

The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

Guide to Reading

Main Ideas

- As Soviet leader, Khrushchev initiated policies of de-Stalinization.
- The Soviet Union faced revolts and protests in its attempt to gain and maintain control over Eastern Europe.

Key Terms

heavy industry, de-Stalinization

People to Identify

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Tito, Imre Nagy, Alexander Dubček

Places to Locate

Soviet Union, Albania, Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia

Preview Questions

1. What were Khrushchev's policies of de-Stalinization?
2. How did the Soviet Union exert its power over Eastern Europe?

Reading Strategy

Categorizing Information Use a diagram like the one below to identify how the Soviet Union carried out Communist policies.



Preview of Events

↓ 1950	↑ 1955	↑ 1960	↑ 1965	↑ 1970
1953 Khrushchev named general secretary	1955 Khrushchev named general secretary	1962 Solzhenitsyn's <i>One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich</i> is published	1964 Khrushchev is voted out of office	1968 The Soviet Army invades Czechoslovakia

Voices from the Past

In 1956, Hungary revolted against Soviet control. The Soviet Union sent in troops and announced:

“Forces of reaction and counterrevolution . . . are trying to take advantage of the discontent of part of the working people to undermine the foundations of the people's democratic order in Hungary and to restore the old landlord and capitalist order. The Soviet government and all the people deeply regret that the development of events in Hungary has led to bloodshed. On the request of the Hungarian People's Government the Soviet government consented to the entry into Budapest of the Soviet Army units to assist the Hungarian authorities to establish order in the town.”

—*Department of State Bulletin, November 12, 1956*

After World War II, Stalin and the Soviet forces kept a tight hold on Eastern Europe—a hold that many countries struggled against.

The Reign of Stalin

World War II devastated the Soviet Union. To create a new industrial base, Stalin returned to the method that he had used in the 1930s. Soviet workers were expected to produce goods for export with little in return for themselves. The incoming capital from abroad could then be used to buy machinery and Western technology.

Economic recovery in the Soviet Union was spectacular in some respects. By 1950, Russian industrial production had surpassed prewar levels by 40 percent. New power plants, canals, and giant factories were built. Heavy industry (the manufacture of machines and equipment for factories and mines) increased, chiefly for the benefit of the military. The testing of hydrogen bombs in 1953 and the first space satellite, *Sputnik I*, in 1957 enhanced the Soviet state's reputation as a world power abroad.

The Soviet people, however, were shortchanged. The growth rate for heavy industry was three times that for consumer goods. Moreover, the housing shortage was severe. An average Russian family lived in a one-room apartment. A British official in Moscow reported that "every room is both a living room by day and a bedroom by night."

Stalin remained the undisputed master of the Soviet Union. He distrusted competitors, exercised sole power, and had little respect for other Communist Party leaders. He is reported to have said to members of his inner circle in 1952, "You are as blind as kittens. What would you do without me?"

Stalin's suspicions added to the increasing repression of the regime. In 1946, the government decreed that all literary and scientific work must conform to the political needs of the state. Along with this anti-intellectual campaign came political terror. A new series of purges seemed likely in 1953, but Stalin's death on March 5 prevented more bloodletting.

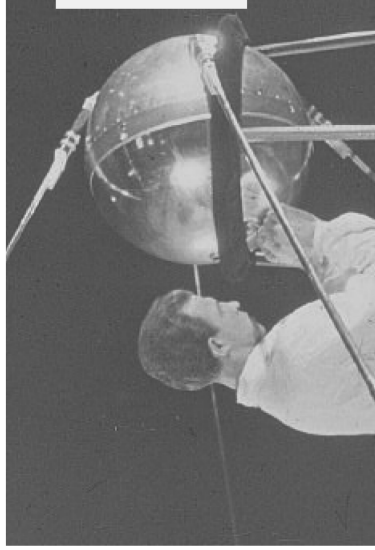
The Khrushchev Era

A group of leaders succeeded Stalin, but the new general secretary of the Communist Party, Nikita Khrushchev, soon emerged as the chief Soviet policy maker. Once in power, Khrushchev took steps to undo some of the worst features of Stalin's regime.

At the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party in 1956, Khrushchev condemned Stalin for his "administrative violence, mass repression, and terror." The process of eliminating the more ruthless policies of Stalin became known as *de-Stalinization*.

Khrushchev loosened government controls on literary works. In 1962, for example, he allowed the publication of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, a grim portrayal of life in a Siberian forced-labor camp written by **Alexander Solzhenitsyn** (SOHL•zhuh•NEET•suh). Each day, as Solzhenitsyn related, prisoners were marched from the prison camp to a work project through subzero temperatures: "There were escort guards all over the place, . . . their machine guns sticking out and pointed right at your face. And there were guards with gray dogs." Many Soviets identified with Ivan as a symbol of the suffering they had endured under Stalin.

Khrushchev tried to place more emphasis on producing consumer goods. He also attempted to increase agricultural output by growing corn and cultivating vast lands east of the Ural Mountains. The attempt to increase agricultural output was not successful and damaged his reputation within the party. This failure, combined with increased military spending, hurt the Soviet economy. The industrial



Peering History

A Soviet scientist is shown working on *Sputnik I*. The launch of *Sputnik I*, which orbited the earth for 57 days, stunned the United States and enhanced the prestige of the Soviet Union.

People In History

Nikita Khrushchev
1894–1971—Soviet leader



First secretary of the Communist Party after Stalin's death, Khrushchev eventually came to be the sole Soviet ruler. In 1956, he denounced the rule of Stalin, arguing that "Stalin showed in a whole series of cases his intolerance, his brutality and his abuse of power. . . . He was a very distrustful man, sickly suspicious. Everywhere and in everything he saw enemies, two-facers, and spies."

