

The Former Eastern Bloc

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[Yuri Pantyukhin's 2000 painting of Alexander Nevsky from the triptych-For The Russian Land.]

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Understanding Russia

- **Ancient Russia**

- The early history of Russia, like those of many countries, is one of migrating peoples and ancient kingdoms. In fact, early Russia was not exactly "Russia," but a collection of cities that gradually coalesced into an empire. In the early part of the ninth century, as part of the same great movement that brought the Danes to England and the Norsemen to Western Europe, a Scandinavian people known as the Varangians crossed the Baltic Sea and landed in Eastern Europe. The leader of the Varangians was the semi legendary warrior Rurik, who led his people in 862 to the city of Novgorod on the Volkhov River. Whether Rurik took the city by force or was invited to rule there, he certainly established the city.
- From Novgorod, Rurik's successor Oleg extended the power of the city southward. In 882, he gained control of Kiev, a Slavic city that had arisen along the Dnepr River around the 5th century. Oleg's attainment of rule over Kiev marked the first establishment of a unified, dynastic state in the region. Kiev became the center of a trade route between Scandinavia and Constantinople, and Kievan Rus', as the empire came to be known, flourished for the next three hundred years.
- By 989, Oleg's great-grandson Vladimir I was ruler of a kingdom that extended to as far south as the Black Sea, the Caucasus Mountains, and the lower reaches of the Volga River. Having decided to establish a state religion, Vladimir carefully considered a number of available faiths and decided upon Greek Orthodoxy, thus allying himself with Constantinople and the West. It is said that Vladimir decided against Islam partly because of his belief that his people could not live under a religion that prohibits hard liquor. Vladimir was succeeded by Yaroslav the Wise, whose reign marked the apogee of Kievan Rus'. Yaroslav codified laws, made shrewd alliances with other states, encouraged the arts, and all the other sorts of things that wise kings do. Unfortunately, he decided in the end to divide his kingdom among his children and bidding them to cooperate and flourish. This was not to occur.
- Within a few decades of Yaroslav's death (in 1054), Kievan Rus' was rife with internecine strife and had broken up into regional power centers. It was around this time that one of the regional princes, held a feast at his hunting lodge atop a hill over

looking the confluence of the Moskva and Neglina Rivers. A chronicler recorded the party, thus providing us with the earliest mention of Moscow, the small settlement that would soon become the pre-eminent city in Russia.

• Mongols and Emergence of Moscow

- Kievan Rus' struggled on into the 13th century, but was decisively destroyed by the arrival of a new invader—the Mongols. In 1237 Batu Khan, a grandson of Genghis Khan launched an invasion into Kievan Rus' from his capital on the lower Volga (Sarai or present-day Kazan). Over the next three years the Mongols (or Tatars) destroyed all of the major cities of Kievan Rus' with the exceptions of Novgorod and Pskov. The regional princes were not deposed, but they were forced to send regular tribute to the Tatar state, which became known as the Empire of the Golden Horde. Invasions of Russia were attempted during this period from the west as well, first by the Swedes (1240) and then in 1242 by fearsome Teutonic Knights. Both were decisively defeated by the great warrior Alexander Nevsky, a prince of Novgorod who earned his surname from his victory over the Swedes on the Neva River.
- For the next century or so, things were relatively quiet in Russia. Given the tribute demanded by the Mongols, there wasn't much money available for building or military campaigns. With the Mongols off to the southwest, the northeastern cities gradually gained more influence—first Tver, and then, around the turn of the 14th century, Moscow. As a sign of the city's importance, the patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church was transferred to the city, making it the spiritual capital of Russia. By the latter part of the century, Moscow felt strong enough to challenge the Mongols directly, and in 1380 a Muscovite prince named Dmitry Donskoy made an attack upon them. It wasn't until 1480, after another century had passed, that Moscow was powerful enough to throw off Mongol yoke for good. Its ruler at that time was Grand Duke Ivan III, better known as Ivan the Great.



- Ivan III began by subjugating most of Moscow's rival cities, and by the time he tore up the Mongol treaty he was effectively in control of the entire country. It wasn't however until the reign of his grandson, Ivan IV (the Terrible), that Russia became a unified state. Ivan the Terrible succeeded his father at the age of three. His mother served as regent until she too died, when Ivan was eight. For the next eight years, the young Grand Duke endured a series of regents chosen from among the boyars (the nobility). Finally in 1547, he adopted the title of tsar and set about crushing the power of the boyars, reorganizing the military, and preparing to destroy the Mongols for good. In 1552 he conquered and sacked Kazan (Sarai), and in 1556 Astrakhan, having thus destroyed the lingering power of the Golden Horde. Ivan IV's campaigns opened vast new areas for Russian expansion, and it was during his reign that the conquest and colonization of Siberia began.
- What is the truth about his violent attributes? It seems that Ivan was not so very terrible at all during the early years of his reign. However, as he grew older his temper worsened, and by the 1560s he carried out a horrific campaign against the boyars, confiscating their land and executing or exiling those who displeased him. In 1581, in a rage, he struck his son and heir Ivan with an iron rod, killing him. When Ivan the Terrible died in 1584, he was succeeded by his son Fyodor, a much lesser person, who left most of the management of the kingdom to his brother-in-law, Boris Godunov. Godunov sought to secure the succession for himself. In 1591, he murdered Fyodor's younger brother Dmitry in the ancient town of Uglich, a spot now marked by the magnificent Church of St. Demetrius on the Blood.
- When Fyodor died in 1598, Godunov was made tsar, but his rule was never accepted as entirely legitimate. Within a few years a pretender arose in Poland, claiming to be Dmitry, and in 1604 he invaded Russia. Godunov died suddenly the next year, and the "Time of Troubles" began. For the next eight years both the first and a second false Dmitry laid claims to the throne, both supported by invading Polish armies. Finally, in 1613, the Poles were ousted from Moscow, and the boyars unanimously elected Michael Romanov as Tsar. The Romanov dynasty was to rule Russia for the next 304 years, until the Russian Revolution brought an end to the Tsarist state.
- **The Romanovs**
 - For the first few generations, the Romanovs were happy to maintain the status quo in Russia. They continued to centralize power, but they did very little to advance Russia in the way economic and political life was changing elsewhere in Europe.
 - Peter the Great however was different. He was his father's youngest son and the child of his second wife, neither of which promised great things. Tsar Alexis also had three children by his first wife: Feodor, an invalid; Sophia; and Ivan, a semi-imbecile. When Alexis died in 1676 Feodor became Tsar, but his poor constitution brought an

early death in 1682.

- The family of Peter's mother succeeded in having him chosen over Ivan to be Tsar, and the ten year-old boy was brought from his childhood home at the country estate of Kolomenskoe to the Kremlin. No sooner was he established, however, than the Ivan's family struck back. Gaining the support of the Kremlin Guard, they launched a coup d'etat, and Peter was forced to endure the horrible sight of his supporters and family members being thrown from the top of the grand Red Stair of the Faceted Palace onto the raised pikes of the Guard. The outcome of the coup was a joint Tsar-ship, with both Peter and Ivan placed under the regency of Ivan's elder and not exactly impartial sister Sophia. Peter had not enjoyed his stay in Moscow, a city he would dislike for the rest of his life.
- With Sophia in control, Peter was sent back to Kolomenskoe. It was soon noticed that he possessed a penchant for war games, including especially military drill and siege craft. He became acquainted with a small community of European soldiers, from whom he learned Western European tactics and strategy. In 1689, just as Peter was to come of age, Sophia attempted another coup-this time, however, she was defeated and confined to Novodevichiy Convent. Six years later Ivan died, leaving Peter in sole possession of the throne. Rather than taking up residence and rule in Moscow, his response was to embark on a Grand Tour of Europe. He spent about two years there, not only meeting monarchs and conducting diplomacy but also travelling incognito and even working as a ship's carpenter in Holland. He amassed a considerable body of knowledge on western European industrial techniques and state administration, and became determined to modernize the Russian state and to westernize its society.
- In 1698, still on tour, Peter received news of yet another rebellion by the Kremlin Guard, instigated by Sophia despite her confinement to Novodevichiy. He returned, decisively defeating the guard with his own European-drilled units, ordering a mass execution of the surviving rebels, and then hanging the bodies outside Sophia's convent window. She apparently went mad. The following day Peter began his program to recreate Russia in the image of Western Europe by personally clipping off the beards of his nobles. Peter's return to Russia and assumption of personal rule hit the country like a hurricane. He banned traditional Muscovite dress for all men, introduced military conscription, established technical schools, replaced the church patriarchy with a holy synod answerable to himself, simplified the alphabet, tried to improve the manners of the court, changed the calendar, changed his title from Tsar to Emperor, and introduced a hundred other reforms, restrictions, and novelties (all of which convinced the conservative clergy that he was the antichrist).
- In 1703 he embarked on the most dramatic of his reforms-the decision to transfer the capital from Moscow to a new city to be built from scratch on the Gulf of Finland.

Over the next nine years, at tremendous human and material cost, St. Petersburg was created. Peter generated considerable opposition during his reign, not only from the conservative clergy but also from the nobility, who were understandably attached to the status quo. One of the most notable critics of his policies was his own son Alexis, who naturally enough became the focus of oppositional intrigue. In fact, Alexis seemed to desire no such position, and in 1716 he fled to Vienna after renouncing his right to the succession. Having never had much occasion to trust in others, Peter suspected that Alexis had in fact fled in order to rally foreign backing. After persuading him to return, Peter had his son arrested and tried for treason. In 1718 he was sentenced to death, but died before the execution from wounds sustained during torture.

- Peter himself died in 1725, and he remains a controversial figure in Russian history. Although he was deeply committed to making Russia a powerful new member of modern Europe, it is questionable whether his reforms resulted in significant improvements to the lives of his subjects. Certainly he modernized Russia's military and its administrative structure, but both of these reforms were financed at the expense of the peasantry, who were increasingly forced into serfdom. After Peter's death Russia went through a great number of rulers in a distressingly short time, none of whom had much of an opportunity to leave a lasting impression. Many of Peter's reforms failed to take root in Russia, and it was not until the reign of Catherine the Great that his desire to make Russia into a great European power was in fact achieved.
- On December 25, 1761, Peter III, a grandson of Peter the Great, was crowned Tsar. Peter was thirty-four, dissolute, and insensitive. He was not accompanied by his wife Catherine, a year younger but far more mature, not dissolute but also no puritan. The couple had been married for eighteen years. Both had been newcomers to the Russian court as teens, and for a few years after their marriage they had been on friendly terms. By 1762, however, their relationship had long since been in name only. Peter had grown into a fool, while Catherine had become a complete success, respected as much for her intellect as for her winning personality. Although the court atmosphere in which they lived was much more cosmopolitan than that inhabited by their royal predecessors, politics was as always a deadly serious pursuit--and everyone knew that Catherine was the more capable politician.
- By the following summer the conflict between Peter and Catherine had become quite serious. In only six months of rule, he had managed to offend and outrage virtually the entire court by diplomatic bumbblings and large segments of the population through his hostility to the church and his evident disdain for Russia. Support for Catherine was widespread, and Peter was suspicious. Early on the morning of June 28, Catherine left her estate at Peterhof, outside of St. Petersburg, and departed for the city. Everything had been prepared in advance, and when she

arrived she was greeted with cheers by both the troops of her factional supporters and the populace. By the next morning, Peter was confronted with a fait accompli and a prepared declaration of his abdication. A week later, he was dead.

- Catherine the Great went on to become the most powerful sovereign in Europe. She continued Peter the Great's reforms of the Russian state, further increasing central control over the provinces. Her skill as a diplomat, in an era that produced many extraordinary diplomats, was remarkable. Russia's influence in European affairs, as well as its territory in Eastern and Central Europe, were increased and expanded. Catherine was also an enthusiastic patron of the arts. She built and founded the Hermitage Museum, commissioned buildings all over Russia, founded academies, journals, and libraries, and corresponded with the French philosophers, including Voltaire and Diderot. Although Catherine did in fact have many lovers, some of them trusted advisors and confidants, stories alleging her to have had an excessive sexual appetite are unproven.



- With the onset of the French Revolution, Catherine became strikingly conservative and increasingly hostile to criticism of her policies. From 1789 until her death, she reversed many of the liberal reforms of her early reign. One notable effect of this reversal was that, like Peter the Great, Catherine ultimately contributed to the increasingly distressing state of the peasantry in Russia. When Catherine the Great died in 1796, she was succeeded by her son Paul I. Catherine never really liked Paul, and her feelings were reciprocated by her son. Paul's reign lasted only five years and was by all accounts a complete disaster. Paul was succeeded by his son Alexander I,

who is remembered mostly for having been the ruler of Russia during Napoleon Bonaparte's epic Russian Campaign.

- In June of 1812, Napoleon began his fatal Russian campaign, a landmark in the history of the destructive potential of warfare. Virtually all of continental Europe was under his control, and the invasion of Russia was an attempt to force Tsar Alexander I to submit once again to the terms of a treaty that Napoleon had imposed upon him four years earlier. Having gathered nearly half a million soldiers, from France as well as all of the vassal states of Europe, Napoleon entered Russia at the head of the largest army ever seen. The Russians, under Marshal Kutuzov, could not realistically hope to defeat him in a direct confrontation. Instead, they begin a defensive campaign of strategic retreat, devastating the land as they fell back and harassing the flanks of the French. As the summer wore on, Napoleon's massive supply lines were stretched ever thinner, and his force began to decline. By September, without having engaged in a single pitched battle, the French Army had been reduced by more than two thirds from fatigue, hunger, desertion, and raids by Russian forces.
- Nonetheless, it was clear that unless the Russians engaged the French Army in a major battle, Moscow would be Napoleon's in a matter of weeks. The Tsar insisted upon an engagement, and on September 7, with winter closing in and the French army only 70 miles (110 km) from the city, the two armies met at Borodino Field. By the end of the day, 108,000 men had died--but neither side had gained a decisive victory. Kutuzov realized that any further defense of the city would be senseless, and he withdrew his forces, prompting the citizens of Moscow to begin a massive and panicked exodus. When Napoleon's army arrived on September 14, they found a city depopulated and bereft of supplies, a meagre comfort in the face of the oncoming winter. To make matters much, much worse, fires broke out in the city that night, and by the next day the French were lacking shelter as well.
- After waiting in vain for Alexander to offer to negotiate, Napoleon ordered his troops to begin the march home. Because the route south was blocked by Kutuzov's forces (and the French were in no shape for a battle) the retreat retraced the long, devastated route of the invasion. Having waited until mid-October to depart, the exhausted French army soon found itself in the midst of winter--in fact, in the midst of an unusually early and especially cold winter. Temperatures soon dropped well below freezing, Cossacks attacked stragglers and isolated units, food was almost non-existent, and the march was five hundred miles. Ten thousand men survived. The campaign ensured Napoleon's downfall and Russia's status as a leading power in post-Napoleonic Europe. Yet even as Russia emerged more powerful than ever from the Napoleonic era, its internal tensions began to increase.

- **The path to revolution**

- Since the reign of Ivan the Terrible, the Russian Tsars had followed a fairly consistent policy of drawing more political power away from the nobility and into their own hands. This centralization of authority in the Russian state had usually been accomplished in one of two ways--either by simply taking power from the nobles and defying their opposition (Ivan the Terrible was very good at this), or by compensating the nobles for decreased power in government by giving them greater power over their land and its occupants. Serfdom had increased steadily in Russia from the time of Ivan the Terrible, its inventor. By the time of Catherine the Great, the Russian Tsars enjoyed virtually autocratic rule over their nobles. However, they had in a sense purchased this power by granting those nobles virtually autocratic power over the serfs, who by this time had been reduced to a state closer to slavery than to peasantry.
- By the nineteenth century, both of these relationships were under attack. In the Decembrist revolt in 1825, a group of young, reformist military officers attempted to force the adoption of a constitutional monarchy in Russia by preventing the accession of Nicholas I. They failed utterly, and Nicholas became the most reactionary leader in Europe. Nicholas' successor, Alexander II, seemed by contrast to be amenable to reform. In 1861, he abolished serfdom, though the emancipation didn't in fact bring on any significant change in the condition of the peasants. As the country became more industrialized, its political system experienced even greater strain. Attempts by the lower classes to gain more freedom provoked fears of anarchy, and the government remained extremely conservative. As Russia became more industrialized, larger, and far more complicated, the inadequacies of autocratic Tsarist rule became increasingly apparent. By the twentieth century conditions were ripe for a serious convulsion.
- At the same time, Russia had expanded its territory and its power considerably over the nineteenth century. Its borders extended to Afghanistan and China, and it had acquired extensive territory on the Pacific coast. The foundation of the port cities of Vladivostok and Port Arthur there had opened up profitable avenues for commerce, and the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway (constructed from 1891-1905) linked the European Russia with its new eastern territories.
- In 1894 Nicholas II acceded to the throne. He was not the most competent of political leaders, and his ministers were almost uniformly reactionaries. To make matters worse, the increasing Russian presence in the far east provoked the hostility of Japan. In January of 1905, the Japanese attacked, and Russia experienced a series of defeats that dissolved the tenuous support held by Nicholas' already unpopular government. Nicholas was forced to grant concessions to the reformers, including most notably a constitution and a

parliament, or Duma. The power of the reform movement was founded on a new and powerful force entered Russian politics. The industrialization of the major western cities and the development of the Batu oil fields had brought together large concentrations of Russian workers, and they soon began to organize into local political councils, or soviets. It was in large part the power of the soviets, united under the Social Democratic party that had forced Nicholas to accept reforms in 1905.

