

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



Life During the Cold War, 1945–1989

Lesson 2 Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

How does war result in change? What challenges may countries face as a result of war?

Reading HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

enhanced improved

sole being the only one

participation having a part in or sharing in something

Content Vocabulary

heavy industry the manufacture of machines and equipment for factories and mines

de-Stalinization the process of eliminating Stalin’s more ruthless policies

détente a phase of relaxed tensions and improved relations between two adversaries

dissident a person who speaks out against the regime in power

TAKING NOTES: *Comparing*

ACTIVITY As you read, use a table like the one below to compare the policies of Khrushchev and Brezhnev.

Policies	Nikita Khrushchev	Leonid Brezhnev

Reading Essentials and Study Guide

**networks**

Life During the Cold War, 1945–1989

Lesson 2 Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, *continued*

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

Joseph Stalin was a cruel leader who wanted to bring Eastern Europe under the control of the Soviet Union. Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia came under Soviet control at this time. Nikita Khrushchev took control after Stalin's death, and he denounced, or spoke out against, some of Stalin's policies.

Postwar Soviet Union

Guiding Question *What political, economic, and social shifts occurred in the Soviet Union during the Cold War?*

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

The Soviet Union's economic recovery was spectacular in some ways. By 1950, Russian industrial production surpassed prewar levels by 40 percent. New power plants, canals, and giant factories were built. **Heavy industry**, or the production of machinery, increased, mostly for military use. The Soviets built a hydrogen bomb in 1953. They also sent the first satellite, *Sputnik 1*, into space. These both **enhanced**, or improved, the Soviet Union's reputation as a world power.

Yet the Soviet people were shortchanged. The production of consumer goods did not increase as much as heavy industry. Also, there was a housing shortage. For example, many people in Moscow lived in one-room apartments.

The Rule of Stalin

Stalin was the undisputed master of the Soviet Union. He exercised **sole** power. He did not trust other Communist Party leaders and had little respect for them. He is reported to have compared members of his inner circle in 1952 to "blind kittens" because he saw them as helpless without him.

Stalin's mistrust and suspicions added to the regime's increasing repression, or control of the people by force and by stopping of any opposition. The government ordered all literary and scientific work to conform to the state's political needs in 1946. This anti-intellectual campaign came with political terror. People who opposed the government were threatened, but these threats disappeared when Stalin died on March 5, 1953.

The Khrushchev Era

A group of leaders followed Stalin. Nikita Khrushchev became the new general secretary of the Communist Party. He soon became the chief Soviet policy maker. Once in power, Khrushchev took steps to end some of the worst features of Stalin's regime.

At the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party in 1956, Khrushchev condemned Stalin. He denounced, or spoke strongly against, Stalin's "administrative violence, mass repression, and terror." The process of ending the more ruthless, or cruel, of Stalin's policies became known as **de-Stalinization**.

Khrushchev loosened government controls on literary and artistic works. For example, he allowed the publication of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* in 1962. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (SOHL-zhuh-NEET-suhn) wrote this story of terrible life in a Siberian labor camp. Many Soviets identified with the novel's title character Ivan. He became a symbol of the suffering endured under Stalin.

Reading Essentials and Study Guide

The logo for 'networks' features the word 'networks' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized graphic consisting of several thin, intersecting lines that form a starburst or web-like pattern.

Life During the Cold War, 1945–1989

Lesson 2 Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, *continued*

Khrushchev also tried to focus on producing consumer goods. He tried to increase agricultural output by growing corn and cultivating a lot of land east of the Ural Mountains. The farming project was unsuccessful. In the end, it damaged Khrushchev's reputation within the party. The Soviet economy was hurt by this failure and by increased military spending. The industrial growth rate had soared in the early 1950s. Now it declined sharply from 13 percent in 1953 to 7.5 percent in 1964.

