I do. It was a huge thing around the world, as it meant that this thing was finally coming to an end. My feelings really didn't change with the wall coming down, I was just really happy that this hostility between America and the Soviets looked as if it may come to an end very soon.
What lessons should students today take away from the Cold War?	I believe that students today should take away the fact that you should always be prepared for the worst to happen, in any given situation. When I was growing up, we were always doing the duck and cover drills, to prepare ourselves incase they dropped an atomic bomb. Being prepared like this can go a long way to help you keep you and those around you safe from danger.
Did you ever think that this hostility between America and the Soviets would last for so long?	To be completely honest, at the time I had no idea. It just kept going on after so many years that we got used to the fact that there was hostility. Of course we still were always preparing and were freaked out by it, but we knew it was there.
What do you think the Cold War showed to the world?	One thing I believe that the Cold War showed to the world, of among many other things, is what happens when you try to take over the world or try to get too much power. When you try to do so, there will be trouble. You can never have too much power, as an entity can only have so much at one time.

### **What did you learn from the primary sources or lesson that was most surprising and why?**

The thing that I found most surprising was that America was able to live so many years like this. I've known all about this for many years, and understand why, but it always still surprises me how long America dealt with all of this.

### **How might a Russian adult have responded differently to the interview questions?**

A Russian may have responded differently, most likely more in defense of Russia. This is because when all of this was going on, propaganda was pushed out on both sides to "villainize" the other side. This was done to make one side oppose the other.