

 **POWER BASICS**®

World History III

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UNIT 4

The World After World War II



LESSON 13: Europe: Democracy and the Iron Curtain

GOAL: To become familiar with events and developments in Europe in the late 1940s and the 1950s

WORDS TO KNOW

atomic age	NATO	summit conferences
EEC	peaceful coexistence	Warsaw Pact

NAMES TO KNOW

Konrad Adenauer	Wladyslaw Gomulka	Imre Nagy
Clement Attlee	John F. Kennedy	Marshal Tito
Charles de Gaulle	Nikita Khrushchev	Walter Ulbricht

The Cold War

At the end of World War II, world leadership passed to two nations that were new to this role: the United States and the U.S.S.R., or Soviet Union. These two countries had been allies—countries that support each other—during the war. But friendly relations between the two nations began to dissolve even before the war was over.

By 1945, Soviet armies had swept German forces out of Eastern Europe. (Eastern Europe included the nations between the borders of the U.S.S.R. and Germany/Austria.) Joseph Stalin, the Soviet ruler, had promised the United States and other allies that he would allow free elections in the countries of Eastern Europe after the war. He did not. Instead, he put these nations under Soviet control.

A struggle then developed between the United States and the U.S.S.R. The Soviet Union wanted to expand communism beyond the borders of Eastern Europe. It worked actively to promote communist activity and communist governments in countries all over the world. The United States

opposed the spread of communism and tried to promote democracy in countries worldwide. In 1947, U.S. President Harry Truman declared that the United States would send aid to any country that was threatened by communists. This was called the *Truman Doctrine*.

Unlike wars in the past, this struggle was not fought by armed troops of the U.S.S.R. and the United States. Instead, it was an economic and political war. Each side gave other nations financial and political support. They hoped that this aid would persuade nations to become or stay democratic or communist, or at least to support the United States or U.S.S.R. Because the war wasn't fought with military weapons, it was called the Cold War. The Cold War was the controlling feature of world politics from 1945 through most of the rest of the twentieth century. You will learn about specific events in this war as you read through this unit.

One big reason the United States and the U.S.S.R. didn't get into a military war was the atomic bomb. The world had entered the **atomic age**. In 1945, the United States had become the first nation in the world to drop an atomic bomb on a civilian target—the Japanese city of Hiroshima. The world had seen with horror the huge destructive power of the atomic bomb. Soon, even more powerful bombs based on atomic energy, called nuclear bombs, were developed. The U.S.S.R. developed its own atomic and nuclear bombs, too.

IN REAL LIFE



Nuclear power is not only used to create weapons of mass destruction. Nuclear power plants provide electrical energy for towns and cities all around the world. Does your electrical power come from a nuclear power plant? If it does, maybe you could visit the plant and learn about this use of nuclear energy.

The concept of world war was now completely changed. By the 1950s, the United States and the U.S.S.R. had built enough nuclear weapons to totally destroy each other. A third world war could mean the end of the world. Neither the United States nor the U.S.S.R. wanted to start such a

war. So they did not fight their war of ideas and politics with nuclear weapons. Instead, they fought with the “cold” weapons of money and political support. Competing groups of cooperating nations were one of those “cold” weapons.

NATO and the Warsaw Pact

When the Soviet Union took over Eastern Europe, Western leaders got very worried. They were afraid the Soviet armies would invade Western Europe next. So in 1949, the United States, France, Great Britain, Italy, and eight other nations formed **NATO**, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. They all agreed to help any one of them that was attacked. In 1954, the NATO nations drew up plans for armed forces.

The Soviet Union responded by calling its satellites to a meeting in 1955. They created the **Warsaw Pact**. The U.S.S.R. and the Eastern European countries agreed to provide troops for mutual use in case of war.

The Common Market and Comecon

The Western and Eastern blocs also created economic alliances. In 1949, the Soviet Union and the Eastern European satellites created Comecon, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. The council’s purpose was to coordinate economic activities within the states of the Soviet bloc.

In Europe, some leaders felt that the only way to be sure of continued peace was to bring their nations closer together. They felt that closer economic ties might be the key. So in 1952, six nations—Belgium, Italy, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany—formed a group. They agreed to stop making individual decisions about two of their most important industries, coal and steel. Instead, an independent body would make the decisions with the aim of benefiting all of the group’s nations.

This first step was a great success. So in 1957, the six nations created the European Economic Community, or **EEC**. It was best known as the Common Market, and it combined other parts of these nations’

economies. Over time, the Common Market took away rules that made trade among their nations difficult. Instead of having six separate markets, they formed one common market. Later, other European nations joined the Common Market. Over time, it became known as the European Union, or EU. You will learn about the EU in Lesson 21.

PRACTICE 58: The Cold War

Circle the letter of the correct answer to each of the following questions.

