Explain why relations changed between the USA and the USSR between 1948 and 1953. (12 marks)

* 1948-9 Berlin Airlift
* 1949 NATO formed
* 1949 Comecon 1953 Death of Stalin

One way that relations changed between the USA and the USSR was the berlin Airlift which took place in 1948 to 1949. Stalin resented the fact that Berlin was split into 4 which would be occupied after the war by the Allies despite Berlin being deep inside the Soviet zone and sphere of influence, it was like a spot of capitalism in a communist area which resulted in Stalin attempting to seize power of Berlin by blockading all transport links e.g. roads and river, the US resorted to airlifting supplied to the 2 million trapped population of Berlin to keep them from being starved of supplies. This caused relations between the USA and the USSR to get worse as neither side gained anything from the confrontation, Stalin had not gained control of the Soviet zone in Berlin which made both sides more determined to win in the next confrontation.

Another way relations changed was the formation of NATO, which was set up as direct result of the Berlin airlift. During the airlift, both sides came dangerously close to having direct military conflict as both sides did not want to back down, this resulted in the US feeling the need to form a military alliance for if ever there was any conflict they would have alliances. This made relations worse between the superpowers because as Stalin felt the alliance was against him he fully opposed it increasing tension further, Stalin claimed it was dividing Europe.

Another way relations changed was due to Comecon, this was the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and was set up in 1949 to increase and consolidate the control that the USSR had over the countries in its sphere of influence and co ordinate the work that was happening in Eastern Europe. Comecon was the Soviet’s response to the Truman Doctrine in 1947 and the Marshall Plan 1948. It allowed the countries of the Soviet Bloc to trade with one another reject Marshall Aid and helped their economic recovery. This made relations worse as it further divided Europe into two camps meaning there were opposite economic alliances, the US resented the fact that Stalin was cutting off Eastern Europe and exerting his control over it further.

The most important reason for relations changing was the Berlin Airlift as it increased tensions most significantly, it demonstrated that both sides were unwilling to back down which was very dangerous in terms of the Cold War it meant both sides became determined to win next time and led to military alliances being formed which increased the likelihood of war breaking out.

Explain why détente collapsed in the years 1979 – 84. (12 marks)

* Olympic Boycott
* SALT
* Soviet invasion of Afghanistan

The 1970s were a period of détente after the Cuban Missile Crisis where both superpowers realized that they had gone too far. Tension therefore eased temporarily, it seemed the USA and USSR were putting there differences aside however, this was not the case.

One reason that détente collapsed in the years 1979-84 was the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan after the Afghan communists needed help against the Mujahideen. A new government in Kabul was set up and reforms were implemented that undermined the Afghans traditional beliefs such as the education of girls. The US President Carter was enraged leading to the US giving money and supplies to the Mujahideen in Afghanistan via Pakistan, both superpowers were involved in a long and futile war. This was therefore a key reason that détente collapsed.

As a result of the invasion of Afghanistan, Carter refused to sign the SALT II Treaty as a form of protest, this resulting in détente collapsing as all they way through détente conferences and talks were being held showing the good relations however the fact that SALT II was not singed is a clear sign détente collapsed.

Another way the US protested against the invasion was through boycotting the 1980 Moscow Olympics, the US along with its allies Canada, China and Japan all boycotted the Olympics instead going to one in Philadelphia, as another protest of the boycotts, the USSR and all the Soviet satellite states boycotted the LA games in 1984. This was clear evidence of the collapse of détente as they were unwilling even to play in the Olympic games as politics got in the way and played a key role in every decision made by each country.

The most important reason that détente collapsed was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as everything else led on from here such as the Olympic boycott and the SALT II treaty not being signed putting the powers back into the Second Cold War therefore explaining the collapse of détente.

Explain why Czechoslovakia became a Cold War flashpoint in 1968. (12 marks)

The first and most significant reason that a crisis occurred in Czechoslovakia was that the Soviet appointed leader was forced to resign and was replaced by Dubcek. Dubcek wanted to get rid of the most repressive aspects of communism and make it more popular, however this ‘socialism with a human face’ and more freedom meant that people had more freedom to criticize communism as he relaxed press censorship. This period of liberal change was called the Prague Spring, it meant that Czechoslovakia became a flashpoint because these reforms caused serious alarm among older members of the Czechoslovakian society and this horror was shared by Brezhnev and his allies across Europe.

Another main reason why Czechoslovakia became a flashpoint was because Brezhnev became increasingly worried that Czechoslovakia would leave the Warsaw Pact, although he was also in a dilemma as Dubcek was his friend, Brezhnev did not want the Prague Spring to influence other countries in the Soviet Bloc, Brezhnev felt threatened by these reforms so he decided to remove Dubcek, this was another reason it became a flashpoint, Brezhnev was very worried such reforms could lead to the break up of the Eastern Bloc.

A final cause of Czechoslovakia becoming a flashpoint was the Soviet invasion of the country in order to overthrow Dubcek. This was a very violent cause of the crisis, as Soviet tanks were brought in and protests occurred. However, this reason was actually less significant because it demonstrated that the USA would not get involved militarily as they were too busy in Vietnam, the invasion met with little resistance but it increased hatred towards the USSR.

Overall there were several factors that caused this crisis all linked by opposition to communism, the openness of Dubcek during the Prague Spring was the most significant reason cause of Czechoslovakia being a flashpoint because this sparked of the other changes, if he had not relaxed censorship, the country would have not spoken out against communism and Soviet policy and the invasion would not have been necessary.