- After the war with Japan was brought to a close, Nicholas attempted to reverse the new freedoms, and his government became more reactionary than ever. Popular discontent gained strength, and Nicholas countered it with increased repression, maintaining control but worsening relations with the population. In 1912, the Social Democrats split into two camps--the radical Bolsheviks and the comparatively moderate Mensheviks. In 1914, another disastrous war once again brought on a crisis. If the Russo-Japanese war had been costly and unpopular, it was at least remote. The First World War, however, took place right on Russia's western doorstep. Unprepared militarily or industrially, the country suffered demoralizing defeats, suffered severe food shortages, and soon suffered an economic collapse. By February of 1917, the workers and soldiers had had enough. Riots broke out in St. Petersburg, then called Petrograd, and the garrison there mutinied. Workers soviets were set up, and the Duma approved the establishment of a Provisional Government to attempt to restore order in the capital. It was soon clear that Nicholas possessed no support, and on March 2 he abdicated the throne in favor of his brother Michael who renounced his claim the next day.
 - The Provisional Government set up by the Duma attempted to pursue a moderate policy, calling for a return to order and promising reform of worker's rights. However, it was unwilling to endorse the most pressing demand of the soviets--an immediate end to the war. For the next nine months, the Provisional Government, under Alexander Kerensky, unsuccessfully attempted to establish its authority. In the meanwhile, the Bolsheviks gained increasing support from the ever more frustrated soviets. On October 25, led by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, they stormed the Winter Palace and deposed the Kerensky government. Although the Bolsheviks enjoyed substantial support in St. Petersburg and Moscow, they were by no means in control of the country as a whole. They succeeded in taking Russia out of the war (though on very unfavourable terms), but within months civil war broke out throughout Russia. For the next three years the country was devastated by civil strife, until by 1920 the Bolsheviks had finally emerged victorious.
- **The Soviet Era**
 - The first few years of Soviet rule were marked by an extraordinary outburst of

social and cultural change. Although the Bolsheviks had maintained complete control of the economy during the civil war, Lenin decided at its end that a partial return to a market economy would help the country recover from the destruction of the previous three years. His New Economic Policy, or NEP, brought about a period of relative prosperity, allowing the young Soviet government to consolidate its political position and rebuild the country's infrastructure. This was also the period during which the Russian Avant-Garde reached its height, developing the radical new styles of constructivism, futurism, and suprematism. Although the country still faced enormous challenges, there was a widespread sense of optimism and opportunity.

- Lenin's death in 1924 was followed by an extended and extremely divisive struggle for power in the Communist Party. By the latter part of the decade, Joseph Stalin had emerged as the victor, and he immediately set the country on a much different course. The NEP was scrapped, to be replaced by an economic plan dictated from the top. Agricultural lands were collectivized, creating large, state-run farms. Industrial development was pushed along at breakneck speed, and production was almost entirely diverted from consumer products to capital equipment. Art and literature were placed under much tighter control, and the radical energy of the Russian Avant-Garde was replaced by the solemn grandeur of Soviet realism. Religion was violently repressed, as churches were closed, destroyed, or converted to other uses. Stalin purged all opposition to himself within the party as well as all opposition to party policy in the country. By the end of the 1930s, the Soviet Union had become a country in which life was more strictly regulated than ever before. Experimentation had ended, and discipline was the rule of the day.
- With the outbreak of the Second World War, the Soviet Union found itself unprepared for the conflict. Political purges had stripped the military of much of its experienced leadership, and industrial production was slow in converting from civil to military production. Although its non-aggression pact with Germany (1939) served for a while to forestall an attack by Hitler, the Soviets were caught by surprise by the invasion of June 1941. By the end of the year, the Germans had seized most of the Soviet territory in the west, surrounded St. Petersburg (having been renamed once again as Leningrad), and advanced to within a few hundred miles of Moscow. With tremendous effort, a Russian counter-offensive pushed back the advance on the capital, but in the summer of 1942 the Germans launched a new invasion against the southern front in an attempt to gain control of the rail center of Stalingrad on the Volga and the vital Caucasus oil fields. Despite an overwhelming disadvantage in numbers and inferior weaponry, the Russian army succeeded in holding out against the enormous German army. In November, a relieving force managed to encircle the attackers and compel the

surrender of the entire force, marking a decisive turning point in the war. From that point onward, the Russian army remained on the attack. By 1944 they had driven the Germans back to Poland, and on May 2, 1945, Berlin fell.

- The Soviet Union emerged from World War II considerably stronger than it had been before the war. Although the country suffered enormous devastation and lost more than twenty million lives, it had gained considerable territory and now ranked as one of the two great world powers along with the United States. Nonetheless, life in the country continued to suffer. Industrial production was once again concentrated on heavy industry, agricultural failures produced widespread famine, political freedoms were restricted even further, and another huge wave of purges was carried out. As the Cold War got underway, an increasing proportion of the Soviet Union's resources were funnelled into military projects, further exacerbating the quality of life. Stalin remained in power until 1953, when he died of a cerebral haemorrhage.
- Almost immediately after the death of Stalin, many of the repressive policies that he had instituted were dismantled. Under the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev, political controls were to some degree relaxed, and cultural life experienced a brief period of revival. However, opposition to Khrushchev gradually gained strength within the party, and in 1964 he was ousted. In a notable break with historical traditions, Khrushchev was permitted to quietly retire. By the 1970s, Leonid Brezhnev, as general secretary of the Communist party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), had become the next prominent Soviet leader. His tenure was marked by a determined emphasis on domestic stability and an aggressive foreign policy.
- The country entered a decade-long period of stagnation, its rigid economy slowly deteriorating and its political climate becoming increasingly pessimistic. When Brezhnev died in 1982 he was succeeded as general secretary first by Yuri Andropov, head of the KGB, and then by Konstantin Chernenko, neither of whom managed to survive long enough to effect significant changes. In March of 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev became general secretary, the need for reforms was pressing. Gorbachev's platform for a new Soviet Union was founded on two now-famous terms--glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring). Like Khrushchev, Gorbachev intended to revitalize the Soviet economy by loosening up a bit on social control, opening some room for new ideas, relaxing control of the economy, and generally allowing for a little fresh air.
- Restructuring began in earnest, with a vigorous housecleaning of the bureaucracy and a significant investigation into corruption. Glasnost, however, lost some credibility right at the outset when it was discovered in April 1986 that the government had waited several days before admitting to the infamous nuclear disaster at Chernobyl--a reactor explosion that had thrown radioactive material

over a wide area of the country. Backed into a corner on Chernobyl, Gorbachev countered with the dramatic removal of all controls on reporting--and at that point the fresh air really began to howl. For the first time in decades, the problems of the country became subjects for open public discussion. Poverty, corruption, the enormous mismanagement of the country's resources, the unpopularity of the Afghan war, and a host of other problems and grievances were raised. Radical reform leaders emerged, including the new Moscow Party chief Boris Yeltsin, and prominent dissidents like Andrei Sakharov were able to voice their views for the first time.

- For some peculiar reason, the government found that it was the target of most of the criticism, but it also found that it wasn't any longer in much a position to do anything but try to move with the flow of events. Early in 1989, Soviet troops were withdrawn from Afghanistan. In the spring of 1989, the first open elections since 1917 were held, allowing voters a novel choice of more than one candidate for seats in the Congress of People's Deputies. The governments of the Soviet satellite states in Eastern Europe, subjected to the same rising tide of public criticism, fell one after the other in a rapid series of revolutions culminating in the fall of the Berlin wall.
- In 1990, the Soviet Union itself began to unravel. Its own constituent republics began to issue declarations of independence. In the Russian Republic, Yeltsin was elected chairman of the Parliament, taking a lead in the independence movement. Large scale strikes shattered the Communist Party's traditional claim to be the representative of workers' rights. Demonstrations against the government and the party intensified. The economy worsened, food shortages became a problem, and the crime rate began to skyrocket. Gorbachev, caught between popular demands for more radical reform and party demands for the re-imposition of strict control, failed to satisfy either side. The following summer, the radical reform movements became strong enough to openly defy the government. In the press, criticism of Gorbachev intensified. Yeltsin, on the other hand, was the overwhelming victor in June elections for the Russian presidency.
- On August 18, party conservatives made a desperate bid for power. A group led by Defense Minister Dmitry Yazov and Vice President Gennady Yanayev detained Gorbachev at his country retreat in the Crimea. After he refused to support the imposition of military law, the head of state was placed under house arrest. The next morning the coup leaders issued the announcement that Gorbachev had resigned and that a state of emergency had been declared. Military units were dispatched to enforce the authority of the new government, but they were met with overwhelming popular protest led by Yeltsin and the other presidents of the republics. After three days the attempted coup had collapsed. Gorbachev was reinstated, only to realize that his position had become completely obsolete. By

the end of the year the Soviet Union had been voted out of existence, to be replaced by a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). On December 25, Gorbachev resigned, and on midnight of December 31, the Soviet flag atop the Kremlin was replaced by the Russian tricolour.

[Historical information above extracted from the University of California (San Francisco)'s Russian Survival Guide – A Brief History of Russia. Maps courtesy of Online Encyclopaedia Britannica]

- **Themes in Russian and Soviet History**

- **The idea of the supreme leader**

Kievan Rus's link with Constantinople (the home of Eastern Orthodox Christianity) produced for Russia two lasting elements, the Eastern Orthodox faith and the idea of a supreme leader, God's vice regent. When Vladimir was choosing which faith to adopt he was impressed by the fact that Byzantine Emperors were already viewed as semi-divine personages. Tsar (first used by Ivan IV) is a corruption of Caesar and so Tsarist Russia could see itself as the Third Rome – ruled by an Emperor with connections to God and the home of Christianity. This partly explains the main governance model of autocracy, particularly up until the Revolution. But of course Soviet Russia, particularly under Stalin, still popular among many Russians today, was a time of ruthless autocracy. Although the Soviet leaders did not embrace the Orthodox church, nor did they destroy it. The magnificent cathedrals in the Kremlin (containing brilliant icons) were simply closed up during the Soviet period.

- **Cycles of autocracy and rebellion.**

The autocratic power of the ruler and the reactions of people on edge of subsistence created strong demands for change that led to increased measures of control and centralization of power; the main instruments for this being the Army, the bureaucracy, and the Church. This resulted in Russia moving between a centralized autocracy attempting to consolidate state power and a natural state of rebellion. Whilst true during the time of the tsars was it true after the revolution?

In the word of Robert C Williams, *"After 1917, those who thought of revolutions as cycles considered the Russian Revolution to be simply the end of another cycle in time. There was no single end of time, but many ends of cycles over time in relentless and unending repetition. In cyclic terms, the Russian Revolution seemed to mark simply another turn of fate's wheel, the "red wheel" of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Russian history appeared to be a series of cycles, moving through authority and rebellion to reaction and restoration. One autocracy replaced another. One time of*

troubles followed another. Serfs of the landowner became serfs of the collective farm. The Third International replaced the Third Rome. Tsar Lenin replaced Tsar Nicholas II. "

- **Cycles of reform and repression**

During Tsarist times the cycles of reform and repression increasingly polarized the nation between defenders of the tsarist autocracy and revolutionaries calling for the wholesale abolition of traditional political and social values in the name of radical socialist or liberal visions.

A cycle of reforms to catch up with the West tended always to create a conservative backlash against the reforms. Thus Russia would fall further behind the West leading to more reform and its consequent rejection. Peter the Great in the early 1700's, Catherine the Great in the later 1700's, Alexander I in the early 1800's, and Alexander II in the mid 1800's' all attempted reforms, which led to conservative responses with the cycle repeating.

Michael Lynch, writing about Tsar Alexander II says: *"The fact is that Alexander II suffered from the besetting dilemma that afflicted all the reforming tsars from Peter the Great onwards - how to achieve reform without damaging the interests of the privileged classes that made up imperial Russia. It was a question that was never satisfactorily answered because it was never properly faced. Whenever their plans did not work out or became difficult to achieve, the Romanovs abandoned reform and resorted to coercion and repression."*

The table below shows the tendency toward reform or repression of five Romanov tsars. The interesting case is that of the last tsar, Nicholas II, known for his vacillating ways, appears in both columns.

Tsar	Period of Rule	Repression	Reform
Alexander I	24	No	Education/less censorship
Nicholas I	30	Secret police/more censorship/books banned	No
Alexander II	26	No	Emancipation of serfs/less military service/local government
Alexander III	13	More power for police/pogroms	No

Nicolas II	23	Puts down dissent (Blood Sunday)/ suspends democracy	Forced to create elected legislature
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Since 1991 structural reform has tended to lower the standard of living for many Russians creating political opposition. Democratization opened the political channels for releasing frustrations. This translated into votes for anti-reform candidates. Russian voters, able to vote for opposition parties in the 1990s, often rejected economic reforms and yearned for the stability and personal security of the Soviet era. These were the groups that had enjoyed the benefits of Soviet-era state-controlled wages and prices, high state spending to subsidize priority sectors of the economy, protection from competition with foreign industries, and welfare entitlement programs.

- **Slavery and Serfdom.**

Slavery and serfdom developed in parallel with autocratic governance. Slavery originally arose as a result of the frequent wars on the southern steppes, in which the conquerors would enslave the vanquished. As land became scarcer between the late 15th and mid 17th centuries serfdom grew up alongside slavery. The Cossacks who kept the frontiers secure required peasants to cultivate their land-holdings and enserfed them to prevent them running away. Russian slavery developed because Russians sold themselves to richer people to escape destitution, a kind of welfare safety net.

Slavery declined and was finally abolished in the early 18th century because slaves neither paid taxes nor did military service, but the state needed peasants to do both. Serfdom however became more like slavery, so that in a sense the two institutions merged. Although serfdom was abolished in 1861, many of its restrictions survived: peasants continued to be bound to the land commune till it was abolished in 1907. The Soviet authorities however *de facto* restored serfdom when they collectivised the farms in the early 1930s, and only when internal passports, needed for free movement around the country, were at last granted to collective farmers in 1957, was half a millennium of bondage brought to an end.

- **Obstacles to reform**

The fall of communism and the creation in 1989 – 1991 of independent (former Eastern Bloc) republics, Russia’s transition has been harder than that of its former satellites as it has had to deal with a number of unique obstacles since the post-

Soviet transition.

- **The first major problem** facing Russia was the legacy of the Soviet Union's enormous commitment to the Cold War. In the late 1980s, the Soviet Union devoted a quarter of its gross economic output to the defense sector. At the time, the military-industrial complex employed at least one of every five adults in the Soviet Union. In some regions of Russia, at least half of the workforce was employed in defense plants. The end of the Cold War and the cutback in military spending hit such plants very hard, and it was often impossible for them to quickly retool equipment, retrain workers, and find new markets to adjust to the new post-Cold War and post-Soviet era.
- **A second obstacle**, partly related to the sheer vastness and diversity of the Russian landmass, was the sizable number of regions dominated by a single industrial employer. The concentration of production in a relatively small number of big state enterprises meant that many local governments were entirely dependent on the economic health of a single employer; when the Soviet Union collapsed and the economic ties between Soviet republics and even regions were severed, the production in the whole country dropped by more than fifty percent. Roughly half of Russia's cities had only one large industrial enterprise, and three fourths had no more than four. Consequently, the decrease in production caused tremendous unemployment and underemployment.
- **Thirdly**, Russia did not inherit a system of state social security and welfare from the USSR. Instead the companies, mainly large industrial firms, were traditionally responsible for a broad range of social welfare functions—building and maintaining housing for their workforces, and managing health, recreational, educational, and similar facilities. The towns in contrast possessed neither the apparatus nor the funds for the provision of basic social services. Industrial employers were left heavily dependent on their firms. Thus, economic transformation created severe problems in maintaining social welfare since local governments were unable to assume financial responsibility for these functions.

Finally, whilst the former Soviet population was not necessarily uneducated (literacy was nearly universal, and the educational level of the Soviet population was among the highest in the world with respect to science, engineering, and some technical disciplines), the Soviets devoted little to what would be described as liberal arts in the West. The former USSR state enterprise managers were skilled at coping with the demands on them under a system of planned production targets. The incentive system built into state institutions and industries encouraged skill in coping with state-run planned economy, but discouraged risk-and-reward centred behaviour of

market capitalism. Thus, almost no Soviet employees or managers had firsthand experience with decision-making in the conditions of a market economy.

Rasputin and the Romanovs

- Grigori Rasputin (1869 – 1916) had a significant influence over the lives of the Tsar Nikolai II and his wife Tsarina Alexandra. Anna Vyrubova, a close friend of the Tsarina, first introduced Rasputin to the Imperial family. She was devoted to Rasputin because she believed that, following a serious accident, he had made it possible for her to live her life, a life she owed to Rasputin.



