HANDOUT 2.1.2 GERMANY AND THE COLD WAR TIMELINE

ASSIGNMENT: GERMANY AND THE COLD WAR TIMELINE

Because understanding chronology is one of the key themes of historical study, this assignment challenges you to develop a deep understanding of some of the key events of the Cold War as they relate to Germany.

1. **Create a Timeline of Turning Points**: Select 10 key events that you believe signaled change in Germany during the Cold War era.
2. **Explain Your Thinking:** Prepare to clearly explain why they selected each event and how the events could be interpreted as turning points.
3. **Compare Timelines:** Once your list is complete, compare lists with another student/group. Name your 10 key events and explain why you chose each one. As you listen, ask questions for clarification and/or to challenge your classmates' selections.

GERMANY AND THE COLD WAR TIMELINE

DATE	EVENT
1945	
May 8:	Capitulation of the German *Wehrmacht* officially ends World War II in Europe.
July 3:	Allied troops complete occupation of Berlin.
July 17 – August 2:	The four allied powers (the United States, United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union) meet in Potsdam for the "Potsdam Conference." Germany is divided into four zones of occupation. The American, British, and French zones merge to form the Western Sector. The Soviet zone forms the Eastern Sector. The city of Berlin (located within the Eastern Sector) is divided into four zones, and similarly the American, British, and French zones join to form West Berlin, while the Soviet zone becomes East Berlin.
1946	
March 5:	Winston Churchill, in a speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, says that an Iron Curtain now separates Europe.
April 21:	Forced unification of the German Communist Party (KPD) and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) in the Soviet-occupied zone to become the "Socialist Unity Party of Germany" (SED).
October 29:	An *Interzonenpass* (inter-zone passport) valid for 30 days is required to travel between the Western and Eastern sectors in Germany.
1947	
June 5:	The Marshall Plan, an American initiative to help rebuild post-war Europe, is announced, setting a precedent for helping countries combat poverty, disease, and malnutrition. The Soviet Union and its allies in eastern Europe reject the offer of aid.
1948	
June 21:	Monetary reform in the three Western allied zones, the *Deutsche Mark* comes into force and replaces the *Reichsmark*.

June 24:	(Berlin) The Soviet Union blockades all highway, river, and rail traffic into Western-controlled West Berlin in an attempt to force the Western powers out of Berlin. As a result, Western allied forces start the famous Berlin Airlift to provide vital supplies to the two million citizens of West Berlin. The Berlin Blockade lasts nearly 11 months (until May of the following year).

1949

April 4:	The United States, Canada, and Western European countries sign the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Washington, DC.
May 12:	The Soviet Union ends the Berlin Blockade.
May 23:	Founding of West Germany: The Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*) of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) is approved in Bonn on May 8, 1949, and with the signature of the occupying Western Allies of World War II on May 12, it comes into effect on May 23.
September 30:	End of the Berlin Airlift.
October 7:	Founding of East Germany: The constitution of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) went into effect. The GDR was formed from the Soviet zone of occupation.
December 15:	(FRG) The Marshall Plan for the rebuilding of West Germany is implemented.

1950

February 8:	(GDR) Founding of the Ministry for State Security (*Stasi*) as the "Shield and Sword of the Party."
September 29:	(GDR) East Germany joins the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, an economic organization comprising the countries of the Eastern Bloc along with a number of communist states elsewhere in the world.

1952

February 8:	(FRG) Against the votes of the Social Democrats (SPD), the Bundestag decides that West Germany will make a defense contribution.
May 27:	(GDR) East Germany closes its borders to West Germany in a one-sided undertaking. East Germany leaves the border between East and West Berlin open.
July 12:	(GDR) Start of collectivization of agriculture in order to build up agricultural production cooperatives.

1953

June 16 – June 17:	(GDR) East Berlin construction workers went on strike against working conditions due to a new law. Protests spread and turned into riots known as the "People's Uprising in East Germany." Protests were suppressed by Soviet forces.

