

Wars After WWII and Alabama's Role

Teachers' Document, Part Two: The Cold War

Vocabulary Words: Soviet Union, capitalism, communism, domino effect, economic and military aid, expansion plans, arms race, radioactive waste, bomb shelters

The Cold War was between the United States and the **Soviet Union**. It was between two forms of economic systems: **capitalism** and **communism**. It began at the end of World War II. Why is it called the Cold war? It was "cold" because the two countries did not fight a traditional war. There were no battles, no soldiers, no armies, and no bombs. In the Cold War, the two countries used spies to gather information about the other country. Both the United States and the Soviet Union wanted to be the most powerful country in the world.

After WWII, the United States believed the Soviet Union wanted communism to take over the world. At that time, the Soviet Union influenced many countries in Asia to become communist. For example, after WWII, China became a communist country. The United States watched governments in Asia turn communist one by one. It worried a **domino effect** was taking place. It worried the domino effect would bring communism to the United States. Therefore, the United States tried to stop communism from spreading in Asia. It began to send **economic and military aid** to non-communist countries in Asia. The United States also used spies to find out the **expansion plans** of the Soviet Union and China, the two largest communist countries in the world.

Three important events happened during the Cold War. The **arms race** was one event. The United States began a race in the world to see who could build the biggest bomb. The United States developed the first bombs: the atom bomb and the hydrogen bomb or H-bomb. Then many countries in the world began making atom bombs. Atom and H-bombs are called nuclear weapons. When countries test nuclear weapons, the explosions send poisonous **radioactive waste** into the atmosphere. As a result of the arms race, people in the United States began to prepare for a war that used nuclear weapons. People all over the country built **bomb shelters** under the ground. Alabama prepared some of the many caves it has throughout the state to be used as bomb shelters. The government stocked them with emergency supplies.

The United States also began a race to see who could be the first country to send a rocket and people to the moon. The Soviet Union embarrassed the United States in 1957 by sending the first rocket, Sputnik, into space. Then in 1961, the Soviet Union sent the first astronaut, Yuri Gagarin, into space in a space ship orbiting the Earth. President John F. Kennedy announced on May 25, 1961, that the United States would send a man to the moon by 1969. NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center at the Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama was the center of development of rocket engines that powered the space program to the moon. On July 20, 1969, Neil

Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, two American astronauts, became the first people to ever walk on the moon.

The third important event during the Cold War was the Vietnam War. The details of the Vietnam War will be presented in the next unit.

The Berlin Wall was a symbol of the Cold War. In 1961, the communist government of East Germany built a barbed wire and concrete wall in the city of Berlin to keep people from entering or leaving the communist part of Germany. The decision to build this wall created an international crisis. The United States sent the National Guard to Germany. Many of the Guardsmen were from the Alabama National Guard, which was the third largest Guard in the United States at that time.

In 1989 the Cold War came to an end when the Soviet Union began to break up into smaller, independent countries. The German citizens began tearing down the Berlin Wall at this time. It was a powerful signal to the world that communism was no longer a danger to the United States.

Vocabulary Words:

1. **Soviet Union:** Another name for the Soviet Union is Russia. Before WWI, Russia had expanded its territory all the way to the border of China. The new territory made Russia the largest country in the world. After World War I, Russia even changed its name to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or the USSR. Most countries called Russia the Soviet Union for short. When the Cold War ended, the name of the Soviet Union changed back to Russia.
In the Story: The Cold War was between the United States and the Soviet Union.
2. **Capitalism:** The government of the United States does not control its own trade and industry. The government can only regulate it. Private citizens and private companies control the trade and industry for their own profit.
In the Story: The United States is a capitalist country.
3. **Communism:** The government of the Soviet Union controlled its own trade and industry. The people could not own anything. The people worked for and were paid by the government.
In the Story: The Soviet Union is a communist country.
4. **Domino effect:** A situation in which one event causes a similar event to happen one after another.
In the Story: One by one, countries in Asia became communist. The United States called this the domino effect.
5. **Economic and military aid:** The United States sent money to other countries to help the governments provide to the citizens good jobs and a strong military.

In the Story: The United States gave economic and military aid to countries in Asia.

6. Expansion plans: The Soviet Union had a plan to expand communism to other countries usually by force.

In the Story: The United States used spies to find out the Soviet Union's expansion plans.

7. Arms race: A country's military is made up of the armed forces: the army, the navy, the marines, and the air force. These forces are armed with weapons, such as guns, rockets, and bombs. If a country is armed, it has weapons to fight with.

In the Story: The arms race was a race to see which country could build the biggest bomb.

8. Radioactive waste: When nuclear bombs explode, they leave harmful, life threatening particles in the air.

In the Story: People in the United States built bomb shelters to protect against radioactive waste in a nuclear war.

9. Bomb shelters: The shelter was a room or several rooms built under the ground to protect the people against the explosion of nuclear bombs.

In the Story: People in the United States built bomb shelters during the Cold War.