Khrushchev alienated other Soviet leaders by his policy in Cuba. He had other problems with the higher Soviet officials as well. They frowned on his tendency to crack jokes and play the clown. They also were displeased when he tried to curb their privileges.

growth rate, which had soared in the early 1950s, now declined dramatically from 13 percent in 1953 to 7.5 percent in 1964.

Foreign policy failures also damaged Khrushchev's reputation among his colleagues. His rash plan to place missiles in Cuba was the final straw. While he was away on vacation in 1964, a special meeting of the Soviet leaders voted him out of office (because of "deteriorating health") and forced him into retirement.

Eastern Europe: Behind the Iron Curtain

At the end of World War II, Soviet military forces occupied all of Eastern Europe and the Balkans (except for Greece, Albania, and Yugoslavia). All of the occupied states came under Soviet control.

Communist Patterns of Control The timetable of the Soviet takeover varied from country to country. Between 1945 and 1947, Soviet-controlled Communist governments became firmly entrenched in East Germany, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, and Hungary. In Czechoslovakia, where there was a strong tradition of democracy and a multi-party system, the Soviets did not seize control of the government until 1948. At that time they dissolved all but the Communist Party.

Albania and Yugoslavia were exceptions to this pattern of Soviet dominance. During the war, both countries had had strong Communist movements that resisted the Nazis. After the war, local Communist parties took control. Communists in Albania set up a Stalinist-type regime that grew more and more independent of the Soviet Union.

In **Yugoslavia**, Josip Broz, known as **Tito**, had been the leader of the Communist resistance movement. After the war, he moved toward the creation of an independent Communist state in Yugoslavia. Stalin hoped to take control of Yugoslavia, just as he had done in other Eastern European countries. Tito, however, refused to give in to Stalin's demands. He gained the support of the people by portraying the struggle as one of Yugoslav national freedom. Tito ruled Yugoslavia until his death in 1980. Although Yugoslavia had a Communist government, it was not a Soviet satellite state.

Between 1948 and Stalin's death in 1953, the Eastern European satellite states, directed by the Soviet Union, followed Stalin's example. They instituted Soviet-type five-year plans with emphasis on heavy industry rather than consumer goods. They began to collectivize agriculture. They eliminated all noncommunist parties and set up the institutions of repression—secret police and military forces.

Revolts Against Communism Communism did not develop deep roots among the peoples of Eastern Europe. Moreover, the Soviets exploited Eastern Europe economically for their own benefit and made living conditions harsh for most people.

After Stalin's death, many Eastern European states began to pursue a new course. In the late 1950s and 1960s, however,

the Soviet Union made it clear—especially in **Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia**—that it would not allow its Eastern European satellites to become independent of Soviet control.

In 1956, protests erupted in Poland. In response, the Polish Communist Party adopted a series of reforms in October 1956 and elected Władysław Gomułka as first secretary. Gomułka declared that Poland had the right to follow its own socialist path. Fearful of Soviet armed response, however, the Poles compromised. Poland pledged to remain loyal to the Warsaw Pact.





The Soviet army invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Developments in Poland in 1956 led Hungarian Communists to seek the same kinds of reforms. Unrest in Hungary, combined with economic difficulties, led to calls for revolt. To quell the rising rebellion, **Imre Nagy**, the Hungarian leader, declared Hungary a free nation on November 1, 1956, and promised free elections. It soon became clear that this could mean the end of Communist rule in Hungary.

Khrushchev was in no position at home to allow a member of the Communist group of nations to leave, however. Three days after Nagy's declaration, the Soviet Army attacked Budapest. The Soviets reestablished control over the country. Nagy was seized by the Soviet military and executed two years later.

The situation in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s was different. There, the "Little Stalin," Antonin Novotny,

had been placed in power in 1953 by Stalin himself and remained firmly in control. By the late 1960s, however, Novotny had alienated many members of his own party. He was especially disliked by Czechoslovakia's writers. A writers' rebellion, which encouraged the people to take control of their own lives, led to Novotny's resignation, in 1968.

In January 1968, **Alexander Dubček** (DOOB•chek) was elected first secretary of the Communist Party. He introduced a number of reforms, including freedom of speech and press and freedom to travel abroad. He relaxed censorship, began to pursue an independent foreign policy, and promised a gradual democratization of the Czechoslovakian political system. Dubček hoped to create "socialism with a human face." A period of euphoria broke out that came to be known as the "Prague Spring."

The euphoria proved to be short-lived, however. To forestall the spreading of this "spring fever," the Soviet Army invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and crushed the reform movement. Gustav Husák replaced Dubček, did away with his reforms, and reestablished the old order.

Directions: On a separate piece of paper, Answer all questions below including, definitions, paragraphs, charts, and evaluating/analyzing paragraphs.

Checking for Understanding

1. **Define** heavy industry, de-Stalinization.
2. **Define** Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Tito, Alexander Dubček.
3. **Locate** Soviet Union, Albania, Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia.

4. **Explain** Khrushchev's relationship to Stalinism.

5. **List** two countries in Eastern Europe that resisted Soviet dominance.

Critical Thinking

6. **Explain** Why did Yugoslavia and Albania not come under the direct control of the Soviet Union?
7. **Organizing Information** Use a table like the one below to identify the policies of Stalin and the policies of Khrushchev.

Stalin	Khrushchev

Analyzing Visuals

8. **Compare** the photograph on page 856 with the one shown above. How does each photograph symbolize a different aspect of the Cold War?