1. Which two nations fought the Cold War against each other?
 - a. U.S.S.R. and Japan
 - b. China and Japan
 - c. United States and U.S.S.R
2. Which section of Europe came under Soviet control?
 - a. Eastern Europe
 - b. Western Europe
 - c. Warsaw
3. What kind of weapons were used in the Cold War?
 - a. military
 - b. personal
 - c. economic and political
4. What aim did the U.S.S.R. have in the Cold War?
 - a. to spread democracy worldwide
 - b. to join with the United States to take over the world
 - c. to spread communism worldwide
5. What one thing stopped the United States and the U.S.S.R. from fighting each other in a military war?
 - a. the United Nations
 - b. the atom bomb
 - c. friendship

The Soviet Union

Joseph Stalin had been the dictator of the U.S.S.R. since the 1920s. Stalin had made the communist nation into a police state. He allowed no opposition and ruthlessly got rid of anyone he thought might be against him. He directed the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe as World War II ended.

Stalin died in 1953. A power struggle followed his death. Top communist leaders shared power for a while. **Nikita Khrushchev** became the new Communist Party secretary. By 1958, he was also firmly in charge of the Soviet government, as premier.

The Soviet Union saw some changes under Khrushchev's rule. The most startling was a program of attacks on many of Stalin's policies. Khrushchev denounced Stalin for having created a cult of himself. Statues and pictures of the dead leader disappeared from public places. Buildings and streets named for Stalin got new names. Prisoners in labor camps came home.

Khrushchev continued the Soviet policies of controlling Eastern Europe and pressing the spread of communism worldwide. But under Khrushchev, relations with the United States were sometimes less tense. He met several times with the leaders of the United States, Britain, and France. These meetings were called **summit conferences**, because the highest leaders of each country came to them.

Also, the Soviet Union under Khrushchev adopted a policy of **peaceful coexistence** with the United States. The U.S.S.R. no longer insisted that a worldwide communist revolution was sure to happen. Instead, it said that it could accept that East and West could exist side by side without war.

In spite of "peaceful coexistence," United States–Soviet relations were extremely poor at times. A summit conference was scheduled to be held in 1960 between Khrushchev and U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower. Just before the meeting, the U.S.S.R. shot down a U.S. spy plane over Soviet territory. Khrushchev canceled the meeting. In 1962, the United States discovered that the U.S.S.R. had set up missiles in Cuba that could reach the United States. The United States and the U.S.S.R. teetered on the edge of nuclear war. Then U.S. President **John F. Kennedy** got Khrushchev to back down and remove the missiles.

At home, Khrushchev steered the Soviet economy toward heavy industry, as Stalin had done. Consumer goods remained hard to get for the Soviet people. Khrushchev’s economic and farming policies weren’t very successful. But Soviet advances in rocket science were impressive. In 1957, the U.S.S.R. launched the world’s first earth-orbiting satellite, called *Sputnik*. A Soviet rocket reached the moon in 1959. And in 1961, Soviet air force officer Yuri Gagarin became the first person to circle Earth in space.

■ PRACTICE 59: The Soviet Union

Decide if each statement that follows is true (T) or false (F). Write the correct letter on the line before each statement.

- _____ 1. Stalin was a democratic ruler.
- _____ 2. Khrushchev made sure the Soviet people honored Stalin after Stalin’s death.
- _____ 3. Khrushchev sometimes met with the leaders of Western nations.
- _____ 4. The Soviet Union installed missiles in Cuba in the early 1960s.
- _____ 5. The Soviet Union took the lead in space exploration.

Eastern Europe

As you have learned, the nations of Eastern Europe came under Soviet control after World War II. They did not become part of the U.S.S.R. Rather, they became Soviet satellites—countries controlled by the Soviet Union. The U.S.S.R. called them “people’s republics.” In each, a communist government ruled with absolute power. The economy, politics, and society followed the Soviet model. Opposition parties were banned. Free speech and a free press disappeared. Industries became state-owned.

The Eastern European people’s republics included Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania. The Soviet Union kept them closely tied to itself. Most contacts between these

nations and Western Europe were cut off. Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Great Britain said that “an iron curtain has descended across Europe.”

However, each of these nations had once been independent countries. So from time to time, feelings against Soviet control erupted. Here’s what happened in some of these satellite nations in the late 1940s and 1950s.

Yugoslavia

This was the one Eastern European nation that kept some distance between itself and the U.S.S.R. Fighting among several groups here during the war ended with a communist victory. The communist leader was Josip Broz, known as **Marshal Tito**. Tito insisted on following an independent course in his country instead of doing what the Soviet Union ordered. In 1948, the U.S.S.R. and its satellites broke off relations with Yugoslavia. Seeing a cold war opening, the United States and its allies gave economic aid to Tito.

Yugoslavia and the U.S.S.R. became friendlier during the 1950s. Still, Tito loosened state control of the economy. He also let most peasants keep their own individual farms. Yet the country remained communist, and Tito ruled as a dictator until his death in 1980.

East Germany

The Allies had divided Germany into occupation zones at the end of World War II. The Soviets made their zone into a people’s republic called the German Democratic Republic in 1949. It was better known as East Germany. Its communist leader from 1946 to 1971 was **Walter Ulbricht**. He ruled as strictly as Stalin had in the U.S.S.R. The state took total control of the economy, which focused on heavy industry.

