

US History:

Lesson #11: April 6

Post-WWII Economic Systems Clash

Learning Target: The student will compare and contrast the USA and capitalism vs. the Soviet Union and communism and explain the origin of this rivalry.

Warm Up

Click on the link here and watch the video about the origin of the Cold War. This is the post-World War II competition that begins in Europe but is rooted in the economic differences between the USA (capitalists) and the Soviet Union (communists).

The Cold War: Ideological Differences - Capitalism vs Communism (5:36)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMycLVDAeD4>

Lesson Activity

Review the chart here titled U.S. Aims Versus Soviet Aims in Eastern Europe.

Compare the goals of each nation with regard to influence in the world, economic plans, government plans, and Germany.

U.S. Aims Versus Soviet Aims in Eastern Europe

The United States wanted to ...	The Soviet Union wanted to ...
Create a new world order in which all nations had the right of self-determination	Encourage communism in other countries as part of the worldwide struggle between workers and the wealthy
Gain access to raw materials and markets for its industries	Rebuild its war-ravaged economy using Eastern Europe's industrial equipment and raw materials
Rebuild European governments to ensure stability and to create new markets for American goods	Control Eastern Europe to balance U.S. influence in Western Europe
Reunite Germany, believing that Europe would be more secure if Germany were productive	Keep Germany divided and weak so that it would never again threaten the Soviet Union

Lesson Activity

Read the text section here titled Former Allies Clash and answer the questions that follow.

Harry S. Truman

(1884–1972)



Former Allies Clash



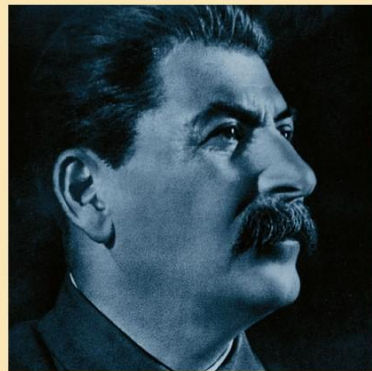
At the end of World War II, many once-powerful countries in Europe were devastated militarily and economically. In the wake of this destruction, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the world's two leading nations. They were superpowers with the might and influence to shape world events. However, the two former allies had very different ambitions for the future. These differences created a climate of icy tension that plunged the two countries into a bitter rivalry.

Political and Economic Differences

The U.S.-Soviet rivalry stemmed in large part from deep-rooted ideological differences. The two countries represented opposite ends of the political spectrum. In the American democratic system, the people voted to elect a president and a Congress from competing political parties. In the Soviet Union, the Communist Party had removed the czar by force. In his place, it had established a totalitarian government in which no opposing parties were allowed to exist. The Soviets were deeply resentful that the United States had not recognized their Communist government until 16 years after the revolution.

Joseph Stalin

(1879–1953)



Lesson Activity



Read the text section here and answer the questions that follow.

Also, click on the link below to get a clear explanation of 'What is Communism?' (2:49)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qElx_EyTTKA

Political Leaders: President Harry Truman

Joseph Stalin

 UNITED STATES	 SOVIET UNION
Population in 1946	▼
GDP in 1950 (in 1990 dollars)	▼
Government	▼
Economy	▲
Capitalism, with businesses owned by individuals and corporations	Communism, with all business and economic activity managed by the government
Economically, too, the countries were ideological opposites. Under Soviet communism, the state controlled all property and all economic activity. Individuals were expected to work only for the betterment of the country as a whole. In the American capitalist system, citizens and corporations drove almost all economic activity. Individuals had the right to work as they chose and to potentially become wealthy through their own efforts.	

Lesson Activity

Read the text section here and answer the questions that follow.

Much of the new tension stemmed from Stalin's refusal to allow democracy in Poland and other parts of Eastern Europe. At the Yalta Conference in January 1945, Stalin had agreed to allow free elections after the war. By the time of the Potsdam Conference six months later, however, he had backed off from his promise. The Soviet government banned democratic parties in countries under its control and arrested non-Communist leaders. Truman had hoped to spread democracy into areas that had been under Nazi control. He viewed Stalin's actions as intolerable.

In addition to spreading political freedom, Truman also felt that the United States had a large economic stake in spreading democracy and free trade across the globe. U.S. industry boomed during the war, making the United States the economic leader of the world.

In a 1946 speech, Stalin announced that communism and capitalism were incompatible—and that another war was inevitable. Therefore, he said, the Soviet Union would concentrate on producing weapons rather than consumer goods. The United States interpreted this speech as a direct challenge.

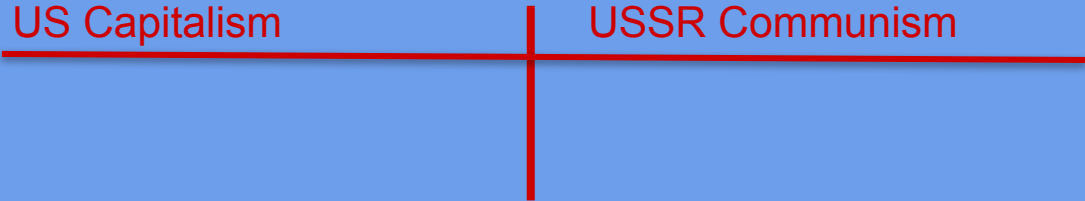
As tensions mounted, Europe found itself divided into two political and economic regions. One was the mostly democratic and capitalist Western Europe. The other was Communist Eastern Europe. In March 1946 Winston Churchill traveled to the United States. He gave a speech that described the situation in Europe.

Note: Winston Churchill is the leader of the United Kingdom (Britain)

Assignment

Write the following questions and answers on a sheet of paper titled:

Lesson #11 April 6 -
Post-WWII
Economic Systems
Clash

1. What does it mean when the US and USSR are called 'Superpowers?' -
2. Draw a 'T' chart on your paper like the one below and compare the economic and political beliefs of both systems

3. Explain what things President Truman hoped to spread after World War II -
4. Explain Joseph Stalin's plans in Europe after World War II -
5. Germany was at the center of this struggle of ideas. Contrast the plans that the US had for post-war Germany with the plans of the Soviets in Germany.

Reflection

Thinking Exercise:

After completing this lesson
reflect on the questions posed
here.

- How did these two ideas or ideologies actually divide Europe after World War II?
- In what ways was the Cold War similar to an actual World War?

Additional Resources

Check out these links for more information on this topic

- What Was the Cold War? (5:53)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-QopdZ7G8ww&t=158s>
- Here's How the Truman Doctrine Established the Cold War (4:51)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jb8aW46T3bg>

Answers

1. What does it mean when the US and USSR are called 'Superpowers?' - These are the countries that have the land, power, and economic resources to influence the world.
2. Draw a 'T' chart on your paper like the one below and compare the economic and political beliefs of both systems

US Capitalism

The US has a democratic gov't that believes in freedom, equality

The US system of capitalism is on free market supply & demand

USSR Communism

The USSR has a totalitarian gov't that believe in authoritarian control

The Soviet system of communism is based on gov't owned and distributed resources

3. Explain what things President Truman hoped to spread after World War II - Truman hoped to spread democracy and free trade in Europe.
4. Explain Joseph Stalin's plans in Europe after World War II - Stalin planned to concentrate on producing weapons instead of consumer goods after the war and he hoped to prevent democratic governments from being established in Europe.
5. Germany was at the center of this struggle of ideas. Contrast the plans that the US had for post-war Germany with the plans of the Soviets in Germany - The Soviets hoped to keep Germany divided and weak for their own future security. The US hoped to unify Germany and establish a productive democratic capitalist nation.