(Images Tsarina Alexandra and Tsar Nicholas II, the Tsarina, Rasputin and the Tsarevich Alexis, Rasputin and lady friends)

- Although having three daughters the tsar and tsarina had despaired for many years at their inability to produce an heir to the throne. They sought the assistance of both mystics and faith healers and were relieved when in 1903 Alexandra gave birth to a long awaited heir to the throne, Alexis. However their happiness was short lived. The Tsarevich had inherited what appeared to be haemophilia from his great-grandmother Queen Victoria. While the Tsar accepted the boy's fate, Alexandra, turned to religion for a cure for her child; Rasputin was summoned to the palace.
- Rasputin did indeed manage to treat the illness, stopping the bleeding whenever it occurred. Those sceptical of his ability to cure though prayer claimed that he had stopped the bleeding through hypnosis. None-the-less Rasputin won the favour of the Imperial couple. The Tsar referred to him as "our friend" acknowledging the trust he had in the monk. Alexandra believed that the Rasputin had been sent by God in answer to her prayers and she made him

her confidant and spiritual guide. Not all members of the Romanov family looked on Rasputin so favourably. Nicholas' sister Olga refused his offers of spiritual guidance in her marital life.

- The couples desire to keep the child's illness a secret lead to rumors about the nature of the close relationship between Rasputin and the Tsarina. Accounts of his seduction of the Empress, her daughters, and Anna Vyubova amongst others were widely circulated in the press. Rasputin himself fuelled the rumors by bragging about the gifts and letters he received from the family. True or not, the stories were certainly in keeping with his behaviour outside the court. When drunk he would boast about his conquests and it was no secret that he had seduced many women and kept several mistresses.
- In addition to the sex scandals, speculation grew about Rasputin's apparent control over the Tsar and his influence on government. It was also suggested that Rasputin was a spy working for the Germans. The Tsarina was of German descent and therefore unpopular among more patriotic members of court. As Rasputin's behaviour became increasingly shameless and the rumors more outrageous, the reputation of the royal family was affected. Members of the Imperial parliament publicly denounced Rasputin and called for his removal from court.

Rasputin remained however in the Tsar's court as a confidante and personal advisor of the Tsarina. At this time he wrote his last letter to the family. *"I write and leave behind me this letter at St. Petersburg. I feel that I shall leave life before January 1st. I wish to make known to the Russian people, to Papa, to the Russian Mother and to the children, to the land of Russia, what they must understand. If I am killed by common assassins, and especially by my brothers the Russian peasants, you, Tsar of Russia, have nothing to fear, remain on your throne and govern, and you, Russian Tsar, will have nothing to fear for your children, they will reign for hundreds of years in Russia. But if I am murdered by boyars, nobles, and if they shed my blood, their hands will remain soiled with my blood, for twenty-five years they will not wash their hands from my blood. They will leave Russia. Brothers will kill brothers, and they will kill each other and hate each other, and for twenty-five years there will be no nobles in the country. Tsar of the land of Russia, if you hear the sound of the bell which will tell you that Grigory has been killed, you must know this: if it was your relations who have wrought my death then no one of your family, that is to say, none of your children or relations will remain alive for more than two years. They will be killed by the Russian people...I shall be killed. I am no longer among the living. Pray, pray, be strong, think of your blessed family."*

(Words written by Grigory Rasputin in a letter to the Tsarina Alexandra, 7 Dec 1916)

- Among Rasputin's growing group of enemies a small gathering of aristocrats and officers chose to silence Rasputin once and for all. They included **Prince Felix Yusupov**, the husband of the Tsar's niece Irina. As the heir to the vast family fortune he was an unlikely murderer. As well as being known for his good looks, the Prince's sexual fancies, including transvestitism and homosexuality were well known.
- The plan was relatively simple. Felix Yusupov was to befriend Rasputin and then lure Rasputin to his palace to be killed. Knowing of Rasputin's renowned appetite for sex, Felix told Rasputin that he could meet Irina at the palace for a possible sexual liaison. The night of December 16th had been chosen for the deed with the cover of night to aid in the disposal of the body. Due to the proximity of the palace to a police station the use of guns would not be possible, and, knowing of his taste for cakes and wine, these were laced with poison. Once the act was accomplished Rasputin's body was to be wrapped in a rug, weighted and thrown into the nearby river.
- Late in the night of the 16th of December 1916 the conspirators put their plan into action. Rasputin was collected and brought to the Yusupov palace (right) as planned and met with Felix in the basement dining room. This, however was all that went right for the conspirators that night.
- After an initial refusal to eat the cakes on the ground that they were too sweet and an uncharacteristic refusal to drink, the conspirators began to panic. However, Rasputin had a change of heart and ate and drank the poisoned foods. But the poison had no effect. After two hours Felix became worried and excused himself from Rasputin's company to consult his fellow conspirators. Shortly he returned with a concealed pistol and shot him.
- After some celebration with his friends, Felix returned to check on the body. To his surprise the body was still warm. When Felix started turning away, he noticed Rasputin's left eye start to flutter open. Rasputin sprang to his feet and rushed at Felix, grabbing his shoulders and neck. Felix struggled to get free and finally did so. He rushed upstairs shouting. The conspirators rushed down the stairs only to find that Rasputin was running out across the courtyard.
- They pursued Rasputin across the courtyard firing their pistols as they did so. One



bullet hit Rasputin in the head. Rasputin fell. His head was jerking but he tried to crawl. Considering this ordeal to be at an end the conspirators wrapped Rasputin's body in a rug and loaded it into the boot of the car, took it to the River Neva and pushed it through a hole in the ice into the water.

- Despite the trauma that Rasputin had already endured there is evidence that he did not die for some time after entering the frozen river. It seems that some of the weights tied to Rasputin's body came free and he floated downstream for sometime before sinking. When his body was recovered some days later it was evident that Rasputin had been alive in the water and had been struggling to untie his bindings. Rasputin's body was buried at the Feodorov Cathedral in Tsarskoe Selo on December 22nd 1916. A small funeral was held.
- The unusual story of Grigory Rasputin did not end, as would be expected with his death. Rasputin's grave was later reopened and the body removed. It was taken from Tsarskoe Selo to St Petersburg, then again out onto the Vyborg highway in order for a secret burial, but the car became stuck, and so the body was incinerated on a hastily created pyre at the side of the road.
- From the extensive books and articles written about his life it would appear that Rasputin led a life that most others in his position would have gone out of their way to conceal. Yet it would seem that the tales of Rasputin's affairs with the Tsar and Tsarina's daughters, of his binge drinking and of his flagrant debauchery were public knowledge throughout his time in the courts of the tsar. Accounts of Rasputin during early his years in St. Petersburg tell of a dirty, unwashed peasant from Siberia who was an embarrassment to the upper classes. He masqueraded as a holy man even though he was never officially ordained and publicly practiced as a healer even though there was only one account of him ever having healed someone. How could such a repulsive man rise so high in society?
- Fortune played its part in Rasputin's rise to power. When he arrived in St. Petersburg, church leaders were desperately searching for a man such as himself, a person with religious influence, but who also had power over the poorer people of the land. In Rasputin they found both of these qualities: a holy man with the power to heal the sick who was also an illiterate peasant from Siberia. Rasputin was purportedly a hugely charismatic man- He once managed to convince the minister that he had just seen the Virgin Mary. His involvement in the Skopsty sect (a religious sect that believed that to get close to God one should commit sins) gave him the perfect excuse for his lifestyle while remaining a credible holy man. The trust he won by managing Alexeis haemophilia enabled Rasputin to become a manipulative advisor to the Tsar.
- For the most part Rasputin will be remembered for the role he played in the

downfall of Romanovs. He deliberately alienated persons by promoting (to the Tsar) the views of Alexandra and by advocating the most injudicious ministerial appointments. It is however unclear what Rasputin was planning to do with the power he had gained. He certainly did seem to have an interest in obtaining a lasting peace between Russia and Germany, something that, if successful, could have had a profound impact on the history of the twentieth century.

- To the west, Rasputin was a symbol of Russia's backwardness, superstition, irrationality and licentiousness, and an object of sensational interest; to the Russian Communists, he represented all that was evil in the old regime and had been overcome in the revolution. Yet to the ordinary Russian people, he remained a symbol of the voice of the peasantry, and many (Russians) to this day reject the myths, honouring the man. After the fall of the Communist government, key documentation was discovered, and the Church considered canonizing Rasputin as a martyr.
- Much of this controversy surrounding Rasputin's life centres on the power he had over others. Rasputin's enemies often attributed his skills of seduction, his mystical healing ability and influence on political figures to hypnotism. While people often reported feeling compelled to do things while in his presence, many examples of his power have more rational explanations. Despite his lax attitude towards personal hygiene, Rasputin was notorious as a womaniser.
- Descriptions of Rasputin's assassination rely heavily on the accounts of the perpetrators or their co-conspirators. It is quite likely that Rasputin's resilience was greatly exaggerated to cover up their own ineptitude. It is claimed that when an autopsy was performed on Rasputin's body it was found that he actually died of drowning. This raises the question as to whether he had actually been poisoned, shot and beaten before being thrown into the river. Rasputin was reported to have had visions all his life, some of which foretold the future. The most famous of these premonitions relates to his own death and is described in the letter he sent to the Tsar. Reports by his secretary that Rasputin transferred all his money into his daughter's account shortly before he died would indeed suggest that he knew his death was imminent. However, given the level of hostility towards the monk it is unlikely that Rasputin would have needed clairvoyant powers to predict his assassination.

The Legacy of World War II in Europe

- The outcome of World War II had far-reaching implications for most of the world. Many millions of lives had been lost and Germany was divided into four parts, which were controlled by the Allied Powers— the United States, UK, France and the Soviet Union. The war can be acknowledged as the catalyst for many continental, national and local phenomena, such as the redrawing of European borders, the birth of the UK's welfare state, the communist takeover of China and Eastern Europe, the creation of Israel, and the division of Germany and Korea and later of Vietnam.

In addition, many organizations have roots in the Second World War; for example, the United Nations, the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation, and the International Monetary Fund. Technologies, such as nuclear fission, the electronic computer and the jet engine, also appeared during this period. A multipolar world was replaced by a bipolar one dominated by the two most powerful victors, the United States and Soviet Union, which became known as the superpowers.

- World War II was unusual in that for the first time in perhaps half a millennium, civilians were killed in greater numbers than soldiers, despite the war being the bloodiest 'soldiers' war in history. It is estimated that about 30,000,000 soldiers died in the conflict from battle, while around 50,000,000 civilians died.
 - Beyond the massive devastation and the unimaginable waste of human life, World War II brutally altered European social life. Civilian life was plagued by shortages of food, fuel, medicine. "Ersatz," or artificial substitutes, were devised, the most important being the German discovery of the means of producing artificial gasoline. But the most pressing problem was housing, and this was most drastic in Germany. For example on August 24, 1944, the German city of Koenigsberg was attacked by 175 British bombers. The estimated damage of the raid was one hundred and thirty-four thousand people being made homeless, and sixty-one thousand people forced to live in badly damaged houses. After the war, new cities had to be built, e.g. Coventry, Rotterdam, and Berlin. At the end of the war, millions of refugees were homeless, the European economy had collapsed, and most of the European industrial infrastructure was destroyed.
- **Border revisions and population transfers**
 - As a result of the new borders drawn by the victors, large populations suddenly found themselves in hostile territory. The main beneficiary of these changes was

the Soviet Union, which expanded its borders at the expense of Germany, Finland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Japan. The Soviet Union also acquired the three independent states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which had declared their neutrality before the outbreak of the war.. The Baltic States were occupied and annexed early in the war in agreement with the Nazis according to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, then re-conquered in 1944.

- A minor temporary beneficiary was France, which in 1947 annexed the German state of Saar as an independent protectorate under French economic control. Poland was compensated for its losses to the Soviet Union by receiving most of East Germany. Germany lost roughly a quarter of its territory.
- Numerous Germans were expelled, mostly from the ceded German territories and from the Sudetenland. Many died, and historians debate to this day the death rate. Several hundreds of thousands of Poles, and Japanese were also expelled.

- **Reparations**

- The eastern victors demanded payment of war reparations from the defeated nations, and in the Paris Peace Treaty, the Soviet Union's enemies—Hungary, Finland and Romania—were required to pay \$300,000,000 each to the Soviet Union. Italy was required to pay \$360,000,000, shared chiefly between Greece, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union. The much larger reparations from occupied Germany to Russia were to be paid not by goods or money but by the transfer of capital goods, such as dismantled manufacturing plants. A separate Reparations to the western victors consisted mainly of free coal deliveries as well as of machinery and dismantled factories, of which the majority went to France, with some going to Britain. Germany and Italy also paid in the form of POW-provided forced labour; 100,000 in Britain and 700,000 in France. The U.S settled for appropriating German patents as well as all German company assets in the U.S. The "intellectual reparations", such as patents and blueprints, taken by the U.S. and the UK amounted to close to \$10 billion, equivalent of around \$100 billion in 2006 terms. The program of also acquiring German scientists and technicians for the U.S. was also used to deny the expertise of German scientists to the Soviet Union.
- The U.S. eventually stopped the shipment of dismantled factories from the U.S. zone of occupation east because of increasing friction with Russia, part of which was caused by Russian refusal to provide the western occupation zones with surplus food from the eastern occupation zone which had been the breadbasket of Germany. Western Allied dismantling of industry in the Saar area and Ruhr area

was virtually completed by 1950.

- **Plans for Germany**

- The initial plans proposed by the United States were harsh. The Morgenthau Plan of 1944 called for stripping Germany of the industrial resources required for war and designed to reduce German economic might and to destroy Germany's capability to remilitarise. The main industrial areas of the Ruhr and Silesia were to be removed from Germany, as were Germany's main sources of coal and iron, namely Saar and the German speaking parts of Alsace-Lorraine, which were to be once again under French occupation.
- These policies were however to some degree counteracted by the military governor of the U.S. zone in Germany, General Lucius D Clay, who did his best to use whatever loopholes the directives allowed for, particularly for actions that would reduce "unrest" and "famine". This slowed down the rate factories were being destroyed and increased the food rations to 1,500 calories per day (half the normal UK rations). The problems brought on by these types of policies became apparent to many after a year of occupation. Germany had long been the industrial giant of Europe, and its poverty held back the general European recovery. The continued scarcity in Germany also led to considerable expenses for the occupying powers, which were obligated to try to make up the most important shortfalls. The Western powers' worst fear was that the poverty and hunger would drive the Germans to communism.
- The Truman administration finally realized that economic recovery in Europe could not go forward without the reconstruction of the German industrial base on which it had previously had been dependent. In July 1947, President Truman replaced previous punitive policies with one, which instead stressed that "[a]n orderly, prosperous Europe requires the economic contributions of a stable and productive Germany."

- **Marshall Plan**

- In view of the continued poverty and famine in Europe, and with the onset of the Cold War that made it important to bring as much of Germany as possible into the western camp, it became apparent that a change of policy was required. The most notable example of this change was a plan established by USA Secretary of State, George Marshall, the "European Recovery Program", better known as the Marshall Plan, which called for the U.S. Congress to allocate billions of dollars for the reconstruction of Europe.

- For western Germany, the psychological impact of the Marshall Plan was large. In monetary terms, Germany received only half of what Britain received; in addition, Germany was eventually forced to repay the majority of the money. But it meant that the occupation policy was officially changed, and thus the West German people finally could start rebuilding their new nation. The East German population were not included, and their attempt to revolt against the Russians a few years later was quickly put down.

- **End of European Imperialism**

- The destruction of Europe and the destruction of a significant portion of the United Kingdom's cities (via aerial bombing) affected the reputation of the imperial nations in the eyes of their colonies. Coupled with the enormous expense incurred in the war, an empire was perceived to be an unnecessarily expensive possession. This led to the rapid decolonisation process that would see the empires of the United Kingdom and others swept away.
- These tendencies helped India and Pakistan become independent from the British Empire in August 1947. Soon Malaysia and other South East Asian colonies also became independent. The Netherlands lost Dutch East Indies, and France lost Indochina. In just a few decades, most Asian and African colonies were independent.

- **Superpowers**

- The immense destruction wrought over the course of the war caused a sharp decline in the influence of the great powers. After the war, the USSR and the United States both became formidable forces. The U.S. suffered very little during the war and because of military and industrial exports became a formidable manufacturing power. This led to a period of wealth and prosperity for the U.S. in the fields of industry, agriculture and technology.
- While the homeland of the United States was untouched by the war, quite the opposite was true in the Soviet Union. At the height of the Axis advance in 1941, the Wehrmacht got within 20 kilometers of Moscow. Although the Nazis were pushed back from Moscow by Soviet winter counter thrusts in early 1942, the Wehrmacht's Operation Blue in summer 1942 pushed Russian forces northeast of the Black Sea to Stalingrad and southeast of the Black Sea to the approaches to Grozny at the foot of the Caucasus Mountains. Therefore the Germans controlled all of Soviet territory west of Leningrad, Moscow, and Stalingrad, from the Baltic Sea to the Caucasus. During the initial German invasion, Operation Barbarossa, the

use of scorched earth tactics by both sides left the western portion of the Soviet Union almost totally destroyed. Agricultural land was burned, livestock exterminated, infrastructure dismantled or destroyed and entire towns flattened. All of this land was part of more battles as the Red Army swept west in 1943-1944. Although the Soviets were able to salvage some heavy industry and ship it to safer areas around the Ural Mountains, much of the USSR's pre-war industry fell into the hands of the Germans.

