

THE COLD WAR

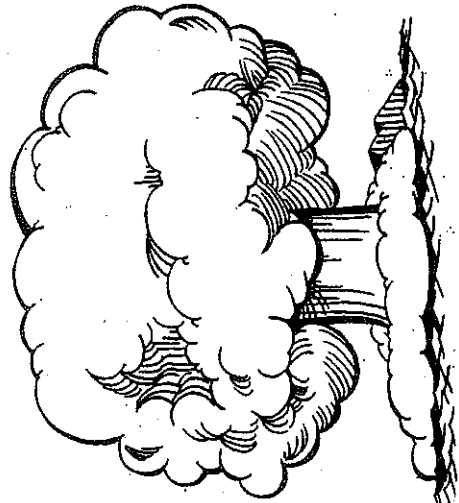
On May 12, 1945, Churchill sent a telegram to Truman asking: "What is going to happen about Europe? An iron curtain is drawn down... [and] we do not know what is going on behind [it]." Much that happened in the Soviet Union during the last eight years of Stalin's life was not open to outsiders, but it appears to have been a dangerous time and place in which to live, and American fears were fed by wild speculation.

Americans were anxious to return to normal lives after the war: get out of the uniform, look for a job, buy a car, build a new house in the suburbs. Industries converted from building tanks to automobiles, from parachutes to stockings. National pride was running high, but the idea that the United States could ignore the refugees, the starving, the devastated cities all around the world made it almost embarrassing for Americans with so much food, wealth, and power. The United States would have to play a major role in solving the problems of the world.

In the Soviet Union, where life had been gloomy before and during the war, it became more grim after. A severe drought in the Ukraine in 1946 caused mass hunger, but Stalin was determined to produce all food on collective farms; they had failed before the war, and now they failed again. Minority groups, especially Jews, were discriminated against. There were few who protested; complainants received visits from the secret police (NKVD). Forced labor camps (gulags) held political prisoners and those accused of helping the Germans during the war. Those sent to the camps often did not live long enough to complete their sentences.

The Russian people knew practically nothing about the outside world. Their only information came from the government-controlled press. Few foreigners (except from China and the satellite nations) were allowed into Russia, and the few who came were always accompanied by Russian escorts. Soviet citizens hesitated to talk with visitors for fear they might be accused of violating the "Decree of State Secrets Act" and be sentenced to anywhere from four years at hard labor to death.

Even the people in Stalin's inner circle distrusted each other. General Zhukov received so much attention during the war that he was sent to a minor military job in the Ukraine. General Andrey Zhdanov gave a speech in 1947 in which he said the world was divided into two hostile camps: the imperialists (led by the United States) and anti-imperialists (led by the Soviet Union). Another powerful person was Georgi Malenkov, a leader in the party. He conspired with the head of the secret police, Lavrenty Berta, against Zhdanov. It is suspected that Zhdanov's death in 1948 may have been murder. Shortly after Zhdanov died, his friends were rounded up and charged with plotting against Stalin. They were all



The threat of nuclear war kept tensions high between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

executed, and Malenkov replaced them with people loyal to himself.

The last four years Stalin lived were dangerous times for Jews and anyone in a leadership role. Jews became targets again when twelve Jewish writers were executed. Even the Jewish wife of Molotov was imprisoned for ten years in Siberia. Nine doctors (seven of whom were Jews) were charged with Zhdanov's murder and plots against the lives of military leaders. Molotov and Mikoyan (the deputy prime minister) were both suspected. The replacement of the Politburo with a new "Presidium" in 1952 may have been a cover to murder some of the old Politburo members.

The United States and Russia greatly feared each other after the war. The United States believed the Communists when they talked about dominating the world, and American foreign policy intended to keep that from happening. Some American politicians, like Senator Joe McCarthy, believed that the Communists had agents inside the U.S. government, and that even caused Americans to be suspicious of each other.

In the meantime, the United States and Russia were constantly trying to get the upper hand with each other. This led to what came to be known as Cold War (struggling with anything short of actual war). The effort to stop communist expansion into Greece and Turkey was called the Truman Doctrine. The financial help sent to build up the economies of Western Europe and stop the growth of Communist parties there was the Marshall Plan. The United States made military alliances in Europe (NATO), in Asia (SEATO), and with Latin America (Rio Pact) to keep Russian influence out. Congress created the "Voice of America," which beamed shortwave radio programs into Russia to inform the people there about the United States. The United States began a program called Point Four to aid underdeveloped countries by giving them technical help.

There were times of great tension. In 1948 Stalin tried to cut off West Berlin by closing off railroads, canals, and roads. Truman decided to respond with the Berlin Airlift. Hundreds of transport airplanes brought in enough food, fuel, and supplies to keep the city going. In 1949 the United States lost a major military advantage when Russia exploded its first atomic bomb. The United States then began building an even more powerful hydrogen bomb. The United States had its first "H-bomb" in 1952; the Russians exploded theirs in 1953.

Stalin's death was announced March 5, 1953. Stalin had left a bloodstained page on Russian history, and his cult image as a great leader did not last long after he was gone.

Debate Topic:

Some Americans feel that the Cold War was the fault of the United States. Were they right?

Name _____ Date _____

CHALLENGES

1. Who used the phrase "iron curtain"? What did it mean?

2. Why didn't Russians complain about the food shortages or treatment of Jews?

3. Why did foreigners have trouble learning anything from conversations with Russians?

4. Why was General Zhukov sent to the Ukraine?

5. Do you think Zhdanov believed in working out problems with the United States? Why or why not?

6. Who were two important enemies of Zhdanov in the government?

7. What was the purpose of the Truman Doctrine?

8. What was the American military alliance with European nations called?

9. What was the name of the American radio network that sent information inside the Iron Curtain?

10. What new, more powerful weapon was invented after the atomic bomb?
