



Eastern Europe and Russia

TERMS & NAMES

Mikhail Gorbachev

parliamentary
republic

coalition government

ethnic cleansing

Duma

MAIN IDEA

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, many former Soviet republics and countries of Eastern Europe became independent.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Nations once under Soviet rule are taking steps toward new economies and democratic governments.

DATELINE

THE KREMLIN, MOSCOW, 1988—To reduce military spending, the Soviet Union has begun removing large numbers of troops and arms from Eastern Europe. This latest news is just one of many changes in the Soviet government since Mikhail Gorbachev (GORE•buh•chawf) came to power three years ago.

Although Gorbachev believes in the ideals of the Soviet system, he thinks that change is necessary to help solve the country's economic and political problems. Since 1985, Gorbachev has reduced Cold War tensions with the United States. At home in the Soviet Union, he has allowed more political and economic freedom.



Region • Mikhail Gorbachev leads the Soviet Union toward a freer society. ▲

The Breakup of the Soviet Union

Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms did not solve the problems of the Soviet Union. The economy continued to get worse. When Gorbachev did not force the countries of Eastern Europe to remain Communist, this further displeased many Communists.



Vocabulary

coup d'état: the overthrow of a government, usually by a small group in a position of power; often shortened to "coup"

In 1991, a group of more traditional Soviet leaders tried to take over the Soviet government. Thousands of people opposed this coup d'état (koo•day•TAH), and the coup failed. Then, one by one, the Soviet republics declared independence. The Warsaw Pact was dissolved. By the end of 1991, the Soviet Union no longer existed. The huge country had become 15 different nations.

Modern Eastern Europe

Each former Soviet republic set up its own non-Communist government. The countries of Eastern Europe that had been under Soviet control held democratic elections, and many wrote or revised their constitutions.

In some countries, such as the Czech Republic, former Communists were banned from important government posts. In other countries, such as Bulgaria, the former Communists reorganized themselves into a new political party and have won elections. Many different ethnic groups also tried to create new states within a nation or to reestablish old states that had not existed in many years.

Parliamentary Republics Today, most of the countries of Eastern Europe are parliamentary republics. A **parliamentary republic** is a form of government led by the head of the political party with the most members in parliament. The head of government, usually a prime minister, proposes the programs that the government will undertake. Most of these countries also have a president who has ceremonial, rather than political, duties.

BACKGROUND

The Central Asian Soviet republics were mostly Muslim. These republics are now the countries of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

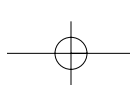
Former Soviet Republics and Warsaw Pact Members, 2001



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER:

Interpreting a Map

- Location** • Which former Soviet republics and Warsaw Pact members border Russia?
- Region** • On which continent are most of these countries located?



In some countries, small political parties have joined forces to work together to form a government. This is called a **coalition government**.

New Economies Under Soviet rule, Eastern Europe struggled economically and its people's freedoms were severely restricted. Although Eastern Europeans gained their freedom, they also faced problems such as inflation and unemployment.

Eastern Europe's countries are changing from command economies to free-market economies. Some countries, such as Slovakia, made this change slowly. Others, such as Poland, reformed their economic system and achieved economic success.

Many former Soviet republics, which did not quickly reform their economic systems, are in bad economic shape. Some of these nations are terribly poor. Struggles for power have led to violence and sometimes civil war. Pollution from the Soviet era threatens people's health. Still, some republics, including Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, are making progress as independent nations.

Defense After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Eastern European nations no longer looked to the Soviet government to defend them. Many wanted to become members of NATO. Belonging to NATO would help assure them of protection in case of invasion.

Reading Social Studies

A. Comparing
Compare a command economy with a free-market economy.



Easter in Ukraine In Ukraine, most Christians belong to the Orthodox Church. These Ukrainians are known for the special way in which they celebrate the Easter holiday. They create beautiful Easter eggs, which are dyed bright colors and covered with intricate designs. These eggs are so beautiful that people around the world collect them.

Ukrainian families also bake a special bread for Easter. They decorate this bread with designs made from pieces of dough. Families bring the bread and other foods to church to be blessed on Easter. These foods then make up the family's holiday feast.