- The Soviet Union also suffered unprecedented casualties. From 1941 to 1945 the Red Army lost over 10 million killed and more than 18 million wounded. Civilian losses were also immense; most estimates range from 14 to 17 million civilians killed. Most civilians in the occupied lands in the western USSR were either shot or left to starve or freeze to death by the Germans. Additionally, the majority of Holocaust victims, as well as the perpetration of the Holocaust, were from the Eastern Front. The total deaths resulting from the war amounted to roughly fourteen percent of the USSR's and sixteen percent of Poland's total pre-war population. By comparison, the United States lost about 0.3% of its total pre-war population.
- Because of the immense loss of life and the destruction of land and industrial capacity, the USSR was at an economic and strategic disadvantage relative to the United States (The USA had the Atomic Bomb). The USSR was, however, in a better economic and strategic position than any other continental European power. By the end of the war in 1945 the Red Army was very large and battle-tested and occupied all of Eastern and Central Europe as well as what was to become East Germany. In areas they occupied, the Red Army installed governments they felt would be friendly towards the USSR. Given the tremendous suffering of the Soviet people during the war, Soviet leadership wanted a "buffer zone" of friendly governments between Russia and Western European nations.

- **European Union**

- The European Union grew out of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which was founded in 1951 by the six founding members: Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg (the Benelux countries) and West Germany, France and Italy. Its purpose was to pool the steel and coal resources of the member states, and to support the economies of the participating countries. As a side effect, the ECSC helped defuse tensions between countries which had recently been enemies in the war. In time this economic merger grew, adding members and broadening in scope, to become the European Economic Community, and later the European Union.

- **United Nations**

- Because the League of Nations had failed to actively prevent the war, in 1945 a new international alliance was considered and then created, the United Nations (UN). The UN also was responsible for the initial recognition of the establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948, in part as a response to the Holocaust.
- The UN operates within the parameters of the United Nations Charter. Unlike its predecessor; the United Nations has taken a more active role in the world, such as fighting disease and providing humanitarian aid to nations in distress. The UN also served as the diplomatic front line during the Cold War. The biggest advantage the United Nations has over the League of Nations is the presence of world superpowers such as the United States and Russia, for the League had little actual international power because of the absence of these nations.



[The UN headquarters in New York and part of the now-defunct Berlin Wall, a symbol of the Cold War]

- **Cold War**

- The end of World War II is seen by many as marking the end of the United Kingdom's position as a global superpower and the catalyst for the emergence of the United States and the Soviet Union as the dominant powers in the world. Friction had been building up between the two before the end of the war, and with the collapse of Nazi Germany relations spiralled downward.
- In the areas occupied by Western Allied troops, pre-war governments were re-established or new democratic governments were created; in the areas occupied by Soviet troops, including the territories of former Allies such as Poland, communist states were created. These became satellites of the Soviet Union. Germany was partitioned into four zones of occupation. The American, British

and French zones were grouped a few years later into West Germany and the Soviet zone became East Germany. Austria was once again separated from Germany and it, too, was divided into four zones of occupation, which eventually reunited and became the republic of Austria. The partitions were initially informal, but as the relationship between the victors deteriorated, the military lines of demarcation became the de facto country boundaries. The Cold War had begun, and soon two blocs emerged: NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

- The partitioning of Europe and Germany and Berlin persisted until the crumbling of the Eastern Bloc in 1989/1990. The Berlin Wall fell on 9 November 1989.

- **Technology**

- The massive research and development involved in the Manhattan Project in order to quickly achieve a working nuclear weapon design greatly impacted the scientific community, among other things creating a network of national laboratories in the United States. In addition, the pressing for numerous calculations for various things like code-breaking (Colossus) and ballistics tables kick-started the development of electronic computer technology.

- **Social effects**

- One of the social effects which affected almost all participants to a certain degree was the increased participation of women in the workforce (where they took the place of many men during the war years), though this was somewhat reduced in the decades following the war, as changing society forced many to return to home and family.
- According to historian Antony Beevor in his book *Berlin - The Downfall 1945* the advancing Red Army had left a massive trail of raped women and girls of all ages behind them. Between several tens of thousands to more than 2,000,000 were victims of rape, often repeatedly. This continued for several years. As a result of this trauma, it is believed that East German women's attitude towards sex was affected for a long time, and it caused social problems between men and women. Russian authorities dispute the event. The German soldiers left many war children behind in nations such as France and Denmark, which were occupied for an extended period. After the war, the children and their mothers often suffered recriminations.
- The casualties experienced by the combatant nations impacted the

demographic profile of the post war populations. One study found that the male to female sex ratio in the German state of Bavaria fell as low as 60% for the most severely affected age cohort (those between 21 and 23 years old in 1946). This same study found that out-of-wedlock births spiked from approximately 10-15% during the inter-war years up to 22% at the end of the war. This increase in out-of-wedlock births was attributed to a change in the marriage market caused by the decline in the sex-ratio.

- **Military effects**

- In the military sphere, World War II marked the coming of age of airpower. Advanced aircraft and guided missiles (developed late in the war) made the battleship, once the queen of the world's oceans, and fixed fortifications such as coastal artillery obsolete. While the pendulum continues to swing in this never-ending competition, air powers are now a full partner in any military action. Perhaps most important of all, World War II ushered in the nuclear era, with the dropping of the first atomic bombs on the Japanese of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

- **Trials for war crimes**

- After the war, many high-ranking Germans were hanged for war crimes, as well as the mass murder of the Jews in the Holocaust committed mainly on the area of General Government (a part of Nazi controlled Poland). Although the deliberate targeting of civilians was already defined as a war crime and it had been used extensively by both sides, most notably in Poland, Britain, Germany and Japan, those responsible were never tried for it. In other countries, notably in Finland, the Allies demanded the political leadership to be prosecuted in "war-responsibility trials."

(The above discussion draws upon Wikipedia's – Effects of World war II)

The Killing Zone of Eastern Europe (Hitler and Stalin)

The following article by Anne Applebaum was published in the *New York Review of Books*, November 2010 and is a review of the books *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* by Timothy Snyder and *Stalin's Genocides* by Norman M. Naimark. The shaded areas in the map below are what Timothy Snyder calls the 'Bloodlands'.



Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov, center, arriving in Berlin to meet with Adolf Hitler, November 12, 1940. At front left are German Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel and Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop



Once, in an attempt to explain the history of his country to outsiders, the Polish poet Czesław Miłosz described the impact of war, occupation, and the Holocaust

on ordinary morality. Mass violence, he explained, could shatter a man's sense of natural justice. In normal times, had he stumbled upon a corpse on the street, he would have called the police. A crowd would have gathered, and much talk and comment would have ensued. Now he knows he must avoid the dark body lying in the gutter, and refrain from asking unnecessary questions....

Murder became ordinary during wartime, wrote Miłosz, and was even regarded as legitimate if it was carried out on behalf of the resistance. In the name of patriotism, young boys from law-abiding, middle-class families became hardened criminals, thugs for whom "the killing of a man presents no great moral problem." Theft became ordinary too, as did falsehood and fabrication. People learned to sleep through sounds that would once have roused the whole neighbourhood: the rattle of machine-gun fire, the cries of men in agony, the cursing of the policeman dragging the neighbours away.

For all of these reasons, Miłosz explained, "the man of the East cannot take Americans [or other Westerners] seriously." Because they hadn't undergone such experiences, they couldn't seem to fathom what they meant, and couldn't seem to imagine how they had happened either. "Their resultant lack of imagination," he concluded, "is appalling."¹

But Miłosz's bitter analysis did not go far enough. Almost sixty years after the poet wrote those words, it is no longer enough to say that we Westerners lack imagination. Timothy Snyder, a Yale historian whose past work has ranged from Habsburg Vienna to Stalinist Kiev, takes the point one step further. In *Bloodlands*, a brave and original history of mass killing in the twentieth century, he argues that we still lack any real knowledge of what happened in the eastern half of Europe in the twentieth century. And he is right: if we are American, we think "the war" was something that started with Pearl Harbour in 1941 and ended with the atomic bomb in 1945. If we are British, we remember the Blitz of 1940 (and indeed are commemorating it energetically this year) and the liberation of Belsen. If we are French, we remember Vichy and the Resistance. If we are Dutch we think of Anne Frank. Even if we are German we know only a part of the story.

Snyder's ambition is to persuade the West—and the rest of the world—to see the war in a broader perspective. He does so by disputing popular assumptions about victims, death tolls, and killing methods—of which more in a moment—but above all about dates and geography. The title of this book, *Bloodlands*, is not a metaphor. Snyder's "bloodlands," which others have called "borderlands," run from Poznan in the West to Smolensk in the East, encompassing modern Poland, the Baltic States, Ukraine, Belarus, and the edge of western Russia. This is the region that experienced not one but two—and sometimes three—wartime occupations. This is also the region that suffered the most casualties and

endured the worst physical destruction.

More to the point, this is the region that experienced the worst of both Stalin's and Hitler's ideological madness. During the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s, the lethal armies and vicious secret policemen of two totalitarian states marched back and forth across these territories, each time bringing about profound ethnic and political changes. In this period, the city of Lwów was occupied twice by the Red Army and once by the Wehrmacht. After the war ended it was called L'viv, not Lwów, it was no longer in eastern Poland but in western Ukraine, and its Polish and Jewish pre-war population had been murdered or deported and replaced by ethnic Ukrainians from the surrounding countryside. In this same period, the Ukrainian city of Odessa was occupied first by the Romanian army and then by the Wehrmacht before being reoccupied by the Soviet Union. Each time power changed hands there were battles and sieges, and each time an army retreated from the city it blew up the harbour or massacred Jews. Similar stories can be told about almost any place in the region.

This region was also the site of most of the politically motivated killing in Europe—killing that began not in 1939 with the invasion of Poland, but in 1933, with the famine in Ukraine. Between 1933 and 1945, fourteen million people died there, not in combat but because someone made a deliberate decision to murder them. These deaths took place in the bloodlands, and not accidentally so: "Hitler and Stalin rose to power in Berlin and Moscow," writes Snyder, "but their visions of transformation concerned above all the lands between."

Beginning in the 1930s, Stalin conducted his first utopian agricultural experiment in Ukraine, where he collectivized the land and conducted a "war" for grain with the kulaks, the "wealthy" peasants (whose wealth sometimes consisted of a single cow). His campaign rapidly evolved into a war against Ukrainian peasant culture itself, culminating in a mass famine in 1933. In that same year, Hitler came to power and began dreaming of creating *Lebensraum*, living space, for German colonists in Poland and Ukraine, a project that could only be realized by eliminating the people who lived there. In 1941, the Nazis also devised the Hunger Plan, a scheme to feed German soldiers and civilians by starving Polish and Soviet citizens. Once again, the Nazis decided, the produce of Ukraine's collective farms would be confiscated and redistributed: "Socialism in one country would be supplanted by socialism for the German race."

Not accidentally, the fourteen million victims of these ethnic and political schemes were mostly not Russians or Germans, but the peoples who inhabited the lands in between. Stalin and Hitler shared contempt for the very notions of Polish, Ukrainian, and Baltic independence, and jointly strove to eliminate the elites of those countries. Following their invasion of western Poland in 1939, the

Germans arrested and murdered Polish professors, priests, intellectuals, and politicians. Following their invasion of eastern Poland in 1939, the Soviet secret police arrested and murdered Polish professors, priests, intellectuals, and politicians. A few months later, Stalin ordered the murder of some 20,000 Polish officers at Katyn and in other forests nearby as well.

Stalin and Hitler also shared a hatred for the Jews who had long flourished in this region, and who were far more numerous there than in Germany or anywhere else in Western Europe. Snyder points out that Jews were fewer than one percent of the German population when Hitler came to power in 1933, and many did manage to flee. Hitler's vision of a "Jew-free" Europe could thus only be realized when the Wehrmacht invaded the bloodlands, which is where most of the Jews of Europe actually lived. Of the 5.4 million Jews who died in the Holocaust, four million were from the bloodlands. The vast majority of the rest—including the 165,000 German Jews who did not escape—were taken to the bloodlands to be murdered. After the war, Stalin became paranoid about those Soviet Jews who remained, in part because they wanted to perpetuate the memory of the Holocaust. At the end of his life he purged and arrested many thousands of them, though he died too soon to carry out another mass murder.

Above all, this was the region where Nazism and Soviet communism clashed. Although they had signed the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact in 1939, agreeing to divide the bloodlands between them, Stalin and Hitler also came to hate each other. This hatred proved fatal to both German and Soviet soldiers who had the bad luck to become prisoners of war. Both dictators treated captured enemies with deadly utilitarianism. For the Germans, Soviet POWs were expendable: they consumed calories needed by others and, unlike Western POWs, were considered to be subhuman. And so they were deliberately starved to death in hideous "camps" in Poland, Russia, and Belarus that were not camps but death zones. Pinned behind barbed wire, often in open fields without food, medicine, shelter, or bedding, they died in extraordinary numbers and with great rapidity. On any given day in the autumn of 1941, as many Soviet POWs died as did British and American POWs during the entire war. In total more than three million perished, mostly within a period of a few months.

In essence the Soviet attitude toward German POWs was no different. When, following the Battle of Stalingrad, the Red Army suddenly found itself with 90,000 prisoners, it also put them in open fields without any food or shelter. Over the next few months, at least half a million German and Axis soldiers would die in Soviet captivity. But as the Red Army began to win the war, it tried harder to keep captives alive, the better to deploy them as forced laborers. According to Soviet statistics, 2.3 million German soldiers and about a million of their allies (from Romania, Italy, Hungary, and Austria, but also France and Holland)

eventually wound up in the labour camps of the Gulag, along with some 600,000 Japanese whose fate has been almost forgotten in their native land.

Some were released after the war and others were released in the 1950s. There wasn't necessarily any political logic to these decisions. At one point in 1947, at the height of the postwar famine, the NKVD unexpectedly released several hundred thousand war prisoners. There was no political explanation: the Soviet leadership simply hadn't enough food to keep them all alive. And in the postwar world there were pressures—most of all from the USSR's new East German client state—to keep them alive. The Nazis had operated without such constraints.

Though some of the anecdotes and statistics may be surprising to those who don't know this part of the world, scholars will find nothing in *Bloodlands* that is startlingly new. Historians of the region certainly know that three million Soviet soldiers starved to death in Nazi camps, where most of the Holocaust took place in the East, and that Hitler's plans for Ukraine were no different from Stalin's. Snyder's original contribution is to treat all of these episodes—the Ukrainian famine, the Holocaust, Stalin's mass executions, the planned starvation of Soviet POWs, postwar ethnic cleansing—as different facets of the same phenomenon. Instead of studying Nazi atrocities or Soviet atrocities separately, as many others have done, he looks at them together. Yet Snyder does not exactly compare the two systems either. His intention, rather, is to show that the two systems committed the same kinds of crimes at the same times and in the same places, that they aided and abetted one another, and above all that their interaction with one another led to more mass killing than either might have carried out alone.

He also wants to show that this interaction had consequences for the inhabitants of the region. From a great distance in time and space, we in the West have the luxury of discussing the two systems in isolation, comparing and contrasting, judging and analysing, engaging in theoretical arguments about which was worse. But people who lived under both of them, in Poland or in Ukraine, experienced them as part of a single historical moment. Snyder explains:

"The Nazi and Soviet regimes were sometimes allies, as in the joint occupation of Poland [from 1939–1941]. They sometimes held compatible goals as foes: as when Stalin chose not to aid the rebels in Warsaw in 1944 [during the Warsaw uprising], thereby allowing the Germans to kill people who would later have resisted communist rule.... Often the Germans and the Soviets goaded each other into escalations that cost more lives than the policies of either state by itself would have.

In some cases, the atrocities carried out by one power eased the way for the

other. When the Nazis marched into western Belarus, Ukraine, and the Baltic states in 1941, they entered a region from which the Soviet secret police had deported hundreds of thousands of people in the previous few months, and shot thousands of prisoners in the previous few days. The conquering Germans were thus welcomed by some as “liberators” who might save the population from a genuinely murderous regime. They were also able to mobilize popular anger at these recent atrocities, and in some places to direct some of that anger at local Jews who had, in the public imagination—and sometimes in reality—collaborated with the Soviet Union. It is no accident that the acceleration of the Holocaust occurred at precisely this moment.”

