



Eastern Europe Under Communism

TERMS & NAMES

propaganda

private property rights

Nikita Khrushchev

deposed

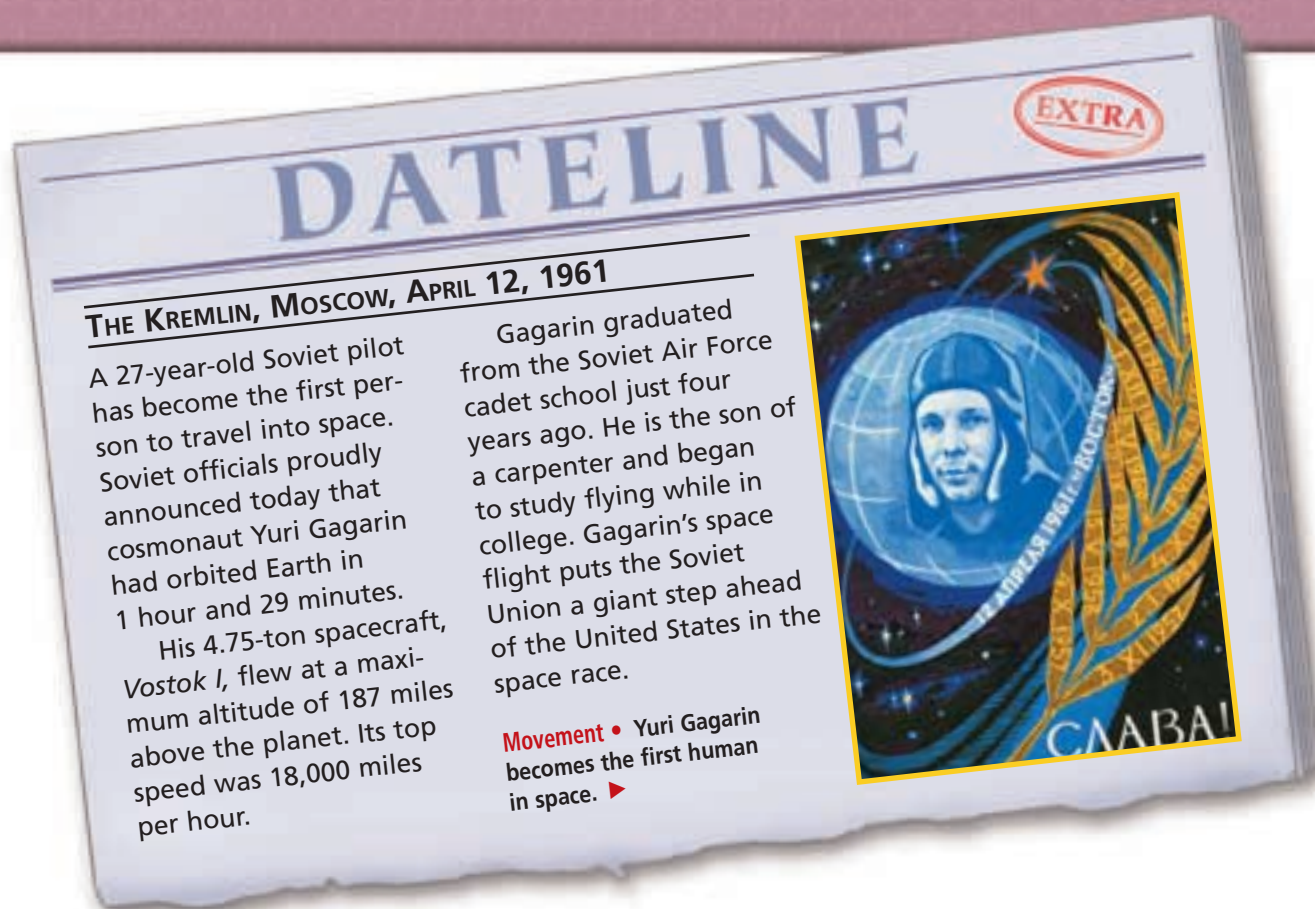
détente

MAIN IDEA

The Communist government of the Soviet Union controlled the lives of its citizens.

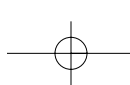
WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Today, many republics of the former Soviet Union have become independent nations.



Soviet Culture

The Soviet space program of the 1950s and 1960s brought international attention to that country. Daily life for citizens of the Soviet Union and of the Eastern European countries under its control, however, was difficult. Most people were poor and had little, if any, say in their government.



Strange but TRUE

Space Dogs Four years before Yuri Gagarin blasted into space, a Russian dog orbited the planet. Her name was Laika (LEE•kuh), which means "Barker." Laika, pictured below, was launched into space on *Sputnik 2* in November 1957. The Soviets did not then have the ability to bring a spacecraft down safely, and Laika lived in space for only a few days.

In August 1960, however, the Russians sent two other dogs into space. Named Belka and Strelka, they were the first living creatures to go into space and return safely to Earth.



Creating a National Identity The Soviet government was fearful that some ethnic groups might want to break away from the Soviet Union. To keep this from happening, Soviet leaders tried to create a strong national identity. They wanted people in the republic of Latvia, for example, to think of themselves as Soviets, not as Latvians.