THINKING CRITICALLY

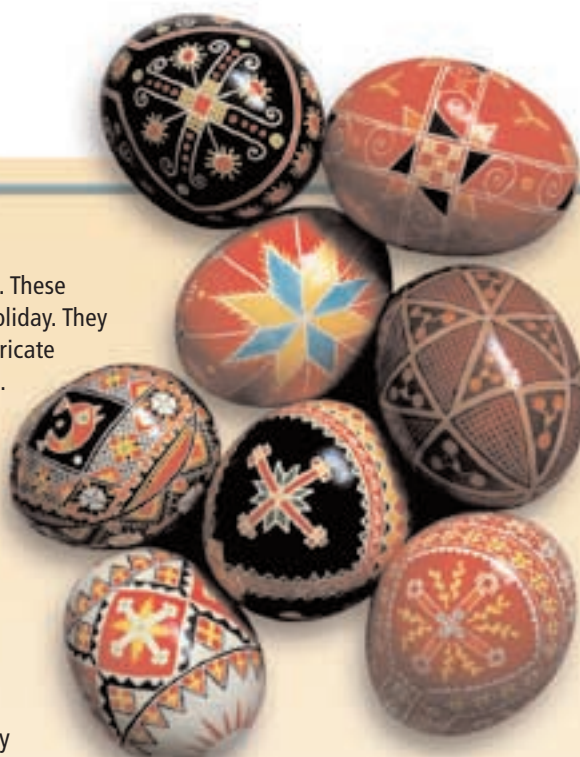


1. Analyzing Issues

Why were Ukrainian Easter eggs not common during the Soviet era?

2. Comparing

Compare how your family prepares for holidays with preparations made by Ukrainians in the Orthodox Church.





Vocabulary

Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—former Soviet republics that are on the Baltic Sea

BACKGROUND

By 1991, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina had gained independence from Yugoslavia. Only Serbia and Montenegro were still part of the Yugoslavian federation.

In 1999, three new members joined NATO: Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. In 2001, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Baltic States were also working to become NATO members.

War in the Balkan Peninsula

Since the late 1980s, much of Eastern Europe has been a place of turmoil and struggle. Yugoslavia, one of the countries located on Europe's Balkan Peninsula, has experienced terrible wars, extreme hardships, and great change.

Under Tito After World War II, Yugoslavia came under Marshal Tito's (TEE•toe) dictatorship. Tito controlled all the country's many different ethnic groups, which included Serbs, Croats, and Muslims. His rule continued until his death in 1980. Slobodan Milosevic (SLOW•boe•don muh•LOW•suh•vitch) became Yugoslavia's president in 1989, after years of political turmoil.

Milosevic Slobodan Milosevic, a Serb, wanted the Serbs to rule Yugoslavia. The Serbs in Bosnia began fighting the Croats and Muslims living there. The Bosnian Serbs murdered many Muslims so that Serbs would be in the majority. The Serbs called these killings of members of minority ethnic groups **ethnic cleansing**. Finally, NATO attacked the Bosnian Serbs and ended the war.

Connections to Science

Pollution Soviet leaders thought that industry would improve life for everyone. Developing industry was so important that the Soviet government did not worry about pollution. Few laws were passed to protect the environment.

In the 1970s and 1980s, there was not enough money to modernize industry or to reduce pollution. Some areas also could not afford proper sewage systems or recycling plants. Today, Eastern Europe has some of the worst pollution problems on the continent.

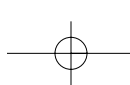


The Balkan States, 1991 and 2001

GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting a Map

- Location** • Which Balkan state borders Greece?
- Region** • How many countries developed from Yugoslavia?





In 1995, the Serbs, Croats, and Muslims of Bosnia signed a peace treaty. In 1999, Milosevic began using ethnic cleansing against the Albanians in Kosovo, a region of Serbia. NATO launched an air war against Yugoslavia that ended with the defeat of the Serbs. In 2000, public protests led to Milosevic's removal. He was subsequently arrested and tried for war crimes by the United Nations.

Modern Russia

Life in Russia has improved since the breakup of the Soviet Union. Russian citizens can elect their own leaders. They enjoy more freedom of speech. New businesses have sprung up. And some Russians have become wealthy.

Unfortunately, Russia still faces serious problems. Many leaders are dishonest. The nation has been slow to reform its economic system. Most of the nation's new wealth has gone to a small number of people, so that many Russians remain poor. The crime rate has grown tremendously. The government has also fought a war against Chechnya (CHECH•nee•yah), a region of Russia that wants to become independent.

Russian Culture The fall of communism helped most Russians to follow their cultural practices more freely. Russians gained the freedom to practice the religion of their choice. They can also buy and read the great works of Russian literature that once were banned. At the beginning of the 21st century, writers and other artists also have far more freedom to express themselves.

New magazines and newspapers are being published. Even new history books are being written. For the first time in decades, these publications are telling more of the truth about the Soviet Union.

Russia's Government Russia has a democratic form of government. The president is elected by the people. The people also elect members of the **Duma** (DOO•muh), which is part of the legislature.