To look at the history of mid-twentieth-century Europe in this way also has consequences for Westerners. Among other things, Snyder asks his readers to think again about the most famous films and photographs taken at Belsen and Buchenwald by the British and American soldiers who liberated those camps. These pictures, which show starving, emaciated people, walking skeletons in striped uniforms, stacks of corpses piled up like wood, have become the most enduring images of the Holocaust. Yet the people in these photographs were mostly not Jews: they were forced laborers who had been kept alive because the German war machine needed them to produce weapons and uniforms. Only when the German state began to collapse in early 1945 did they begin to starve to death in large numbers.

The vast majority of Hitler’s victims, Jewish and otherwise, never saw a concentration camp. Although about a million people died because they were sent to do forced labour in German concentration camps, some ten million died in killing fields in Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia—that means they were taken to the woods, sometimes with the assistance of their neighbours, and shot—as well as in German starvation zones and German gas chambers. These gas chambers were not “camps,” Snyder argues, though they were sometimes adjacent to camps, as at Auschwitz:

“Under German rule, the concentration camps and the death factories operated under different principles. A sentence to the concentration camp Belsen was one thing, a transport to the death factory Belzec something else. The first meant hunger and labour, but also the likelihood of survival; the second meant immediate and certain death by asphyxiation. This, ironically, is why people remember Belsen and forget Belzec.”

He makes a similar point about Stalin’s victims, arguing that although a million died in the Soviet Gulag between 1933 and 1945, an additional six million died from politically induced Soviet famines and in Soviet killing fields. I happen to think Snyder’s numbers are a little low—the figure for Gulag deaths is certainly

higher than a million—but the proportions are probably correct. In the period between 1930 and 1953, the number of people who died in labour camps—from hunger, overwork, and cold, while living in wooden barracks behind barbed wire—is far lower than the number who died violently from machine-gun fire combined with the number who starved to death because their village was deprived of food.

The image we have of the prisoner in wooden shoes, dragging himself to work every morning, losing his humanity day by day—the image also created in the brilliant writings of Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn—is in this sense somewhat misleading. In fact, prisoners who could work had at least a chance of staying alive. Prisoners who were too weak to work, or for whom work could not be organized because of war and chaos, were far more likely to die. The 5.4 million Jews murdered in the Holocaust mostly died instantly, in gas chambers or mobile vans or in silent forests. We have no photographs of them, or of their corpses.

The chronological and geographical arguments presented in *Bloodlands* also complicate the debate over the proper use of the word “genocide.” As not everybody now remembers, this word (from the Greek *genos*, tribe, and the French *-cide*) was coined in 1943 by a Polish lawyer of Jewish descent, Raphael Lemkin, who had long been trying to draw the attention of the international community to what he at first called “the crime of barbarity.” In 1933, inspired by news of the Armenian massacre, he had proposed that the League of Nations treat mass murder committed “out of hatred towards a racial, religious or social collectivity” as an international crime. After he fled Nazi-occupied Poland in 1940, Lemkin intensified his efforts. He persuaded the Nuremberg prosecutors to use the word “genocide” during the trials, though not in the verdict. He also got the new United Nations to draft a Convention on Genocide. Finally, after much debate, the General Assembly passed this convention in 1948.

As the Stanford historian Norman Naimark explains in *Stalin’s Genocides*, the UN’s definition of genocide was deliberately narrow: “Acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.” This was because Soviet diplomats had demanded the exclusion of any reference to social, economic, and political groups. Had they left these categories in, prosecution of the USSR for the murder of aristocrats (a social group), kulaks (an economic group), or Trotskyites (a political group) would have been possible.

Although Lemkin himself continued to advocate a broader definition of the term, the idea that the word “genocide” can refer only to the mass murder of an ethnic group has stuck. In fact, until recently the term was used almost exclusively to

refer to the Holocaust, the one “genocide” that is recognized as such by almost everybody: the international community, the former Allies, even the former perpetrators.

Perhaps because of that unusually universal recognition, the word has more recently acquired almost magical qualities. Nations nowadays campaign for their historical tragedies to be recognized as “genocide,” and the term has become a political weapon both between and within countries. The disagreement between Armenians and Turks over whether the massacre of Armenians after World War I was “genocide” has been the subject of a resolution introduced in the US Congress. The leaders of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine campaigned to have the Ukrainian famine recognized as “genocide” in international courts (and in January 2010, a court in Kiev did convict Stalin and other high officials of “genocide” against the Ukrainian nation). But the campaign was deliberately dropped when their more pro-Russian (or post-Soviet) opponents came to power. They have since deleted a link to the genocide campaign from the presidential website.

As the story of Lemkin’s genocide campaign well illustrates, this discussion of the proper use of the word has also been dogged by politics from the beginning. The reluctance of intellectuals on the left to condemn communism; the fact that Stalin was allied with Roosevelt and Churchill; the existence of German historians who tried to downplay the significance of the Holocaust by comparing it to Soviet crimes; all of that meant that, until recently, it was politically incorrect in the West to admit that we defeated one genocidal dictator with the help of another. Only now, with the publication of so much material from Soviet and Central European archives, has the extent of the Soviet Union’s mass murders become better known in the West. In recent years, some in the former Soviet sphere of influence—most notably in the Baltic states and Ukraine—have begun to use the word “genocide” in legal documents to describe the Soviet Union’s mass killings too.

Naimark’s short book is a polemical contribution to this debate. Though he acknowledges the dubious political history of the UN convention, he goes on to argue that even under the current definition, Stalin’s attack on the kulaks and on the Ukrainian peasants should count as genocide. So should Stalin’s targeted campaigns against particular ethnic groups. At different times the Soviet secret police hunted down, arrested, and murdered ethnic Poles, Germans, and Koreans who happened to be living in the USSR, and of course they murdered 20,000 Polish officers within a few weeks. A number of small nations, notably the Chechens, were also arrested and deported en masse during the war: men, women, children, and grandparents were put on trains, and sent to live in Central Asia, where they were meant to die and eventually disappear as a nation. A

similar fate met the Crimean Tatars.

Like Snyder's, Naimark's work has also ranged widely, from his groundbreaking book on the Soviet occupation of East Germany to studies of ethnic cleansing. As a result his argument is authoritative, clear, and hard to dispute. Yet if we take the perspective offered in *Bloodlands* seriously, we also have to ask whether the whole genocide debate itself—and in particular the long-standing argument over whether Stalin's murders "qualify"—is not a red herring. If Stalin's and Hitler's mass murders were different but not separate, and if neither would have happened in quite the same way without the other, then how can we talk about whether one is genocide and the other is not?

To the people who actually experienced both tyrannies, such definitions hardly mattered. Did the Polish merchant care whether he died because he was a Jew or because he was a capitalist? Did the starving Ukrainian child care whether she had been deprived of food in order to create a Communist paradise or in order to provide calories for the soldiers of the German Reich? Perhaps we need a new word, one that is broader than the current definition of genocide and means, simply, "mass murder carried out for political reasons." Or perhaps we should simply agree that the word "genocide" includes within its definition the notions of deliberate starvation as well as gas chambers and concentration camps, that it includes the mass murder of social groups as well as ethnic groups and be done with it.

Finally, the arguments of *Bloodlands* also complicate the modern notion of memory—memory, that is, as opposed to history. It is true, for example, that the modern German state "remembers" the Holocaust—in official documents, in public debates, in monuments, in school textbooks—and is often rightly lauded for doing so. But how comprehensive is this memory? How many Germans "remember" the deaths of three million Soviet POWs? How many know or care that the secret treaty signed between Hitler and Stalin not only condemned the inhabitants of western Poland to deportation, hunger, and often death in slave labour camps, but also condemned the inhabitants of eastern Poland to deportation, hunger, and often death in Soviet exile? The Katyn massacre really is, in this sense, partially Germany's responsibility: without Germany's collusion with the Soviet Union, it would not have happened. Yet modern Germany's very real sense of guilt about the Holocaust does not often extend to Soviet soldiers or even to Poles.

If we remember the twentieth century for what it actually was, and not for what we imagine it to have been, the misuse of history for national political purposes also becomes more difficult. The modern Russian state often talks about the "twenty million Soviet dead" during World War II as a way of emphasizing its

victim hood and martyrdom. But even if we accept that suspiciously large round number, it is still important to acknowledge that the majority of those were not Russians, did not live in modern Russia, and did not necessarily die because of German aggression. It is also important to acknowledge that Soviet citizens were just as likely to die during the war years because of decisions made by Stalin, or because of the interaction between Stalin and Hitler, as they were from the commands of Hitler alone.

For different reasons, the American popular memory of World War II is also due for some revision. In the past, we have sometimes described this as the “good war,” at least when contrasted to the morally ambiguous wars that followed. At some level this is understandable: we did fight for human rights in Germany and Japan, we did leave democratic German and Japanese regimes in our wake, and we should be proud of having done so. But it is also true that while we were fighting for democracy and human rights in the lands of Western Europe, we ignored and then forgot what happened further east.

As a result, we liberated one half of Europe at the cost of enslaving the other half for fifty years. We really did win the war against one genocidal dictator with the help of another. There was a happy end for us, but not for everybody. This does not make us bad—there were limitations, reasons, legitimate explanations for what happened. But it does make us less exceptional. And it does make World War II less exceptional, more morally ambiguous, and thus more similar to the wars that followed.

If nothing else, a reassessment of what we know about Europe in the years between 1933 and 1953 could finally cure us of that “lack of imagination” that so appalled Czesław Miłosz almost sixty years ago. When considered in isolation, Auschwitz can be easily compartmentalized, characterized as belonging to a specific place and time, or explained away as the result of Germany’s unique history or particular culture. But if Auschwitz was not the only mass atrocity, if mass murder was simultaneously taking place across a multinational landscape and with the support of many different kinds of people, then it is not so easy to compartmentalize or explain away. The more we learn about the twentieth century, the harder it will be to draw easy lessons or make simple judgments about the people who lived through it—and the easier it will be to empathize with and understand them.

1. Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind* (1953; Penguin, 2001), pp. 26–29.

2. Typical is the story of a house I own in northwest Poland: intending to “Germanize” the region, the Nazis evicted the Polish owners in 1939 and installed a German family from Lithuania in their place. These Germans were evicted again in 1944, and the house became state property.

3. These figures come from Richard Overy, *Russia's War* (Penguin, 1997), p. 297, and from *Voennoplennye v SSSR, 1939–1956: dokumenty i materialy*, edited by M.M. Zagorul'ko (Moscow: Logos, 2000), pp. 331–333.

Explaining the Holocaust

- On January 27, 2005 the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by the Soviet army was commemorated, with the participation of Russian President Putin, German President Köhler and the heads of state of several European countries and the US vice president. This ceremony symbolized the coming together of Europe and the Holocaust as a symbol of the united opposition of Europeans to genocide. Yet, the problem still does not seem willing to go away. It even appears that expressing anti-Semitism has become politically correct in Germany; especially under the cover of anti-Zionism. It is respectable in certain milieus to be anti-Israel, which can be a proxy for anti-Semitism. Anti-Americanism is also often linked with anti-Semitism.
- Both are allegedly aggressive, modern, rootless, cultureless, greedy and exploitative. Thus, the anti-Americanism that is found in some segments of the European public today may also cause negative feelings toward Jews. Indeed, some scholars suggest that anti-Semitism is integral to European culture or Western culture, which if true would explain its popularity with youth and some intellectuals. (Just as Hitler used the Jews as the cause of communism, so to do many in Europe blame the Jews (and Americans) for the Palestine problem). The Holocaust was only partly dealt with in the past in Germany. The army and bureaucracy were ignored to a considerable extent, while blame for the Holocaust was assigned to Hitler and the SS.

Difficulty of Understanding

- German interest in the Holocaust developed slowly, as it was for a long time hard to grasp its significance. Whereas it was initially regarded as just one of the many catastrophes of the Twentieth Century, an atrocity or a crime against humanity, it now appears to be the perfect idea of evil and provides a measure of all mass killing. The Holocaust appears to be the conspiratorial work of a few extremely evil individuals, but at the same time the voluntary cooperation of state and society. On the one hand, it appears as a radical expression of hatred, and on the other, something the perpetrators stumbled into with no particular plan.
- Not surprisingly, there was little interest in remembering the Holocaust in the period immediately following World War II. People tend not to want to remember terrible events. The current interest is driven above all by factors like the growing interest in memory, trauma and increased respect for the victim as survivor. For many the Holocaust has come to be an historical, universal symbol of evil. There are museums and monuments dedicated to the Holocaust in many

countries, including the USA and Germany. There are university chairs dedicated to the topic, memorials, monuments, commemorative ceremonies, exhibitions, artistic works, film, theater and literature inspired by the Holocaust.

- A final paradox to be noted is that the Holocaust has been researched more than any other case of mass killing in history. We know more and more about the Holocaust, but the sense of understanding seems not to be keeping pace. The Holocaust seems to continue defy comprehension due to its depth of evil.

➤ **Mass killing in history**

- Mass killings of large populations have occurred since time immemorial, but the current situation, in which there is a great division of labour in military, police and society, means that the manifestations of violence in the past were not entirely similar to those today. It was accepted practice in Antiquity to use mass killing against other societies with the killing of leaders, the massacring the men and the selling of women into slavery or in some case, total annihilation. Mass murder and rape of men and women in conquered societies was not considered morally wrong.
- Jews have been attacked through out Western history, although there were long periods of relatively peaceful coexistence, and the genocide of the Nazis was the first attempt at complete extermination in Europe. There was an attempt at genocide against the Jews in the Fourth Century BC for example in Persia.

➤ **Uniqueness?**

- Various attempts have been made to specify the uniqueness and significance of the Holocaust. For example, the Holocaust is metaphorically described as a 'rupture in history', a black hole in reality. For Martin Buber, the Holocaust was "a systematically prepared and executed procedure whose organized cruelty cannot be compared with any previous historical event." In contrast other authors emphasize its familiar, modern trappings. Raul Hilberg comments on the paradox that Holocaust was executed using **ordinary administrative processes**: *"there is no precedent for the almost endless march of millions of men, women, and children into gas chambers. The systematization of this destruction process sets it aside from all else that has ever happened. However, "it is the very mundaneness and ordinariness of these everyday official actions which made the destruction process so crass."*

- Some authors focus on what happened after the Holocaust as making it unique. Kurt Jonassohn states, "West Germany ... is the first country in modern history to admit that a genocide was committed and to agree to a modest form of reimbursement to some of the survivors. ... West Germany's is the only case in which a perpetrator has admitted guilt."
- Another way in which the Holocaust appears unique is that the victims did not remain silent, as did the victims of many cases of mass murder. The Jewish survivors spoke out to express their outrage "in several art forms, such as painting, sculpture, poetry, memoirs, and novels as well as in the recording of oral histories, the presentation of records, and in lobbying for human rights."

➤ **Perpetrators**

- Many studies have tended to emphasize the planning processes for the Holocaust and the role of Hitler's closest circle. More recently, military policy and bureaucratic policy, the administrators of concentration camps and a variety of minor local organizations such as the local police have been focused on. The range of persons who count as perpetrators and bystanders is also a matter of discussion. Recent approaches have greatly expanded the range of perpetrators to include such groups as revenue officials and professional associations involved in the location, assessment, confiscation and use of assets of disenfranchised Jewish citizens. Besides the German perpetrators, there were also collaborators in the conquered countries. Some organized and some unorganized local groups participated in the Holocaust. Thus, it recently became known that the people of a Polish village had committed the massacre of the Jews living there and had blamed the Germans. In occupied countries and in Germany itself, many so called bystanders served as informers for the Gestapo, helping in the apprehension and murder of Jews.
- The following are among the most important types of perpetrators found in the literature: 1. the misfit, loser, outcast, socially disadvantaged criminal type; 2. the authoritarian personality; 3. the normal person whose behaviour was controlled by the totalitarian system, the Eichmann type; 4. the ordinary man who is easily induced to obey authoritative orders; 5. the transgressive person seeking identity through violence; 6. the opportunist seeking economic advantages.

- If ordinary people were perpetrators, why did they behave in ways they normally would not? Perhaps they were powerless to act as they would have wanted in the context of a war over which they had little control. People can put aside the normal notions of moral behaviour if placed under pressure or propaganda. For example, they are encouraged to think of the Jews or other victims as non-persons, or the cause of major problems. Situational factors influence the way people behave by clouding their thought processes. For example, when an individual behaves in conformity to a common belief, especially in the passions of war, they begin to shift from rational modes of thought to imaginary modes that justify unusual and immoral behaviour.
- Because the Holocaust involved such a high degree of organization over a longer period of time, explanations have tended to emphasize the influence of institutions on decision-making. But the Jewish survivors are themselves sometimes portrayed as perpetrators. The accusation is sometimes made that to survive the camps they behaved unscrupulously toward other prisoners. The administration of the camps was largely delegated to the prisoners, and this could result in brutal behaviour by prisoner officials to other prisoners.

