

Summary: The Cold War

Roots of the Cold War

The United States and the Soviet Union worked together to win World War II. Differences between the countries pushed them apart after the war. The countries had different ideas about economics and government. Americans live under capitalism. They have a market economy. Americans have a democratic government. They vote for their leaders. Soviets lived under communism. They did not choose their leaders. Soviets did not have much freedom.

By 1947, the Soviet Union and the United States were in a Cold War. This was a war of words and ideas. When World War II ended, the Allies shared control of Germany. The Soviet Union controlled the eastern half. The United States, Britain, and France controlled the western half. The capital city was divided. The Soviets controlled East Berlin. The Allies controlled West Berlin.

The Soviet Union created communist governments in Eastern Europe. Winston Churchill said an “iron curtain” divided Europe. The curtain was not real. It was a symbol of the differences between communist and non-communist countries. In 1949, the United States, Canada, Britain, and most of the non-communist European countries formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO. It wanted to keep the Soviets from forcing nations to be communist.

Conflicts in Europe Grow

Soviets blocked the roads and railroads to West Berlin in 1948. The United States and Britain broke this blockade. Airplanes took food and supplies to people trapped in West Berlin. This was called the Berlin Airlift. Many people from East Berlin escaped to West Berlin during the 1950s. In 1961, the Soviets began to build a wall. It divided East Berlin and West Berlin. It was called the Berlin Wall.

Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

capitalism *noun*, when ordinary people and businesses control the production of goods and services

market economy individuals and businesses make most economic decisions

communism *noun*, a government that controls production and owns the nation’s natural and capital resources.

After You Read

REVIEW What area did the Soviet Union take control of after World War II? Circle the sentence that tells which half of Germany the Soviet Union controlled. Then underline the sentence that tells which countries controlled the other half.

REVIEW In what way did the United States and Britain help end the blockade of Berlin? How did the United States and Britain help the people trapped in West Berlin? Circle the sentence that tells you the answer.