

## The Cold War: How did the Cold War affect American culture and Soviet culture?

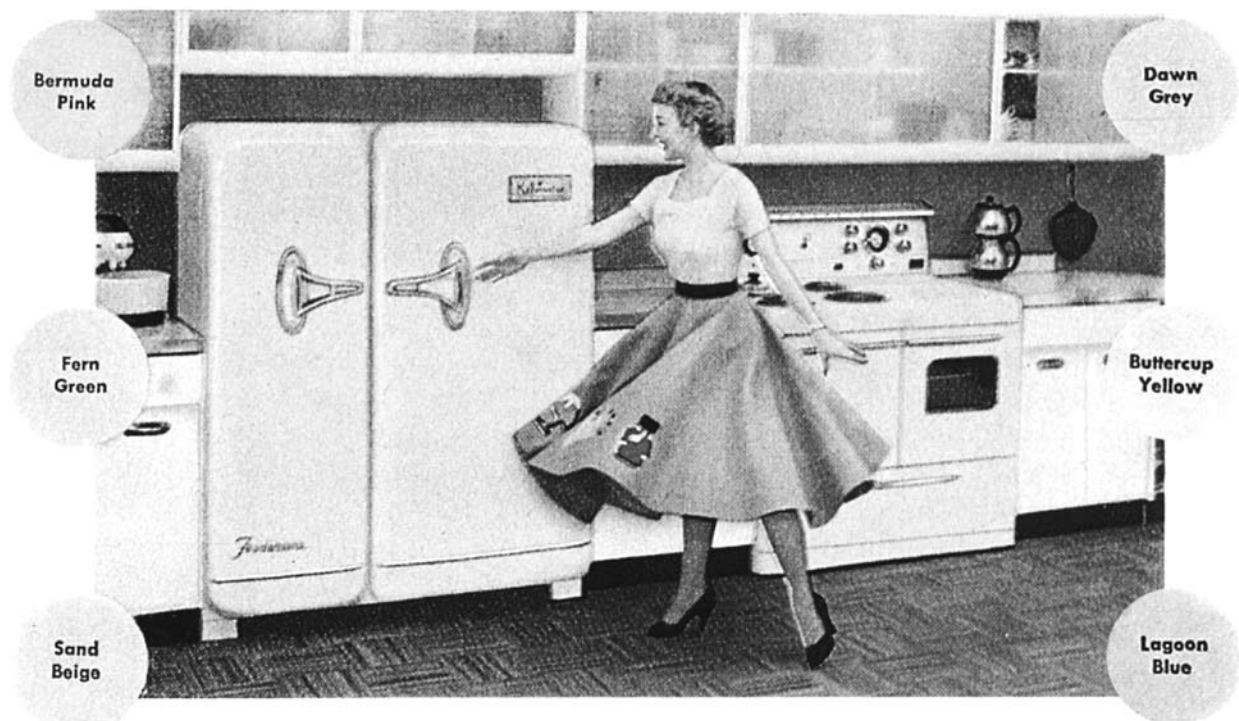
### INTRODUCTION FOR STUDENTS

In today's lesson, you will learn how the Cold War affected American and Soviet culture in the 1950s. The sources you will examine tried to convince citizens that their nation's way of life, whether democracy or communism, was the best way to achieve happiness. In the United States, Americans quickly adjusted to a consumer economy after World War II. Advertisements encouraged Americans to invest in homes, televisions, and kitchen appliances. However, Americans were

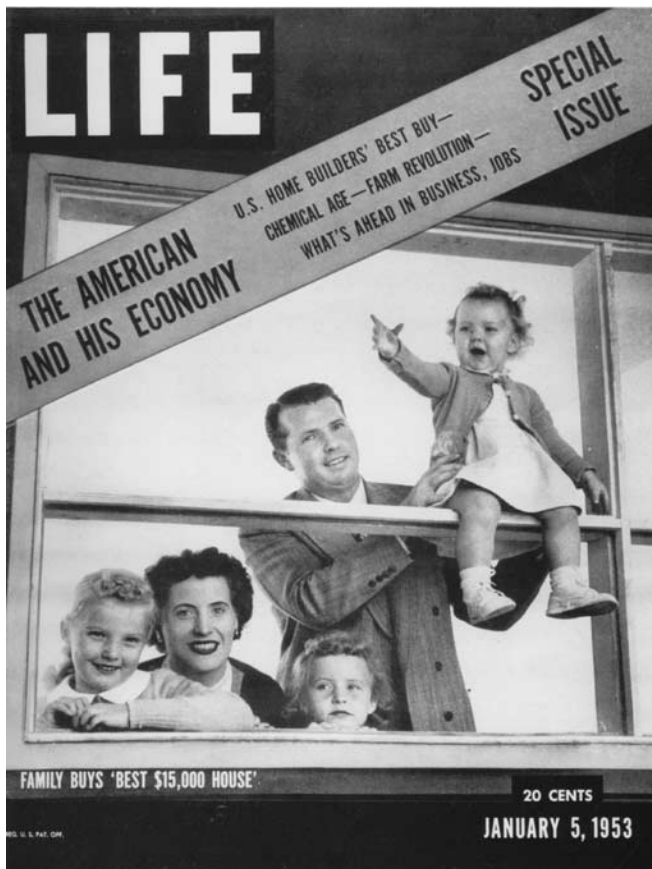
also worried about the spread of communism. Many advertising campaigns and magazine articles tried to persuade Americans that the availability of consumer goods proved the superiority of the American way of life. In the Soviet Union, which suffered tremendous damage to its economy during World War II, state-sponsored propaganda campaigns claimed that the nation resulted in prosperity and happiness for its citizens. The campaigns criticized capitalism in the West for problems such as war, unemployment, exploitation, and racism.

### COLD WAR: HOW DID AMERICANS EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COMMUNISM AND CAPITALISM?

Following are advertisements, articles, and photographs from American magazines and television during the 1940s and 1950s. Using these pictures, answer the questions at the bottom of page 27.



Advertisement for kitchen appliances, 1950s. Source: Thomas Hine, *Populuxe* (New York: Knopf, 1986), p. 22



*Life* magazine cover, 1953. The caption on the cover reads, "Family Buys 'Best \$15,000 House'"



### A 1950s Family

Source: Thomas Hine, *Populuxe* (New York: Knopf, 1986), title page.

**“Women—Russia’s Second-Class Citizens”**  
Julie Whitney, “Russian-born wife of an American newspaperman,”  
[this excerpt appeared in *Look Magazine* in 1954]

“A woman in Russia has a chance to be almost anything, except a woman. Even today, in a relatively cosmopolitan Moscow, a good-looking, well-dressed girl wearing make-up is one of three things: a foreigner, an actress or a prostitute.... The majority of statues of women in Russian parks wear brassieres and gym pants! Needless to say, there is no ‘Miss U.S.S.R.’” In Moscow, with its population of five million, “there are just two beauty parlors which by Western standards deserve the name. The other half-dozen are ‘medical cosmetic institutions.’”

Source: <http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/50s/home.html>

**American advertising and culture:**

1. Which photograph best summarizes capitalism and/or democracy in the 1950s as you understand it? Who are the “heroes” of these advertisements? Be ready to explain your answer.
2. Which photographs (there is more than one) celebrate life in the United States? Explain why.
3. Which source contains a critique of communism and/or the Soviet Union?
4. Do you think these images accurately depict life in the United States in the 1950s?
5. Do these images leave any group of Americans out of the picture?