➤ **Fascism and totalitarianism**

- It is held by many that the system of government (National Socialism – Nazism) was more important than simple prejudices, such as anti-Semitism or racism, as causes of the Holocaust. Totalitarianism and fascism refer to forms of government or institutions as well as to the ideologies that brought them about. Totalitarianism emphasizes more the instruments of power rather than any ideas or ideologies behind them. Fascism theories emphasize the ideologies such as nationalism of fascist parties.
- Hannah Arendt, a historian and writer on the subject of totalitarianism, says that the Third Reich ruled through an alliance of the leaders and the masses. Thus the masses assent to and contribute to totalitarian rule; they are not victims in a simple sense. One of the implications of this theory is that the oppression of the Jews was not necessarily due to anti-Semitism but that this was a convenient way to gain power and that any minority or victim group could have been chosen in a system of absolute control.
- One of the more complex after-effects of the Third Reich was that thousands of professionals who collaborated with the Nazis were able to continue their careers after the war. Thus, officials who confiscated the property of Jews in the Third Reich resumed their successful careers in the reformed postwar

bureaucracies without facing legal penalties for their shameful actions during the Reich. This repeated itself in many professions. Former Wehrmacht soldiers joined the defence forces, former policemen who had arrested Jews for deportation returned to their former profession. Judges who had served the Nazis served the Federal Republic, and physicians who had experimented with victims resumed their practices.

- Some historians tried to minimize German responsibility for the war and the Holocaust by invoking European wide historical processes (such as the loss of confidence, the Treaty of Versailles, the worldwide depression, etc.) as causal factors, as opposed to particularly German developments. Some point to Germany's Prussian past suggesting that Hitler's rise was linked to 'Prussian-German militarism'. The positive aspects of the traditional military tradition in Germany depended on a balance of reason and the irrational in human nature, and Hitler managed to seduce the army to overemphasize the irrational.

➤ **The mechanism of scapegoating**

- The mechanism of scapegoating used the Jews as the explanation for Germany's problems, such as the loss of World War I, the economic depression and the loss of prosperity. Jews could be identified as a source of modern forces that threatened the middle classes.
- Another way anti-Semitism worked to encourage genocide was the creation of negative stereotypes that dehumanized Jews. By depriving the Jews of humanity and identifying them with disease, pests and parasites, it was made easier to commit violence against them. Hitler also contributed to anti-Semitism by combining anti-Semitism with anti-Bolshevism and undemocratic views.
- The Hitler-centred explanation of the Holocaust states that Hitler planned the war with the objective of gaining control over the Jews in order to kill them. Another view is that the Holocaust arose as a side effect of the war. For example, the idea of killing the Jews may have become more plausible to military planners when they encountered bottlenecks and eliminating the Jews could be rationalized as a way of solving supply problems by expropriating the food needed by the Jews to military use.

[I am indebted to access to a University of Constance PhD dissertation by Jame Brice for suggestions made in the above discussion of the Holocaust.]

The Collapse of Communism

- On the night of November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall--the most potent symbol of the Cold War division of Europe--came down. Earlier that day, the communist authorities of the German Democratic Republic had announced the removal of travel restrictions to democratic West Berlin. Thousands of East Germans streamed into the West, and in the course of the night, celebrants on both sides of the wall began to tear it down.
- The collapse of the Berlin Wall was the culminating point of the revolutionary changes sweeping east and central Europe in 1989. Throughout the Soviet bloc, reformers assumed power and ended more than 40 years of dictatorial communist rule. The reform movement that ended communism in east and central Europe began in Poland. Solidarity, an anti-communist trade union and social movement, had forced Poland's communist government to recognize it in 1980 through a wave of strikes that gained international attention. In 1981, Poland's communist authorities, under pressure from Moscow, declared martial law, arrested Solidarity's leaders, and banned the democratic trade union. The ban did not bring an end to Solidarity. The movement simply went underground, and the rebellious Poles organized their own civil society, separate from the communist government and its edicts.
- In 1985, the assumption of power in the Soviet Union by a reformer, Mikhail Gorbachev, paved the way for political and economic reforms in east central Europe. Gorbachev abandoned the "Brezhnev Doctrine"--the Soviet Union's policy of intervening with military force, if necessary, to preserve communist rule in the region. Instead, he encouraged the local communist leaders to seek new ways of gaining popular support for their rule. In Hungary, the communist government initiated reforms in 1989 that led to the sanctioning of a multiparty system and competitive elections. In Poland, the communists entered into round-table talks with a reinvigorated Solidarity. As a result, Poland held its first competitive elections since before World War II, and in 1989, Solidarity formed the first non-communist government within the Soviet bloc since 1948. Inspired by their neighbours' reforms, East Germans took to the streets in the summer and fall of 1989 to call for reforms, including freedom to visit West Berlin and West Germany. Moscow's refusal to use military force to buoy the regime of East German leader Erich Honecker led to his replacement and the initiation of political reforms, leading up to the fateful decision to open the border crossings on the night of November 9, 1989.
- In the wake of the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Czechs and Slovaks took to the streets to demand political reforms in Czechoslovakia. Leading the

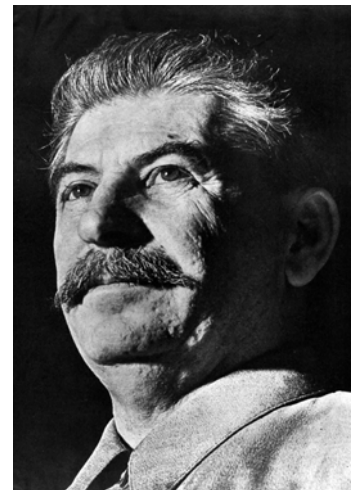
demonstrations in Prague was dissident playwright Vaclav Havel, co-founder of the reform group Charter 77. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia quietly and peacefully transferred rule to Havel and the Czechoslovak reformers in what was later dubbed the "Velvet Revolution." In Romania, the communist regime of hardliner Nicolai Ceausescu was overthrown by popular protest and force of arms in December 1989. Soon, the communist parties of Bulgaria and Albania also ceded power.

- The revolutions of 1989 marked the death knell of communism in Europe. As a result, not only was Germany reunified in 1990, but soon, revolution spread to the Soviet Union itself. After surviving a hard-line coup attempt in 1991, Gorbachev was forced to cede power in Russia to Boris Yeltsin, who oversaw the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The collapse of communism in east central Europe and the Soviet Union marked the end of the Cold War.

➤ **A roll call of leading players**

Josef Stalin (1878 – 1953)

- Stalin suffered a major stroke on March 1st 1953 but treatment was delayed from reaching him as a direct result of his actions over the previous decades. He slowly died over the course of the next few days, apparently in agony, finally expiring on March 5th of a brain haemorrhage. In his last years, Stalin drew into isolation - he surrounded himself with loyal lackeys and his suspicions of conspiracy and plot intensified. Before he died, he believed that his doctors had conspired against him. Yet many people wept -- for millions of Russians, Joseph Stalin had been their saviour. What shape, what direction would the Soviet Union now take, now that its dictator was dead?

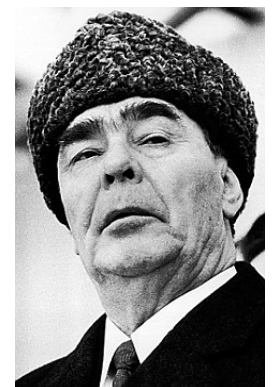


- Leadership was assumed by a team headed by **Nikita Khrushchev** (1894-1971) who became the Premier of the Soviet Union until 1964. It was Khrushchev who had introduced the first Soviet "thaw." Most, but not all, of the Gulags were emptied. Ethnic groups who had been resettled under Stalin were gradually allowed to return to their homeland. And in his speech at the 20th Party Congress in February 1956, Khrushchev denounced Stalin and the crimes Stalin had committed against his own people. Khrushchev cited example after example of Stalinist terror. Without criticizing Soviet communism, Khrushchev managed to reject the excesses of Joseph Stalin. Of course, Khrushchev was also able to skilfully downplay his role in Stalinist atrocities as well.




- Khrushchev's speech in 1956 caused a profound stir around the world. Card carrying communists as well as communist fellow travellers began to defect from the party in large numbers. Meanwhile, in Eastern Europe, Poland was on the brink of rebellion in 1956. And in that same year a Hungarian uprising against Moscow was nearly successful had not the Soviets sent in their tanks. Again, events such as these alienated a great many Soviet sympathizers and international support for the Soviets dwindled. In foreign policy, Khrushchev proposed peace; however, he threatened the west by blocking western access to Berlin and by placing missiles in Cuba. And in 1960, Russia withdrew its offer to aid China - communist since 1949 - to develop and build nuclear weapons. Khrushchev presented Russia with a new party program and pressed for reforms in industry, agriculture and party organization. Of course, such efforts on his part also managed to alienate and antagonize a great many party officials. So, in October 1964, and while he was away from Moscow on vacation, Khrushchev's Politburo comrades removed him from power. The international press reported that Khrushchev had been replaced for reasons of ill-health.

- Khrushchev was replaced by **Leonid Brezhnev**, an elderly man who required massive doses of stimulants in order to appear alive. Under Brezhnev, the Soviet government turned from personal dictatorship to oligarchy, that is, the collective rule of a privileged minority. As a result, authoritarian control over the Soviet people was now relaxed. A "New Class" had been born in a supposedly classless society.



- In the 1970s, US-Soviet relations entered a period of *detente*, or peaceful co-existence. The Soviets had achieved parity in atomic weapons with the United States. Slowly, the country was opened up to the outside world. Authority was relaxed, young people were allowed access to Western music and fashion, issues were open to debate, and there was some artistic freedom as well as a revival of religious belief and practice. For Russian intellectuals who criticized the State, however, the story was much different. Andrei Sakharov, the man who helped invent the Soviet H-bomb was also a human rights activist. He was exiled from Moscow and placed under house arrest for six years. He died in late 1989, after having witnessed the last stage of the 1917 Revolution, the collapse of Soviet communism. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the Russian novelist and critic, was arrested by Stalin in 1947, sent to the GULAG until 1956 and was later exiled from the country. He fled to Vermont where he spent about ten years -- he returned to Russia in 1994. Other critics and intellectuals were declared insane and the KGB, despite efforts toward relaxation, was as powerful as ever. Brezhnev and his colleagues, Kosygin, Chernenko and Andropov, were old men who survived in office for just a brief period of time.

- In 1985, **Mikhail Gorbachev** took over. Unlike Brezhnev, who needed tanks of oxygen at his side, Gorbachev had good health and relative youth on his side. At 54 years of age, Gorbachev represented a generation which had begun their political and party careers after 1953. So although they were born and raised in the Stalin years, Stalin was gone by the time they begun their political lives. A self-confident and energetic man, Gorbachev talked freely to people from all walks of life. He was keenly aware of the problems facing the Soviet Union and knew that the Party had stagnated over time. Much of this stagnation as well as inefficiency was made readily apparent in April of 1986 when a nuclear reactor at Chernobyl exploded and sent radiation 300 times normal levels into the atmosphere. The Soviet government denied any such accident and denounced it as a creation of the western media. Seventeen days after the fact, Gorbachev appeared on Soviet television and gave a speech that was wholly uncharacteristic of Soviet leadership and presented a sharp break with the way the Kremlin had always handled such issues. Instead of propaganda, he delivered a serious admission of the facts of the accident.
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- "For our internal progress," Gorbachev wrote in 1987, "we need normal international relations." The Soviets had to catch up to the rising prosperity and high technology of the Europe and North America. The Soviet Union had to

concentrate on domestic development and promote international peace whenever possible. However, it could only accomplish such a goal by giving up any global ambitions. So Gorbachev abandoned the traditional Soviet anti-western orientation. He wanted to integrate the Soviet Union into the main currents of modern life and that meant democracy, free enterprise and a market economy. *Time* magazine went on the vote "Gorby" Man of the Year and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher pronounced that Gorbachev was "a man with whom we can do business."

- Gorbachev gave the Soviet Union and the World two slogans: *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness). Perestroika held out the promise of reorganizing the State and society. For instance, individual initiative would be revived and there would be more technology and a higher standard of living. Soviet citizens were to become more involved at the grass roots level and participate in national affairs. *Glasnost* was the corrective held up to Stalinist excesses. Openness would permit the open discussion of the nation's problems and it would rid public thinking of propaganda and lies. Both *perestroika* and *glasnost*, as Gorbachev understood them, would transform Soviet society into a true democracy.

- The four elements of Gorbachev's reforms were—Perestroika (Reconstruction)

Uskorenie—Acceleration, - Glasnost—Openness and Demokratizatsiia—Democratization.

Perestroika, a process that lead to many progressive changes in the Soviet society), Glasnost (towards freedom of speech, a right to information, more truth in the media and the use

of less propaganda), Uskorenie (Acceleration, an economic program - introducing some mild attributes of market economy, such as "More money for more work"); all leading to a form of social democracy.



- Academics, writers, intellectuals and artists responded enthusiastically, as did most western politicians. Sakharov rose to political prominence and Solzhenitsyn

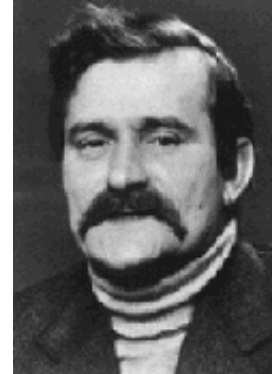
was invited home. Soviet fiction that was produced and subsequently banned in the 1920s and 30s was now published for the first time. George Orwell's novels *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* were now published by Soviet printing houses. Some new novels not only told the truth about the past, but also tried to explain it. In many cases this amounted to speculation about Stalin's real nature and motivation, as in Anatoli Rybakov's novel, *Children of the Arbat*. With archives now being opened and made available new histories began to appear that shed light on the recent past. A good deal of archival material on the Stalinist purges and the Great Terror was unearthed and published. Some statistics were located but an accurate count of those who suffered will probably never be known.

- In Gorbachev's way of thinking, it was to be the Russian Communist Party that was to serve as the vanguard of *perestroika*. It was the party that would stimulate civic activity and responsibility. In 1988, a Soviet Congress was formed, including elected members, which in 1989 chose the smaller Supreme Soviet. In 1990, the Supreme Soviet elected Gorbachev as the country's president for a term of five years. At the time, Gorbachev was still the leader of the increasingly unpopular Communist Party. Economic changes accompanied these political reforms. Industrial enterprise was encouraged which in turn would foster private initiative and loosed the stranglehold of decades of central planning.
- By 1990, Gorbachev was cautiously promoting a market economy including the individual's right to possess private property. Religious freedoms were restored and in 1988, the Russian Orthodox Church celebrated its 1000th anniversary. Meanwhile, contacts with the outside world, especially the west, began to intensify. However, all this seemingly good stuff -- especially from the western perspective -- had its downside as well. For instance, *glasnost* released decades of bitterness which had accumulated over the fifty years of Stalinist repression and terror. *Perestroika* and *glasnost* also revealed the widespread ecological damage the Soviets had caused on the environment. Gorbachev's reforms also polarized opinion in ways that even Gorbachev and his stalwart supporters could never have foreseen. All that restructuring and all that openness had increased the diversity of opinions and in the end, led to little more than nationalist and ethnic in-fighting.
- Meanwhile, Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians all demanded independence which in turn set off similar demands among Ukrainians, Georgians, Byelorussians, Armenians and the various peoples of central Asia. By the late 1980s, inter-ethnic violence had escalated. And in 1990, the Russian Republic, the largest republic of the Soviet Union, declared its limited independence under Boris Yeltsin, and an Anti-Reform Russian Communist Party broke off from the reformist party faction led by Gorbachev.

- Gorbachev, caught in an avalanche he himself had helped to create, was willing to establish a new federal union of Soviet sovereign republics but remained opposed to the outright dissolution of the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the transition to a market economy was too complex for ready and easy solutions. The production and distribution of consumer goods collapsed. Local governments hoarded essential commodities and the black market flourished as did the Russian Mafia. As the journalist David Remnick has written: *"the Communist Party apparatus was the most gigantic Mafia the world has ever known. It guarded its monopoly on power with a sham consensus and constitution and backed it up with the force of the KGB and the Interior Ministry police."*
- In October 1990, Gorbachev sadly remarked that "unfortunately, our society is not ready for the procedures of a law-based state." In response to a crisis produced by Gorbachev, the liberals of Moscow and Leningrad pressed Yeltsin for even quicker modernization. This included a multi-party system, a flourishing market economy and increased civil liberties for all Soviet citizens. But, on the opposite side, were the Communist hardliners who were willing and eager to revive the old order, the Stalinist order, which depended on the army for restoring order. Gorbachev viewed all this with an eye toward compromise.
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- On August 19, 1991, the conservative acted. They imprisoned Gorbachev in his Crimean vacation home and deposed him as president of the Soviet Union. They declared a state of emergency and began preparations for a new communist dictatorship. The problem was, the conservative faction was completely out of touch with popular opinion. Most citizens had enough of the party and thanks to *glasnost* and *perestroika*, had no intention of a Stalinist revival. Even the KGB defected over to Yeltsin's side. Emotions were high and the outburst spread to Moscow, Leningrad and other cities. The coup collapsed in three days and the chief victims, never to recover, were the Communist Party and the unity and existence of the Soviet Union.
- By early May 1992, twelve of fifteen republics declared their independence and the empire of the tsars and the Communists had fallen to pieces. Gorbachev had fallen victim to those forces which he had helped to release through *glasnost* and *perestroika*. The problem was that *perestroika* and *glasnost* were dynamite. They unleashed a stream of sympathetic voices at the same time that they unleashed reaction. Most revolutions have this effect. Most Russians were confused. They felt suspended between a Russia of traditional communist values and the ideals

and consumer lifestyles of the west. While some favored democracy on the western model, others demanded a return to Stalinist practice.