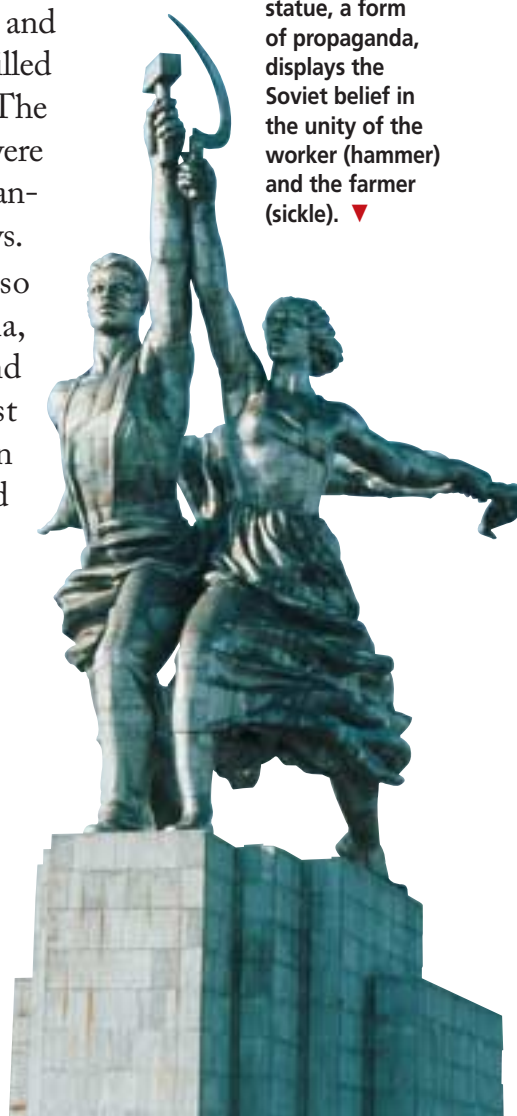
To help achieve its goals, the Soviet government created and distributed **propaganda** (proh•puh•GAN•duh), or material designed to spread certain beliefs. Soviet propaganda included pamphlets, posters, artwork, statues, songs, and films. It praised the Soviet Union, its leaders, and communism.

Soviet Control of Daily Life To prevent different ethnic groups from identifying with their individual cultures rather than with the Soviet Union, the Soviet government outlawed many cultural celebrations. It destroyed churches and other religious buildings and killed thousands of religious leaders. The members of many ethnic groups were not allowed to speak their native languages or celebrate certain holidays.

The Soviet government also controlled communications media, such as newspapers, books, and radio. This meant that most Soviet citizens could not learn much about other nations around the world.

Literature and the Arts The works of many writers, poets, and other artists who lived during the Soviet era often were banned or censored. Soviet artists were forced to join government-run unions. These unions told artists what kinds of works they could create. Artists who disobeyed were punished. Some were imprisoned or even killed.

Region • This statue, a form of propaganda, displays the Soviet belief in the unity of the worker (hammer) and the farmer (sickle). ▼





Ethnic and Cultural Groups of the Soviet Union, c. 1950



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting a Map

- Place** • Where in the Soviet Union do most Uralic and Altaic people live?
- Region** • What is the most common ethnicity of the Soviet Union?

Sports The leaders of the Soviet Union wanted their country to be seen as equal to, if not better than, other powerful nations. One way to achieve this goal was to become a strong competitor in the Olympics and in other international sports competitions.

The Soviet government supported its top athletes and provided for all their basic needs. It even hired and paid for the coaches and paid for all training. The hockey teams and gymnasts of the Soviet Union were among the best in the world.

Region • Romanian gymnasts, like Nadia Comaneci, won medals at the Olympics. ▼

The Soviet Economy

In addition to controlling the governments of the Soviet Union and of those Eastern European countries under its influence, Soviet leaders also ran the economy. When the Soviets installed Communist governments in Eastern Europe after World War II, they promised to improve industry and to bring new wealth to be shared among all citizens. This did not happen.

Government Control Communism in the Soviet Union did not support **private property rights**, or the right of individuals to own land or an industry. The Soviets wanted all major industries to be owned by the government rather than by private citizens. So the government took over factories, railroads, and businesses.





The Soviet government decided what would be produced, how it would be produced, and who would get what was produced. These choices were made based on Soviet interests, not on the interests of the republics or of individuals. Communist countries of Eastern Europe were often unable to meet the needs—including bread, meat, and clothing—of their citizens.