Foreign policy failures also damaged Khrushchev's reputation among his colleagues. His rash, or sudden and not well-thought-out, plan to place missiles in Cuba was the final straw. While he was on vacation in 1964, a special meeting of the Soviet leaders voted him out of office. They blamed his removal on "deteriorating health." They had forced him to retire, however.

The Brezhnev Era

Alexei Kosygin and Leonid Brezhnev (BREHZH•NEHF) replaced Khrushchev in 1964. Brezhnev emerged as the dominant leader in the 1970s. He was determined to keep Eastern Europe under Communist rule. Also, he was not interested in reform. Brezhnev insisted on the Soviet Union's right to intervene if communism was threatened in another Communist state. This policy was called the Brezhnev Doctrine.

At the same time, Brezhnev benefited from **détente**. Détente describes a period of less tension and improved relations between the Soviet Union and the United States. In the 1970s the two superpowers signed SALT I and SALT II (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties) and the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty to limit the number of nuclear arms each country had. Soviet leaders felt more secure. As a result, they relaxed their authoritarian rule and allowed more access to Western music, dress, and art. Of course, **dissidents**—those who spoke out against the regime—were still kept from expressing their ideas. For example, Andrei Sakharov was the creator of the Soviet hydrogen bomb. He was punished for defending human rights.

Brezhnev continued to focus on heavy industry in his economic policies. Two problems weakened the Soviet economy. First, the government's central planning led to a huge, complex bureaucracy. It led to inefficiency and to indifference, or lack of interest. Second, collective farmers had no incentive to work hard. Many wanted to work on their own small private plots of land instead of working in groups on jointly owned land.

By the 1970s, the Communist ruling class had become complacent, or satisfied with its current situation. It had also become corrupt. Party and state leaders, as well as army leaders and secret police (KGB), enjoyed a high standard of living. Brezhnev was aware of the waste of time and energy and the corruption that the system encouraged. Despite this, he was unwilling to change the party leadership or the state bureaucracy.

As a result of détente, U.S. grain and consumer goods were being sold to the Soviet Union by the 1970s. However, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, and détente collapsed. A new period of East-West confrontation began. The Soviet Union wanted to restore a pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan. The United States saw this as an act of expansion. President Jimmy Carter showed his disapproval by canceling U.S. **participation** in the 1980 Olympic Games to be held in Moscow. He also placed an embargo on the shipment of U.S. grain to the Soviets. That is, he stopped selling grain to the Soviets.

Relations became even more difficult when Ronald Reagan became president. Reagan called the Soviet Union an "evil empire." Then he began a military buildup and a new arms race. Reagan also gave military aid to the Afghan rebels. He hoped to maintain a war in Afghanistan that the Soviet Union could not win.

Reading Essentials and Study Guide

networks

Life During the Cold War, 1945–1989

Lesson 2 Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, *continued*



Reading Progress Check

Contrasting How were U.S.-Soviet relations different during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev regimes?

Natan Sharansky (1948–)

During the 1970s, the protests continued against the Soviet government. The government continued to send political prisoners to labor camps in Siberia. One example was Natan Sharansky. Sharansky was a Soviet Jew who wanted to emigrate to Israel in 1973 but was denied the right.

The government's refusal led Sharansky to help found the Refusenik movement. This was a group of activists speaking out about Soviet political oppression. The Refuseniks gave special attention to the plight of Jews in the Soviet Union. Sharansky worked as a human rights activist and spoke to Western journalists to spread the word about life in the Soviet Union.

In 1977 Sharansky was arrested and charged with treason and spying. This was a common charge by the government against anyone voicing opposition to Soviet power. If a person spoke with a Westerner about anything state-related, it was easy for the government to claim that the information hurt the U.S.S.R. Sharansky was convicted in a secret trial and sent to a labor camp in Siberia.