1954

July 4:	(FRG) West Germany wins the soccer world championship in Switzerland. The unexpected win evoked a wave of euphoria throughout Germany. This was also the first public singing of the German national anthem since WWII. This victory at the beginning of the so-called economic miracle is often regarded as a turning point in post-war German history.

1955

May 5:	(FRG) West Germany gains full sovereignty.

May 9:	(FRG) West Germany joins NATO.
May 14:	(GDR) Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance (the Warsaw Pact) officially established.
May 24:	(FRG/GDR) Hallstein Doctrine stated that the FRG would no longer have diplomatic ties to the GDR (lasted until 1969)
September 20:	(GDR) Sovereignty of East Germany.
December 20:	(FRG) Start of the "guest worker" program to attract southern European workers to work in West Germany. It is officially stopped in 1973 because of the oil crisis.

1956

February 25:	(GDR) Three years after Stalin's death, Nikita Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" (given in a closed session of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) marks a period of reform and change of official policy back to a Leninist model, which also has an impact on East Germany.
August 17:	(FRG) The Communist Party is banned in West Germany.
October 24:	(GDR) Student unrest breaks out at universities in East Germany (and in other Soviet satellites), and these actions are suppressed by the police. The turmoil is linked to protests and the nationwide revolt in Hungary known as the Hungarian Revolution.

1957

March 28:	(FRG) West Germany is one of six nations to sign the founding treaties of the European Economic Community (EEC), the predecessor of the European Union (EU).
October 4:	USSR launches Sputnik, the first artificial Earth satellite, into orbit.
December 11:	(GDR) Leaving East Germany without permission is forbidden, and violations are prosecuted with up to three years in prison.

1958

Starting November 10:	"The Berlin Crisis": Khrushchev demands withdrawal of Western troops from Berlin within six months, sparking a crisis over the future of Berlin that culminated with the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

1960 - 1989

1960 - 1989	(GDR) The *Schießbefehl* ("order to fire") is in place in various forms for the entirety of this time period. It is a standing order that instructs border patrol guards in East Germany to prevent border penetration by East German citizens by all means necessary. Only in 1982 is this order formally legalized by §27 of the border law.

1960

February 10:	(GDR) Founding of the National Defense Council, with Walter Ulbricht as chairman.
August 29:	(FRG) West Germany contracts out of the inter-zone-agreement with East Germany because of the travel restriction put into force by the GDR.

1961

April 1:	(FRG) The first acknowledged conscientious objectors to military service start their civilian service (*Zivildienst*), a kind of compulsory community service.

August 13:	(GDR) The Berlin Wall is built: In the middle of the night, East German soldiers surround West Berlin with barbed wire. The wire is soon replaced by concrete, and the Berlin Wall (*Berliner Mauer*) is built and fortified to block the stream of East Germans from leaving East Germany to go to West Germany through West Berlin.
October 25-28:	(East/West Berlin) Army tank confrontation; American and Soviet tanks face each other at Checkpoint Charlie.

1962

October 22-27:	The Cuban Missile Crisis takes place between the USA and the Soviet Union. The Cold War reaches new heights.
October-December:	(FRG) The Spiegel Affair, one of the major political scandals in Germany during the era following World War II. During the scandal, the government had to be reshuffled, and finally the freedom of press was strengthened.

1963

January 22:	(FRG) The Elysée Treaty of Friendship between France and West Germany is signed.
June 23:	(West Berlin) U.S. President John F. Kennedy visits the city and declares: "*Ich bin ein Berliner.*" ("I am a Berliner.")

1964

June 12:	(GDR) Mutual assistance pact and friendship treaty between the Soviet Union and the GDR.
September 10:	(FRG) The one millionth "guest worker" is ceremoniously welcomed into West Germany.

1967

June 2:	(West Berlin) University student Benno Ohnesorg is shot by a West Berlin police officer who turns out to be a double agent, also working for the East German Stasi. Start of the "Student Revolution."

1968

April 6:	(GDR) Ratification of the new constitution for the GDR as the "Socialist State of the German Nation."
May 29:	(FRG) Under harsh protests the *Bundestag* passes the Emergency Constitution allowing the German government to defend West Germany in an emergency.
June 10-11:	(GDR) The People's Chamber (*Volkskammer*), the unicameral legislature of East Germany, enacts passport and visa enforcement for the transit traffic between West Germany and West Berlin.