- Outside the Soviet Union, *perestroika* and *glasnost* spread among people who were resentful of Soviet domination and worried about economic collapse. In 1989 and 1990, these people showed their dislike of communist leadership and demanded what were clearly democratic reforms. Communist leaders across Eastern Europe either resigned their office or agreed to reform.
- Poland took the lead. Here the population was traditionally anti-Russian. The Poles had long protested their country's economic decline. Soviet assurance to assist and massive loans from Western Europe brought no relief. The slightest relaxation of Soviet control only encouraged Polish nationalism which had always been expressed with the support of the Roman Catholic Church. With the selection of Pope John Paul II in 1978, Polish nationalism surged ahead. In 1980, workers under the leadership of an electrician, **Lech Walesa**, succeeded in forming an independent labour union called Solidarity. Pressured by a series of strikes, the Polish government recognized Solidarity, despite threats of Soviet intervention.
- In 1981, more radical members of Solidarity began to talk about the necessity of free elections. But in December, a military dictatorship under **Wojciech Jaruzelski** was formed and declared martial law. Walesa and others were jailed and protesting workers were dispersed by force. In 1987, Jaruzelski presented a referendum for support on economic and political reforms. Polish voters abstained or voted against him. And in 1988, Jaruzelski ended his dictatorship and started a civilian government. Meanwhile Walesa appeared on Polish television pleading for pluralism and freedom. He was supported by the Roman Catholic Church. In January 1989, Solidarity was legalized and the Communist Party retired. Solidarity triumphed in the first free election and led to a non-communist government in September 1989. Poland's economy was still poor - inflation soared as the cost of living rose and the black market flourished. In December 1990, the Polish people elected Walesa as their president.
- In May 1989, the communist bureaucracy was abolished in Hungary. By year's end there were more than fifty political parties in existence. Democracy and free enterprise were introduced and the result, as it had been in Poland, was inflation. In East Germany, the upheaval in 1989 was even more momentous. Within a month after celebrating the 40th anniversary as a socialist workers state, and with Gorbachev in attendance as honoured guest, the Communist Party collapsed.



- East Germany had always been indispensable to Soviet Russia. Its industry was nationalized, its agriculture collectivized and its people regimented by the Communist Party. In June 1953, the workers of East Berlin staged an uprising. What followed was a steady exodus of skilled workers into West Germany. Three million people escaped before the East German government erected the Berlin Wall in August 1961. In 1972, *detente* allowed diplomatic relations and closer economic ties between East and West Germany. Moscow did not object. But the East Germans always looked to the West -- they wanted jeans and televisions. By 1985, even the East Germans began to cheer Gorbachev's *perestroika* initiative. In 1989, almost 400,000 people left East Germany through the opened borders of Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile, the streets of Berlin were full of protest. On November 6th 1989, the walls came tumbling down. Three days later, on November 9th, the first hole was made in the Berlin Wall and East Germans crossed into West Berlin. The East German police stood by nervously, but the Berlin wall had fallen. Gorbachev eventually approved.
- It was at this time that Czechoslovakia joined the crusade against Soviet communism. The hard line Czech communists had held power since the events of the Prague Spring in 1968. But events in Poland and Hungary coupled with the nation's economic decline, increased public pressure for change. Strikes, public demonstrations and the circulation of *samizdat*, or self-printed books, made the situation positively explosive. Early in 1989, anti-government demonstrations escalated - the government repressed them. **Vaclav Havel** was jailed. But when protests again erupted in the fall, the government faltered. Havel was released and became the leader of the opposition group, the Civic Forum. Faced with massive demonstrations in Prague - all shown on television - and urged on by Gorbachev to initiate democratic reforms, the Czech communist leaders resigned on November 24th. A month later Vaclav Havel was elected as president of Czechoslovakia.



Berlin

Life in Berlin means living with history, especially the legacy of the city's Nazi past. The years 1933 to 1945, when Berlin was the capital of Adolf Hitler's Third Reich continue to define the city. Berlin was the center of planning for the conquest of Europe and the killing of Jews and other minorities in the Holocaust. Though some Berliners resisted the Nazis, many supported them and participated in their crimes.

- **The Nazi Era**

As World War II progressed, Berlin and Berliners began to suffer. The British made their first bombing raid on the city in August 1940, and bombing from the air continued for the next five years, increasing dramatically after the United States entered the war. Then in April 1945, the Soviet Red Army got close enough to begin shelling the city, and their troops soon completed the conquest of Berlin. Germany surrendered on May 8, 1945.

But the war was not over for all Berliners. Many Berliners were killed by the Red Army in revenge for brutalities committed by the Nazis during their invasion of the Soviet Union. Other Berliners were arrested as war criminals and sent to labour camps in Russia. Many died in captivity there, and some of those who survived were not released until the mid-1950s. The loss of so many Berliners, both soldiers and civilians, during and after the war made it especially difficult for Berlin to recover from the devastation of the war.

- **The Airlift**

Although Berlin had been devastated by British and American bombing and Soviet shelling, Berliners had reason to hope that conflict was at an end and that they would be able to rebuild in peace. But it was not that simple. After the war, control of Germany was divided among the victorious Allied nations—the United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. Berlin was located deep inside the Soviet sector, but as the German capital it was regarded as a special case. Just as Germany had been, the city was divided into four zones of occupation, the easternmost being controlled by the Soviets.

The Soviets wanted compensation and revenge for Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union during the war. So they took over German industrial production and sent many Germans to forced-labour camps in the Soviet Union. The Western powers took the opposite approach. American secretary of state George Marshall designed a massive aid program to lift Germany out of poverty and

integrate the nation into European affairs. This contrast between the methods of the Western powers and the Soviets meant that life was very different for Berliners in the eastern and western sectors of the city.

West Berlin was an island of relative prosperity and democracy in a sea of Soviet repression, and the Soviets wanted the Western powers out. Using a dispute over currency reform as a pretext, the Soviets blocked all road and rail traffic into the western sectors of Berlin on June 24, 1948. The only way to fight the blockade was through an airlift. Within a day, Americans were flying in essential supplies in what they called Operation Vittles, and the British launched a similar effort, called Operation Plainfair, three days later. Before the Soviets reopened road and rail links eleven months later, the British and Americans had flown 278,000 flights and delivered 2.5 million tons of supplies. The seventy-nine air and ground crew members who died in accidents during the Berlin Airlift are commemorated today in the Airlift Memorial at Berlin's Tempelhof Airport.

- **The Berlin Wall**

In 1961, as the contrasts between life in East and West Berlin were becoming painfully obvious and more and more East Berliners were crossing to the West and staying, the Soviets almost overnight constructed a hundred-mile-long wall, complete with guard towers, surrounding West Berlin. East German soldiers were ordered to shoot anyone trying to escape East Germany.

The Berlin Wall, by helping imprison East Berliners, became the best-known symbol of the Cold War. Over the years, two U.S. presidents, John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan, called on Soviet leaders to tear the wall down. Eventually those calls were heeded. In the late 1980s the new policies of openness and reform initiated by Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev made people in East Germany feel that they could call for the reunification of their country without fearing violent repression. After having partitioned the city for twenty-eight years, the Berlin Wall was finally opened in 1989. It was soon demolished, not by the East German government but by ordinary East and West Berliners wielding hammers. Soldiers who just days before had guarded the wall with machine guns stood by and watched as it fell.

- **Problems Since Reunification**

New Year's Eve 1989 turned into a massive celebration of freedom for Berliners, the result of hard work and sacrifice not only by Berliners but also by the United States, the United Kingdom, and the other Western democracies. Since the war, West Berlin and West Germany had become prosperous and had forty years of experience with democracy. During that same time, East Berlin had been under

the control of the Communist government of East Germany, which in turn was controlled in most matters by the Soviet Union. Most East Berliners had no experience with either democracy or free enterprise, though many of them wanted to try both. It was obvious that bringing the former East Berlin up to the standards of the western sector would require a long and expensive period of learning and building.

The first decade after reunification saw Berliners struggle with many problems and opportunities. To the surprise of many, in 1991, Berlin was selected as capital of the reunited Germany. West Berliners and the rest of western Germany paid huge sums in taxes to fund education, social programs, and rebuilding projects in the eastern sector, and some in the west were openly resentful of the reunification tax. And in the east, people were used to guaranteed jobs and extremely low rents. When the Communist system collapsed, many in the east found themselves unemployed. At the same time, they faced a transition to private ownership of property, which meant that rents rose, driving the cost of living up dramatically.

The result of these challenges was protest from both sides of the former border, though it was clear that the desire of virtually all Germans and Berliners to have their nation and city reunified would be enough incentive to work things out peacefully. Berliners are still reminded of World War II and the Cold War by reconstruction projects, the new Holocaust memorial, and the myriad social and economic problems stemming from Berlin's history as a divided city. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, after its pivotal role in two world wars and the Cold War, Berlin is only now settling in as the peacetime hub of Central Europe.

- **The New Berlin**

Berlin is attractive to Germans and immigrants alike because it has hundreds of distinctive streets, squares, buildings, monuments, and parks, both historic and modern that makes the city a unique place to live. But this attractiveness is the result of decades of hard work and billions of dollars spent to rebuild the city. The city's leaders have been moving as rapidly as possible to create a new Berlin that will be both a desirable place to live and a political and economic hub for Central Europe. Ordinary Berliners generally like this revitalization and the jobs it has created, but are less enthusiastic about the noise, traffic jams, and other inconveniences that accompany such a rebuilding.

Berlin is the most changed and changing city in Europe, perhaps in the world, and its citizens often have trouble keeping up with the transformations. One of these changes has been the influx of immigrants from around the world to fill

thousands of jobs— mostly lower-paying positions that few Berliners want to take. As a result, today Berlin is more culturally diverse than any other German city. Berlin is home to people whose families have lived in the region for hundreds of years as well as Germans from the rest of the country, many of whom moved there recently in the wake of the reunification of the nation and the city. Many others also call Berlin home—ethnic Turks, Poles, Russians, and others—but because of the nation's restrictive immigration laws few of them are German citizens, even though they may have lived in Berlin for decades.

- **The Long Shadow of World War II**

When England's Queen Elizabeth II went to Berlin in July 2000 to open the new British embassy building, the British press indulged in some decidedly undiplomatic Berlin-bashing. According to a July 18, 2000, article titled "Spiked Helmets and Swastikas" on the newspaper *Die Welt*'s website www.berlinworldwide.welt.de in the days preceding the queen's visit, British newspapers had described Berlin as lacking in real brains, self-assurance, or even decent gossip; a failed German capital with few writers, a city administration apparently intent on recreating the 'triumphs' of the Nazi past and a general population that spend its evenings listening for exploding mortars and grenades from World War II while the rest of Germany—principally Munich and Hamburg—glitter and party. Worse, what Berlin has in common with Munich is not the German language or culture... but the Austrian corporal Adolf Hitler."

The rancour of the British press seemed to tap into a lingering resentment about Berlin and Germany in general among the British populace. Many Britons had family members who were killed by the Germans during World War II, and there is also anger over the way Germany was helped to recover economically after the war, becoming the powerhouse of Europe, while Britain suffered through a long and painful economic decline and the loss of its empire. While official relations between the United Kingdom and Germany are excellent, many working-class Britons are still so angry that they will take it out even on Germans who had nothing to do with the war. For example, Klaus Burger, a bus driver from the Berlin suburb of Potsdam, moved to England in 1993. Despite the fact that he was not even born when the war ended and had opposed the East German Communist government, he was still subjected to anti-German jokes and name-calling by his fellow workers and eventually had to quit his job.

- **The New Berliners**

Berlin has undergone more change than any other European capital, and some of those changes breed conflict. The parties to Berlin's conflicts are divided by age, ethnicity, economic status, and political beliefs: recent immigrants trying to find a place in a society that was not only closed but murderously hostile just a

few decades ago; ethnic Germans trying to remake themselves and their city in the image of the tolerant and democratic West; young people trying to find ways of earning a living that are consistent with their values; and a few older Germans who are returning to the city after decades in exile. Neo-Nazi groups and their covert sympathizers are in conflict with those who believe in an open and tolerant society; older, retired Berliners are often in conflict with younger workers who resent the size of their pensions; the leaders of large companies are in conflict with those who would rather restore historic buildings than build new skyscrapers; some west Berliners think east Berliners are lazy.

- **Cultural Differences, East and West**

Even though the Wall existed for less than three decades and East Berlin was under a Communist government for less than forty-five years that was enough time to educate hundreds of thousands of people in a culture very different from that of the West. While East Berliners welcomed the end of the political repression they had endured under Communism, not all of them wanted to adopt the lifestyle and values of their western neighbours. East Berliners had lived for decades with scarcity and decay. They had learned to adapt and to cope with want, and in many ways they were proud of their ability to make the best of a bad situation. More important, easterners had adopted the belief that society should be classless and that capitalism and commercialism are evil. After reunification, easterners still tended to see westerners as being too concerned with money and status.

Many Berliners think it will take another two or three generations to overcome the barriers that were built up during the period of division.

- **A Changing Mix of Peoples**

The number of foreign residents was about four hundred thousand in 1994 and had increased by thirty-three thousand at the end of the decade, making Berlin the most culturally diverse city in Germany.

Of the foreign residents living in Berlin, one-third are Turkish. Turks began moving to Berlin in large numbers in the 1960s when East Germans, who had been working in low-paying jobs in the western sector, were prevented from doing so by the newly constructed Wall. Authorities in West Berlin began recruiting *Gastarbeiter*, or guest workers, from several countries, one of which was Turkey. The Turks at the time faced a dismal economy in their homeland, and even though German law prevented them from becoming citizens, they flocked to Berlin because jobs there paid enough so they could support themselves and even send some money back to family members in Turkey.

Even though these guest workers fulfilled an urgent need for West Berliners, they

were not always welcomed.

Berlin's diversity has also increased in part due to instability elsewhere in Europe. For example, today about one-sixth of Berlin's foreign residents are from the states of the former Yugoslavia. Some came before that country broke apart in 1989, but many more are refugees from the ethnic fighting of the 1990s. There are also significant numbers of residents from Poland, Italy, Greece, and the former Soviet republics. In addition, there are well over ten thousand native English speakers in Berlin, mainly from the United States and the United Kingdom.

All of this ethnic diversity makes Berlin an interesting place, especially for younger people who want to find out how people in other cultures live. The Turkish community maintains many of its traditions, and several neighbourhoods now have a majority of Turkish residents—the Kreuzberg area has long been known as "Little Istanbul

Also, many ethnic Russians live in Berlin, both new immigrants and long-time residents. The long-term residents' story is both complex and interesting. During World War II, the Nazis told their soldiers that it was all right to kill Russians, even civilians and POWs, because they were subhuman. But this brutal rhetoric was contradicted by the fact that many Russians living in Berlin were not persecuted in the least. Russia had fought against Germany in World War I, and at the end of the war thousands of Russian POWs were in the Berlin area. Normally, POWs are anxious to go home, but these Russians faced a complication: the Communist revolution, which had transformed the Russian empire these soldiers had fought for into the Soviet Union. Many of the POWs, especially the officers, because they opposed the Communists, thought they would be better off staying in Berlin. These Russians were joined by thousands more refugees in the 1920s and 1930s who wanted to escape Communist rule. When Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, there were tens of thousands of ethnic Russians in Berlin, and many hoped that Hitler's invasion would succeed, that the Communists would be overthrown, and that they could at last return home. Despite the official Nazi teaching that Russians were racially inferior, these Russians were welcome in Berlin because they were anti-Communist.

The Russians who have lived in Berlin for decades have been joined in recent years by thousands of Russian Jews. At the turn of the twenty-first century, anti-Semitic incidents were infrequent in Berlin, and more and more non-Jewish Berliners were showing interest in and support for Jewish culture and the Jewish community. In a way this was surprising: over half of the registered members of the Jewish community were from the former Soviet Union, Germany's bitterest enemy in World War II. And among the Jews of Berlin there were even seventy

Soviet Red Army veterans who chose to live in the capital of the country that had once sought to exterminate them. Ironically, some of these men said that they moved to Berlin because anti-Semitism is now worse in the former Soviet countries than it is in Berlin.

The center of Jewish community life in Berlin is the magnificent New Synagogue in the Mitte (central) district, which opened in 1995. It is both a synagogue and community center, and many Jewish businesses and restaurants have also been established in the neighborhood. In 2000, over twelve thousand Jews were registered members of Berlin synagogues.