Sharansky spent almost ten years in prison. To help him get through the experience, he played chess matches in his head. During his imprisonment, his wife and leaders in the West called for his release. These pressures helped lead to his release in a prisoner exchange in 1986. He soon moved to Israel where he entered politics. He rose to the level of Deputy Prime Minister.

Eastern Europe

Guiding Question *How was Eastern Europe affected by communism after World War II?*

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 Soviets took over Eastern European countries at different times. Soviet-controlled Communist governments became firmly entrenched in East Germany, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, and Hungary between 1945 and 1947. Czechoslovakia had a tradition of democracy and a multiparty system. Soviets did not take control of that government until 1948. At that time they dissolved all parties except the Communist Party.

Albania and Yugoslavia escaped Soviet control. During the war, both countries 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. Under this government, Albania grew more and more independent of the Soviet Union.

Reading Essentials and Study Guide

The logo for 'networks' features the word 'networks' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized graphic consisting of several thin, intersecting lines that form a starburst or network pattern.

Life During the Cold War, 1945–1989

Lesson 2 Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, *continued*

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

The Soviet Union's Eastern European satellite states followed Stalin's example between 1948 and Stalin's death in 1953. They established Soviet-type five-year plans that focused on heavy industry rather than consumer goods. They also collectivized agriculture. All noncommunist parties were eliminated. Institutions of repression, such as secret police and military forces, were established.

Revolts Against Communism

Communism did not develop deep roots among the people of Eastern Europe. To add to this, the Soviets exploited Eastern Europe economically for their own benefit. This system made living conditions harsh for most people in Eastern Europe. These factors became causes of independence movements within the Soviet bloc.

Many Eastern European states began to follow a new political course after Stalin's death. In the late 1950s and 1960s, however, the Soviet Union made it clear that it would not allow its Eastern European satellite states to become independent of Soviet control. This was especially true for Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.

Protests erupted in Poland in 1956. In response, the Polish Communist Party adopted a series of reforms in October. It elected Władysław Gomułka as first secretary. He declared that Poland had the right to follow its own socialist path. However, the Poles were afraid of Soviet armed response. As a result, they compromised and pledged to remain loyal to the Warsaw Pact.

The Hungarians watched the developments in Poland in 1956. As a result, Hungarian Communists sought the same kinds of reforms. Economic difficulties and public unrest led to calls for revolt in Hungary. Hungarian leader Imre Nagy calmed the rising rebellion. He declared Hungary a free nation on November 1, 1956, and he promised free elections. It became clear that this could mean the end of Communist rule in Hungary.

Khrushchev needed to maintain his power and reputation in the Soviet Union. He could not allow a member of the Communist group of nations to leave. Three days after Nagy's declaration, the Soviet Army attacked Budapest, the capital of Hungary. They reestablished control over Hungary. The Soviet military seized Nagy. Two years later he was executed.

The situation in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s was different. In 1953, Stalin had placed Antonín Novotný, the "Little Stalin," in power there. By the late 1960s, Novotný had alienated many of his own party members. Czechoslovakia's writers especially disliked him. A writers' rebellion erupted. It encouraged the people to take control of their own lives. This rebellion led to Novotný's resignation in 1968.

Alexander Dubček (DOOB-chehk) was elected first secretary of the Communist Party in January 1968. He introduced a number of reforms. These included freedom of speech and press and freedom to travel abroad. He relaxed censorship and began to pursue an independent foreign policy. He promised to make the Czechoslovakian political system democratic. Dubček hoped to create "socialism with a human face." A period of great joy and excitement broke out. That time came to be known as the "Prague Spring."

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



Life During the Cold War, 1945–1989

Lesson 2 Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, *continued*

The excitement did not last long, however. The Soviets needed to stop the spread of this “spring fever.” The Soviet Army invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968. They crushed the reform movement. Gustav Husák replaced Dubcek. Husák removed the reforms and reestablished the old order.



Reading Progress Check

Drawing Conclusions Why was Yugoslavia different from other Eastern European countries during the Cold War?