1969 – 1973

May 17:	(FRG) The *Bundestag* ratifies the "Eastern Treaties" (*Ostverträge*) as part of the new Eastern policies between West Germany and the Soviet Union, Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria.

1969

November 28:	(FRG) West Germany joins the Non-Proliferation Treaty to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology.

1970

August 12:	(FRG) Moscow Treaty signed between USSR and West Germany, which strive for normalization of relations between their two countries.

December 7:	(FRG) West Germany and Poland sign the Treaty of Warsaw, in which they recognize each other's territories, agree to only peaceful methods of border change and increased trade. Chancellor Willy Brandt kneels before the Warsaw memorial for the victims of the uprising in the Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw.

1971

September 3:	(Berlin) The Four Power Agreement over Berlin is reached. It charges the FRG and GDR with negotiating an accord that would regulate access to and from West Berlin from West Germany and secure the right of West Berlin residents to visit East Berlin and the GDR.
December 10:	(FRG) Chancellor Willy Brandt receives the Nobel Peace Prize for his so-called *Ostpolitik* ("Eastern policy"), a policy aimed at improving relations with the Eastern bloc, which caused considerable controversy in West Germany.

1972

January 6:	(GDR) For the first time, Central Committee secretary Erich Honecker calls West Germany a "foreign country."
August 26 – September 11:	(FRG) West Germany hosts the XX Summer Olympics in Munich. The games are overshadowed by the hostage-taking of the Israeli sports team by Palestinian terrorists on September 5th. During the crisis, two hostages are murdered during an unsuccessful attempt by the German police to liberate the hostages. All captives and five of the eight kidnappers are killed; in all, 17 people died. After a day of mourning the games were continued.
December 21:	(East Berlin) Signing of "The Basic Treaty" between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. The treaty commits both Germanys to develop normal relations on the basis of equality, guaranteeing their mutual territorial integrity as well as the border between them, and recognizing each other's independence and sovereignty. They also agreed to the exchange of "permanent missions" in Bonn and East Berlin to further relations.

1973

May – June:	(GDR/FRG) East Germany and West Germany establish formal diplomatic ties and implement "The Basic Treaty," the basis for new policy long-term.
September 18:	(GDR/FRG) East Germany and West Germany become members of the United Nations.
November – December	(FRG) First oil crisis which leads to a government-ordered ban of driving on four Sundays.

1974

April 24:	(FRG) Günther Guillaume, one of the closest staff members of West German Chancellor Willy Brandt, is uncovered as an East German spy. It is the most publicized case of political espionage between the two Germanys.
May 7:	(FRG) Chancellor Willy Brandt takes political responsibility for the "Guillaume Affair" and resigns from office.

1977

Starting in February:	(FRG) The "German Autumn" attacks by the far-left militant organization *Rote Armee Fraktion* (RAF, Red Army Faction) in West Germany. Assassination of the attorney general Siegfried Buback. Kidnapping and eventual killing of Hanns Martin Schleyer, president of the Confederation of German Employers' Association. Hijacking of a Lufthansa Airline's plane in Mogadishu, Somalia.

1978

August 26:	(GDR) Astronaut Sigmund Jähn becomes the first German in space. He flies with Waleri Fjodorowitsch Bykowski in a Soviet Sojus 31 to the Soviet space station Saljut 6. The flight is 7 days, 20 hours, 49 minutes and 4 seconds long. During their 125 orbits around the Earth they conduct many experiments.

1979

December 24:	Military intervention by the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Subsequently: (GDR) Lutheran church circles criticize the involvement of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The peace movement of East Germany becomes more prevalent. (FRG) The West German peace movement focuses their protests against the NATO Double-Track Decision and against the United States' plans for additional armament

1982

April 24:	(FRG) For the first time in history, West Germany wins the Eurovision Song Contest with 17-year-old singer Nicole (Seibert)'s performance of her song "*Ein bisschen Frieden*" ("A Little Peace").