Overworked and hungry East German workers revolted in 1953. Soviet troops and tanks put down the rebellion. But unhappy East Germans kept trying to leave for West Germany. Ulbricht blocked the border. But the German capital of Berlin was divided into East Berlin and West Berlin.

Skilled East German workers kept flowing into West Berlin, which had a free economy and a free political system. Ulbricht stopped that flow in 1961 by building the Berlin Wall. It ran between East and West Berlin. People could get through the wall only at a few heavily guarded entryways. People who tried to sneak across the wall were shot and often killed by East German border guards.

TIP



The formal name of a country doesn't necessarily tell you what type of government it has. For example, the formal name of East Germany was the German Democratic Republic. Its government was not democratic; it was communist. The democratic German country was West Germany. North Korea is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Its government is communist, not democratic. Its people have no say in their government.

Poland

Poland was a very faithful Soviet satellite at first. Then, after Stalin's death, demands for reforms grew. In 1956, workers demonstrated. Troops put down the protest. But Poland's new ruler, **Wladyslaw Gomulka**, made some changes. For example, elections became open to some opposition candidates. Most collective farms were dissolved. The press gained some freedoms.

Hungary

The greatest threat to Soviet control of its satellites in the 1950s came from Hungary. Hungary's communist government had become less rigid after Stalin's death. In 1956, students and workers demonstrated and demanded more reforms. **Imre Nagy**, as premier, agreed and promised free elections. Soviet troops and tanks once again moved in. The rebels were killed, exiled, and imprisoned. Nagy was executed. The communist government took strict control again.

■ PRACTICE 60: Eastern Europe

Match each description with a term from the list below. Write the letter of the correct term on the line before each description.

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
| a. East Germany | c. Poland | e. Hungary |
| b. communist | d. Yugoslavia | f. satellite |

- ____ 1. type of government in the countries controlled by the Soviet Union
- ____ 2. country that refused to be controlled by the Soviet Union
- ____ 3. country where the Berlin Wall was built
- ____ 4. country where 1956 protests resulted in some reforms
- ____ 5. country where 1956 protests failed and the government kept strict control
- ____ 6. term for any country controlled by the Soviet Union

Western Europe

The main business of the countries of Western Europe after World War II was economic recovery. Great Britain, France, and Italy had all suffered huge losses in the war. Roads, buildings, factories, and bridges had been damaged and destroyed. The Marshall Plan, a U.S. program of massive aid, helped make this recovery possible.

The Western European countries were also involved in the cold war. They acted with the United States to resist communist pressures in Europe and elsewhere.

Great Britain

Winston Churchill, leader of the Conservative Party, had been a great wartime leader. But he and his party lost the election of 1945. Voters chose the Labour party and its leader, **Clement Attlee**. The Labour Party followed

a policy of moderate socialism. The government took over important British industries. This is called nationalization. Nationalized businesses included the railroads, the coal industry, and utilities like electric power companies.

Also, medical care was socialized—every British person became entitled to free medical care provided by the government. When Churchill and the Conservatives came back into power in 1951, they left these Labour Party changes in place.

France

A new French government was set up in 1946. But it was unstable, with governing groups changing often. France lost its colonies in Southeast Asia to Asian nationalists after a nine-year war. War also broke out in Algeria, a country in North Africa that France had taken over. General **Charles de Gaulle** then emerged as a strong French leader. As president of France, he used the powers in a new 1958 constitution to bring stability to French politics and to move Algeria to independence.

West Germany

The three zones occupied by the Allies at the end of World War II became the postwar nation of West Germany. It was a strong, democratic country allied with the other nations of Western Europe. It helped block the spread of Soviet communism to Western Europe. By 1955, West Germany had become fully independent. It was allowed to rearm, and it joined NATO.

From 1949 to 1963, West Germany's elected leader was **Konrad Adenauer** of the moderate Christian Democratic Union. Adenauer oversaw a remarkable recovery of the German economy, called Germany's "economic miracle." At first, this miracle was threatened by the millions of refugees who poured into West Germany from Eastern Europe. But many of the refugees were skilled workers. They added to the productive nature of West Germany's workforce.

Italy

Italy in the postwar years had a strong Communist Party that clashed often with the more moderate parties that formed ruling coalitions. The Communists lost much influence in the mid-1950s.

Spain

In Spain, a dictator ruled. Francisco Franco and his fascist and conservative followers had won the Spanish Civil War in 1939. The other Western powers would have nothing to do with Franco until the 1950s. Then the United States saw Franco's Spain as a possible ally against the Soviet Union. The United States began giving Franco aid in return for the use of Spanish military bases. Spain was allowed to join the United Nations in 1955.

■ PRACTICE 61: Western Europe

Match each description with a term from the list below. Write the letter of the correct term on the line before each description.

- | | | |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| a. Algeria | c. democratic | e. Labour |
| b. de Gaulle | d. dictator | f. nationalized |

- ____ 1. Great Britain did this to many of its large industries—that is, the government took over these industries.
- ____ 2. This British party followed a policy of moderate socialism.
- ____ 3. France fought a difficult war in this North African country.
- ____ 4. This general was France's postwar leader.
- ____ 5. West Germany had this type of government.
- ____ 6. Spain had this type of ruler.