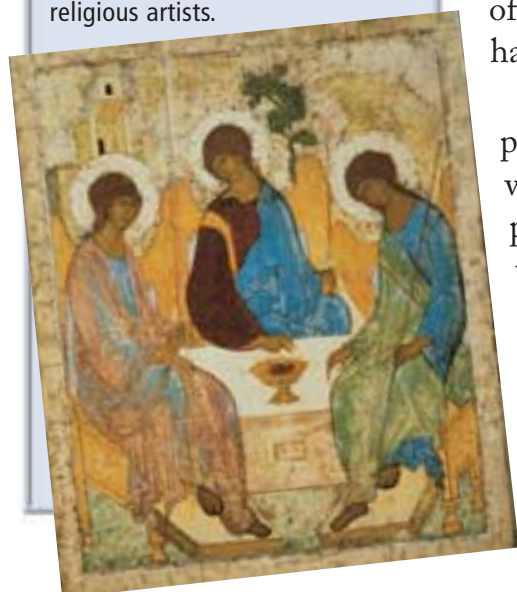
Reading Social Studies

B. Identifying Problems What are the main problems that face Russia today?



Russian Icons A special feature of Russian Orthodox churches are beautiful religious paintings called icons (EYE•kons). Russian icons usually depict biblical figures and scenes. They often decorate every corner of a church.

The greatest Russian icon painter was Andrei Rublev (AHN•dray ROO•blawf). He worked in the late 1300s and early 1400s. Rublev's paintings, one of which is shown below, are brightly colored and highlighted in gold. His work influenced many later painters, and today he is considered one of the world's great religious artists.



BACKGROUND

One of the most popular pastimes in Russia is the game of chess. In fact, many of the world's greatest chess players, such as Boris Spassky, have been Russian.



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting a Map

- Human-Environment Interaction** • Name three of Russia's more common natural resources.
- Place** • What is the most common type of land in Russia?

BACKGROUND

Russian highways are in poor condition. Also, many rivers and major ports are closed by ice in the winter. As a result, most Russian goods are transported by railroad.

Democracy is still new to the Russian people. Some citizens are working to improve the system to reduce corruption and to ensure that everyone receives fair treatment. Even the thought of changing the government is new to most Russians. Under the Soviets, people had to accept things the way they were.

Resources and Industry The map above shows Russia's major natural resources. The country is one of the world's largest producers of oil. Russia also contains the world's largest forests. Its trees are made into lumber, paper, and other wood products.

Russian factories produce steel from iron ore. Other factories use that steel to make tractors and other large machines. Since Russian ships can reach both the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, Russia also has a large fishing industry.

Economics Following the lead of Eastern European countries, Russia has been moving toward a free-market economy. Citizens can own land, and foreign companies are encouraged to do business in Russia. These changes have given many Russians more opportunities, but they have also brought difficulties.

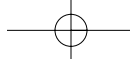
Connections to Language

The Russian Language More than 150 million people speak Russian. It is related to other Slavic languages of Eastern Europe, including Polish, Serbian, and Bulgarian.

Russian is written using the Cyrillic (suh•RIL•ik) alphabet, which has 33 characters.

Many of the newly independent republics are now returning to the Latin alphabet, used to write English and most other languages of the Western world. The major powers in the world economy base their languages on the Latin alphabet, and clearer communication may improve the economies of these new countries.

Hello
Привет



Place • Forestry is a major industry in Russia. These harvested logs are being floated downriver to be processed. ►



Prices are no longer controlled by the government. This means that companies can charge a price that is high enough for them to make a profit. At the beginning of the 21st century, however, people's wages have not risen as fast as prices. Many people cannot afford to buy new products.

Some Russians have done well in the new economy. On the other hand, people with less education and less access to power have not done as well. Also, today most new businesses and jobs are in the cities, which means that people in small towns have fewer job opportunities.

BACKGROUND

The Russian government is unable to enforce tax laws. Many people don't pay their taxes. Without that money, the government cannot provide basic services, such as health care.

SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT

Terms & Names

1. Identify: (a) Mikhail Gorbachev (b) parliamentary republic (c) coalition government
(d) ethnic cleansing (e) Duma

Taking Notes

2. Use a flow chart like this one to outline the changes in Eastern Europe and Russia from 1988 through 2000.

1988:
↓
↓

Main Ideas

3. (a) What happened to the governments of the former Soviet republics after independence?
(b) How have the economies of Eastern European countries changed now that those countries are free?
(c) In what ways has life in Russia improved since the breakup of the Soviet Union?

Critical Thinking

4. Making Inferences

Why do you think many Eastern European countries would like to join NATO?

Think About

- ♦ what happened to the Warsaw Pact
- ♦ the economies of Eastern Europe
- ♦ the relationship between Eastern Europe and Russia

ACTIVITY -OPTION-

Reread the information in the Spotlight on Culture feature. Write a short, personal **essay** that describes a special family, school, neighborhood, or holiday celebration in which you participated.