1985

March 11:	Mikhail Gorbachev becomes the 6th General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, initiating a campaign of openness called "*glasnost*" and restructuring called "*perestroika*."

1986

April 26:	(GDR/ FRG) The Chernobyl disaster takes place. Radioactive fallout falls over Germany. The East German government and the state-controlled media ignore it completely. The West German government addresses the topic and issues warnings to the population to stay indoors, not to consume certain fresh vegetables, fresh milk, etc.

1987

June 6 – 8:	(West Berlin/ GDR) A three-day open-air rock concert in West Germany, only meters away from the Berlin Wall, leads to violent clashes between the East German police and East German teenagers who want to listen to the concert from East Berlin.
June 12:	(West Berlin) U.S. President Ronald Reagan visits West Berlin and calls on Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall.
September 7 – 11:	(GDR/ FRG) Erich Honecker, chairman of the State Council of the GDR, visits West Germany.

1989

May 2:	(GDR) Hungary opens its borders to Austria, which enables hundreds of GDR citizens to emigrate to the West.
May 7:	(GDR) Regional elections take place in East Germany. Citizens protest against election fraud committed by the East German government. In Leipzig more than 100 demonstrators are arrested by the Stasi.
September 30:	(FRG/GDR) After almost 6,000 GDR citizens sought refuge on the grounds of the West German Embassy in Prague, West German Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher announces that all of them would be allowed to emigrate to West Germany.
October 7:	(GDR) The 40th anniversary of the founding of the GDR is celebrated with a huge parade. At the same time the Stasi applies force on demonstrators in different parts of East Berlin.

1989 (cont.)

October 8:	(GDR) During his visit to East Berlin, President Mikhail Gorbachev declares: "Life punishes those who come too late," which some interpreted to mean that he was voicing support for those in the GDR demanding changes."
October 9:	(GDR) Peaceful "Monday demonstration" in Leipzig with 70,000 participants chanting "We are the people."
November 4:	(GDR) Around 1 million people join in anti-government demonstrations in East Berlin.
November 8:	(GDR) The entire Politbüro (cabinet council) of the Socialist Unity Party resigns.
November 9:	(Berlin) Fall of the Berlin Wall: The East German government announces that visits to West Berlin and West Germany will be permitted. Immediately, thousands of East Berliners pass into West Berlin as border guards stand by. That same night, people begin tearing down the Berlin Wall (*Berliner Mauer*).
November 28:	(FRG) West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl presents his Ten Point Plan for the reunification of Germany.
December 4:	(GDR) The Erfurt *Stasi* office is occupied by East German citizens to prevent the *Stasi* from destroying files. Afterward the GDR Stasi offices all over are occupied by the opposition.
December 7:	(GDR) Begin of the "Round Table Talks" between members of the West German government and the East German government's opposition representatives.

1990

March 18:	(GDR) First free and democratic elections held in East Germany.
June 12:	Boris Yeltsin was elected by popular vote to the newly created post of President of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.
June 19:	(FRG) West Germany signs the "Schengen Treaty" (in the city of Schengen) pledging to decrease inner-European border controls.
July 1:	(GDR/FRG) Both East and West Germany sign the treaty to merge monetary, economic, and social matters going forward. The introduction of the West German *Deutsche Mark* in the GDR, replacing the *Ostmark* currency, marks the beginnings of the currency union.
August 31:	(GDR/FRG) Both Germanys sign the Unity Treaty.
September 12:	(GDR/FRG) East Germany and West Germany, along with the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union sign the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany (also known as the "Two Plus Four Treaty") in Moscow. This treaty is the final settlement to WWII and officially ends the four allied powers' rights and responsibilities in Germany.
September 24:	(GDR) East Germany formally withdraws from the Warsaw Pact.
October 3:	(GDR/FRG) Day of German Unity: East Germany formally joins West Germany creating one unified Germany.

1991

Over the course of 1991:	The Warsaw Pact is dissolved. Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev resigns. The Soviet Union breaks apart into Russia and several countries.

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