Reading Social Studies

A. Clarifying Who benefited most from Soviet industry?

Attempts at Change

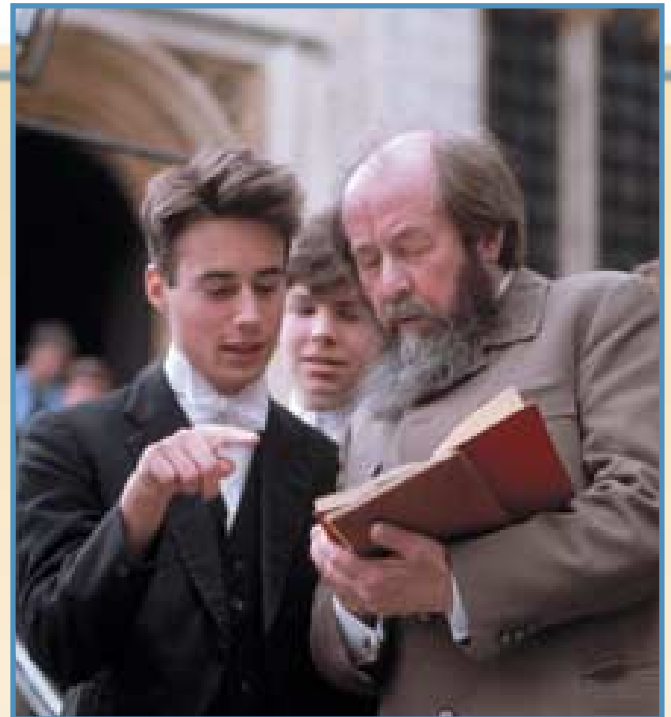
Starting in the 1950s, Eastern Europeans began to demand more goods of better quality. They also wanted changes in the government. In 1956, Hungary and Poland tried to free their governments and economies from Soviet control. But the Communist army put an end to these attempts at change.

Khrushchev From 1958 until 1964, **Nikita Khrushchev** (KROOSH•chev) ruled the Soviet Union. During this period, called “The Thaw,” writers and other citizens began to have greater freedoms. Khrushchev even visited the United States in 1959, but the thaw in the Cold War did not last. In 1964, with the Soviet economy growing weaker, Khrushchev was **deposed**, or removed from power.



Solzhenitsyn In 1945, army officer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (sohl•zhu•NEET•sin), far right, called the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin “the boss.” For this, he was sentenced to eight years in slave-labor camps. Later, Solzhenitsyn wrote books about his experiences in those camps. He also wrote a letter against censorship. The government called him a traitor, and in 1969 it forced Solzhenitsyn to leave the writers’ union. Five years later, Solzhenitsyn left the country.

Although Solzhenitsyn’s works were banned, many Soviet citizens read them in secret. Copies of his and other banned books were passed from person to person across the nation. Through such writings, Soviet citizens learned many things that the government had tried to hide from them.



THINKING CRITICALLY



- Analyzing Motives** Why would the Soviet government stop people from reading Solzhenitsyn’s books?
- Comparing** Compare the censorship of literature in the Soviet Union with censorship in the United States.



Reading Social Studies

B. Recognizing Important

Details How did the Soviet Union maintain control over other Eastern European nations?

The Prague Spring In January 1968 in Czechoslovakia, Alexander Dubček (DOOB•chek) became the First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. His attempts to lessen the Soviet Union's control over Czechoslovakia led to a period of improvement called the "Prague Spring." Czech citizens enjoyed greater freedoms, including more contact with Western Europe. In August of that year, however, the Soviet Union sent troops to force a return to strict Communist control. Dubček was later replaced, and Soviet controls were back in place.

Détente The member nations of NATO, which were concerned about starting an all-out war with the Soviet Union, were unable to stop the Soviet control of Eastern Europe. In the 1970s, however, leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States began to have more contact with each other. This led to a period of **détente** (day•TAHNT), or lessening tension, between the members of NATO and the Warsaw Pact nations.



Place • Nikita Khrushchev, the son of a miner and grandson of a peasant, lessened government control of Soviet citizens. ▲



Region • Citizens of Czechoslovakia protested Soviet control in 1968. ◀



Place • The old city of Dubrovnik is in Croatia, a part of the former Yugoslavia, which was a Communist country in Eastern Europe. ►



Economic Crisis By the 1980s, economic conditions in the Soviet Union and in those countries under its control had still not improved. Even after détente, the Soviet government continued to spend most of its money on the armed forces and nuclear weapons. In addition, people who lived in the non-Russian republics of the Soviet Union now wanted more control over their own affairs. Many citizens began to reject the Soviet economic system, but the Soviet leaders refused to give up any of their power or control.

SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

Terms & Names

- 1. Identify:** (a) propaganda (b) private property rights (c) Nikita Khrushchev
(d) deposed (e) détente

Taking Notes

- 2.** Use a chart like this one to list and describe major aspects of Soviet culture.

Aspects of Soviet Culture

Main Ideas

- 3. (a)** Why did Soviet leaders try to create a strong national identity?
(b) What began to happen in Eastern Europe in the 1950s?
(c) Describe the significance of the "Prague Spring."

Critical Thinking

4. Analyzing Motives

Why do you think the works of many writers, poets, and artists were banned or censored during the Soviet era?

Think About

- ♦ what Soviet citizens learned from Solzhenitsyn's works
- ♦ the government's use of propaganda
- ♦ what life was like for most Soviet citizens

ACTIVITY -OPTION-

Reread the information under "Literature and the Arts" and the Spotlight on Culture feature. Write a **speech** for or against censorship in the arts.