Age is another cultural dividing line in Berlin, which has a large population of retired workers. The official retirement age in Germany is sixty-five, but many companies have offered employees early retirement plans that have brought the average age when workers retire down to sixty. Retirement pensions for most workers are excellent, so there are thousands of retired Berliners with time on their hands and money to spend. However, younger workers sometimes resent the taxes they have to pay to support the pensioners, and one of the debates in business and government circles in Berlin is how to make the system more equitable. One suggestion under discussion is to raise the retirement age so that workers pay into the pension system longer.

- **Dealing with the Holocaust**

The fiercest debates in Berlin are often about the city's Nazi past. However, those who try to defend or excuse the Nazis are becoming fewer in number, and most Berliners want to deal with their city's past in a constructive way. For example, on Holocaust Remembrance Day in September 2000, more than ten thousand Berliners gathered in front of the city's town hall to hear a speech by Andreas Nachama, leader of Berlin's Jewish community, and thousands of people attended other rallies, conferences, and concerts marking the occasion.



There is an excellent DVD produced by the BBC in conjunction with the Open University in the UK called Berlin. Presented by Matt Frei the description of the DVD on the Readings website reads: ***'Berlin is a city unique in the world one that has not grown organically, but always been contrived and redefined. Even if we have never visited, we all feel touched by events that have taken place there because they are the universal stories of our time. This fascinating three-part series tells how since its founding, Berlin has been a crucible for radical ideas that have changed the world. It also reveals how the buildings of Berlin tell a story of the extremes of human creativity and***

destruction, and how the experiences of Berlin's ordinary people have come to stand for world history.'

Lithuania

Lithuania as a state emerged in early 13th century after the union of a number of minor kingdoms, becoming at the end of 14th century one of the most powerful states in the Eastern Europe. For almost two centuries Teutonic knights invaded Lithuania although it was never conquered.

In 1569 the Poland-Lithuania Union was sealed as a Commonwealth but after the partitioning of the Commonwealth in 1795, Lithuania was incorporated into Russia. On February 16, 1918 Lithuania proclaimed its independence and restoration of statehood, gaining recognition around the world. However this state of affairs only lasted for 22 years as in 1940 the Soviet Union occupied Lithuania, remaining under Soviet rule for the next half century. The Soviet regime was resisted by partisans (1944-52) resulting in an estimated 40,000-60,000 casualties. In addition some 350,000 were deported or perished in Soviet labour camps.

In the late 1980s, Gorbachev's *Perestroika* reforms brought an opportunity for change. In 1988, the non-Communist Lithuanian Reform Party conducted a successful campaign to restore Lithuanian as the official language and to legalize the old national symbols. In December 1989 the Lithuanian Communist party separated itself from the Soviet Communist party and Lithuania became the first Soviet republic to permit a multiparty system. In February 1990, the Reform Party won an overwhelming majority in free parliamentary elections, and in March independence was proclaimed. Moscow responded with an economic blockade that brought Lithuanian industry and transportation to a standstill.

In June Lithuania agreed to suspend their independence declaration while negotiations were held to reach a solution. In January 1991 Soviet troops occupied in Vilnius in an attempt to halt the independence movement, and a number of civilians were killed in confrontations with the military. A stalemate ensued that lasted for several months. Finally, in September 1991, after Boris Yeltsin's reformers had gained the upper hand in Moscow, the USSR recognized the independence of Lithuania.

Lithuanian scientists, architects and restorers returned to life a number of historical and architectural monuments, especially in the Old Town district of Vilnius - the largest in the Eastern Europe. Lithuania has 14 schools of higher learning and among them the oldest University in the former Eastern Bloc - Vilnius University, founded in 1579.

Poland

The history of Poland begins in the 10th century, when the Polish nation accepted Christianity. The new kingdom was suffered from attacks from inside the nation and without through the following centuries, but succeeded to preserve it's identity during the medieval period. In the 14th century the country entered a union with Lithuania, which lasted until the end of the 18th century. The union made Poland one of the strongest states in Europe, but the ruling Jagiellon dynasty began to lose control in the 16th century as powerful and aggressive nobles gathered their strength. After the death of the last Jagiellon king in 1569, Poland became an elective monarchy, a quasi-democratised state in an era of the absolute monarchies all around Europe. The Polish Parliament, the Sejm became the main legislative power in the middle of the 16th century.

The once powerful state gradually lost competitiveness against its stronger neighbours in the 17th and 18th century, and was partitioned by the former Austria, Prussia and Russia. The idea of Polish independence was still kept alive through the 19th century, resulting in an uprising against the Tsar. Poland regained it's independence after the First World War for two decades, but was the first to fall against German and Soviet attacks at the beginning of the Second World War. Many thousands Poles served in the armies of the Allied Forces. During the war some six million Polish citizens perished at the hands of Germans; 2.5 million were transported to labour or extermination camps.

After the Second World War Poland became a satellite state of the Soviet Union, under a communist regime. Uprisings in 1956 and 1968 were suppressed. In 1978 Karol Wojtyła became Pope John Paul II, which gave encouragement and support to the reform movement, Solidarity. Poland was the first Eastern European state to break free of the Soviet Union. Since then the economy of Poland has developed into one of the most robust in Eastern Europe. Poland joined NATO on May 27, 1999 and the European Union on May 1, 2004.

Hungary

Present-day Hungary was the province of Pannonia of the Roman Empire from the 1st to 4th centuries. Later it was ruled by the Goths and subsequently by the Huns in the 5th century. Magyar tribes from Eastern Europe entered the area in 895 and established the state of Hungary. During the following centuries the territory was enlarged in large parts of Central Europe. Hungary became part of the Ottoman Empire in 1526.

In the same year Hungary joins a union with its neighbour Austria accepting the Austrian Habsburgs as their King. Gradually the Ottomans are driven out of Hungary and in 1849 is formally annexed to Austria. In 1867 Austria is restyled into the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, of with the Kingdom of Hungary is one of the two constituent parts.

After the defeat of Austro-Hungarian Empire in World War I, Hungary becomes independent as the parliamentary democratic Hungarian People's Republic. In 1919 the communists seize power and establish the Hungarian People's Republic. Counter-revolutions and unsuccessful attempts at expansion fail and with the outbreak of World War II, Hungary allies with Germany. Despite an attempt to switch sides Hungary falls under German military occupation, which brings the fascist leader Ferenc Szálasi to power.

In 1944/1945 Hungary is invaded by the USSR. In the eastern parts of Hungary the Hungarian State is established, renamed Hungarian Republic in 1946. The provisional government, dominated by the Hungarian Communist Party, MKP, is replaced in 1945 after elections which gave majority control of a coalition government. This is undermined by terror tactics and with the support of the USSR leads to a communist dictatorship. Although a reformer Imre Nagy later took power he was forced (1954), but in 1956 the Hungarian people rose up against the communist regime and Soviet oppression. Pressure for change reaches a climax when security forces fired on Budapest students marching in support of Poland's confrontation with the Soviet Union. The ensuing battle quickly grew into a massive popular uprising with Imre Nagy became prime minister. Nagy dissolved the state security police, abolished the one-party system, promised free elections and negotiated with the USSR to withdraw its troops. Later that year Nagy announced Hungary's neutrality and withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. Consequently the USSR launched a massive military attack on Hungary. Some 200,000 Hungarians flee to the West.

Unfortunately with Soviet support Imre Nagy was replaced and thousands of people executed or imprisoned.

In 1989 the communists give up power voluntarily and Hungary becomes a parliamentary democratic republic named Hungarian Republic. The communist party is reformed and the first free elections are won by populist, center-right and liberal parties. Hungary joins the European Union in 2004.

Czech Republic

Following the First World War, the closely related Czechs and Slovaks of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire merged to form Czechoslovakia. During the interwar years, the new country's leaders were frequently preoccupied with meeting the demands of other ethnic minorities within the republic, most notably the Sudeten Germans and the Ruthenians (Ukrainians). After World War II, a truncated Czechoslovakia fell within the Soviet sphere of influence.

In 1968, an invasion by Warsaw Pact troops ended the efforts of the country's leaders to liberalize Communist party rule and create "socialism with a human face." Anti-Soviet

demonstrations the following year ushered in a period of harsh repression. With the collapse of Soviet authority in 1989, Czechoslovakia regained its freedom through a peaceful "Velvet Revolution." On 1 January 1993, the country underwent a "velvet divorce" into its two national components, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The Czech Republic joined NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004.

Attitudes of Former East Europeans



Nearly two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, people of former Iron Curtain countries generally look back approvingly at the collapse of communism. Majorities of people in most former Soviet republics and Eastern European countries endorse the emergence of multiparty systems and a free market economy. However, the initial widespread enthusiasm about these changes has dimmed in most of the countries surveyed; in some, support for democracy and capitalism has diminished markedly. In many nations, majorities or pluralities say that most people were better off under communism, and there is a widespread view that the business class and political leadership have benefited from the changes more than ordinary people.

Nonetheless, self reported life satisfaction has risen significantly in these societies compared with nearly two decades ago when public opinion in the former Eastern bloc was first surveyed.

The acceptance of – and appetite for – democracy is much less evident today among the publics of the former Soviet republics of Russia and Ukraine, who lived the longest under communism. In contrast, Eastern Europeans, especially the Czechs and those in the former East Germany, are more accepting of the economic and societal upheavals of the past two decades. East Germans, in particular, overwhelmingly approve of the reunification of Germany, as do those living in what was West Germany. However, fewer east Germans now have very positive views of reunification than in mid-1991, when the benchmark surveys were conducted. And now, as then, many of those living in east Germany believe that unification

happened too quickly.

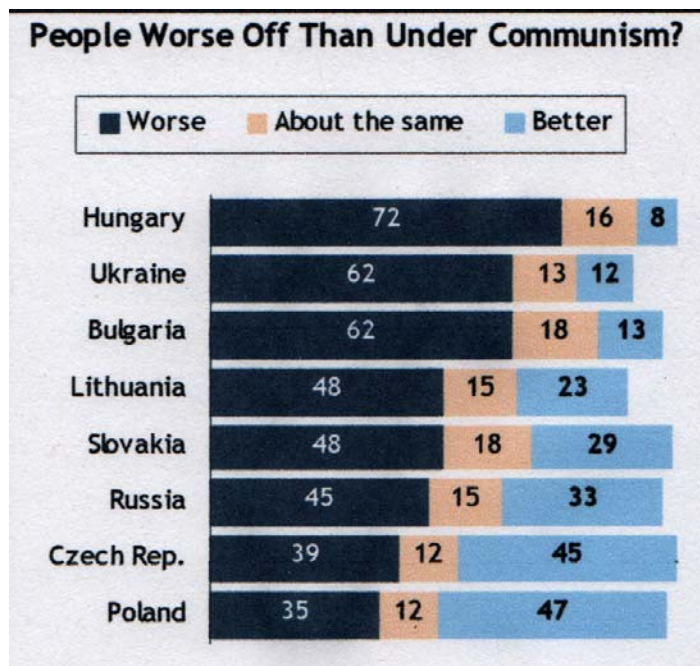
One of the most positive trends in Europe since the fall of the Wall is a decline in ethnic hostilities among the people of former communist countries. In a number of nations, fewer citizens say they hold unfavourable views of ethnic minorities than did so in 1991. Nonetheless, sizable percentages of people in former communist countries continue to have unfavourable views of minority groups and neighboring nationalities. The new poll also finds Western Europeans in a number of cases are at least as hostile toward minorities as are Eastern Europeans. In particular, many in the West, especially in Italy and Spain, hold unfavourable views of Muslims. Concern about Russia is another sentiment shared by both Eastern and Western Europeans. A majority of the French (57%) and 46% of Germans say Russia is having a bad influence on their countries; this view is shared by most Poles (59%) and sizable minorities in most other Eastern European countries. The exceptions are Bulgaria and Ukraine, where on balance Russia's influence is seen as more positive than negative.

As for the Russians themselves, there has been an upsurge in nationalist sentiment since the early 1990s. A majority of Russians (54%) agree with the statement "Russia should be for Russians"; just 26% agreed with that statement in 1991. Moreover, even as they embrace free market capitalism, fully 58% of Russians agree that "it is a great misfortune that the Soviet Union no longer exists." And nearly half (47%) say "it is natural for Russia to have an empire."

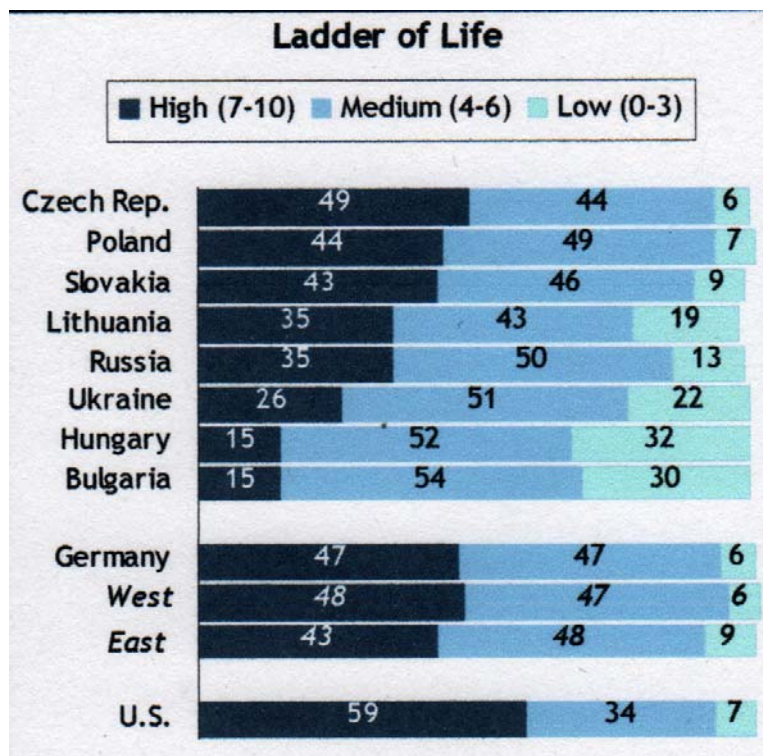
These are among the major findings of a new, 14-nation survey by the Pew Research Centre's Global Attitudes Project that was conducted Aug. 27 through Sept. 24 2009 among 14,760 adults. The survey, which includes nations in Eastern and Western Europe, as well as the United States, re-examines many of the key issues first explored in the 1991 survey.

The following results of the survey have been extracted from the report as been an interesting snapshot of the way people in the former Eastern Bloc view certain matters. For members of the tour it might prove of value, having looked at the results and then visited some of the former countries, to see whether your opinions match those of the people surveyed.

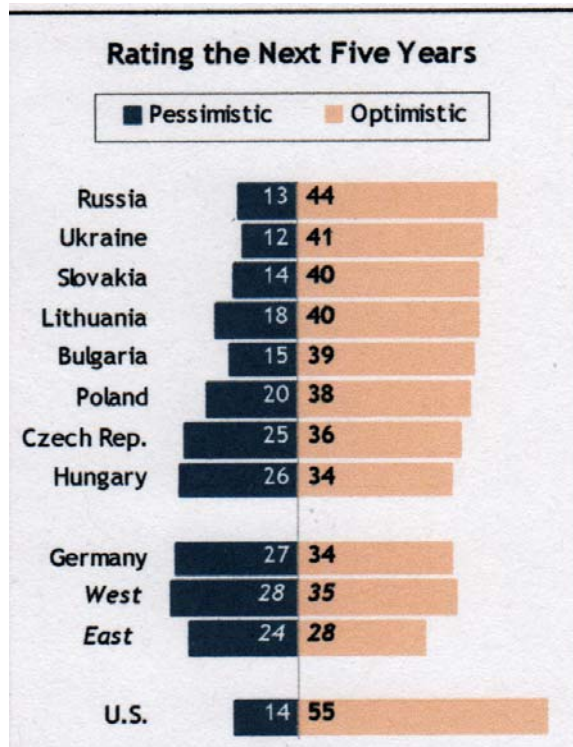
1. Are people now worse off than under communism?'



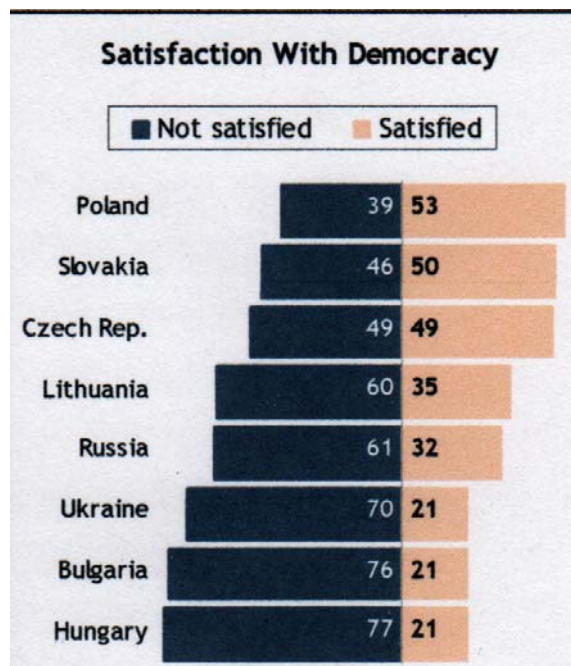
2. The ladder of life – where do you feel you are personally?



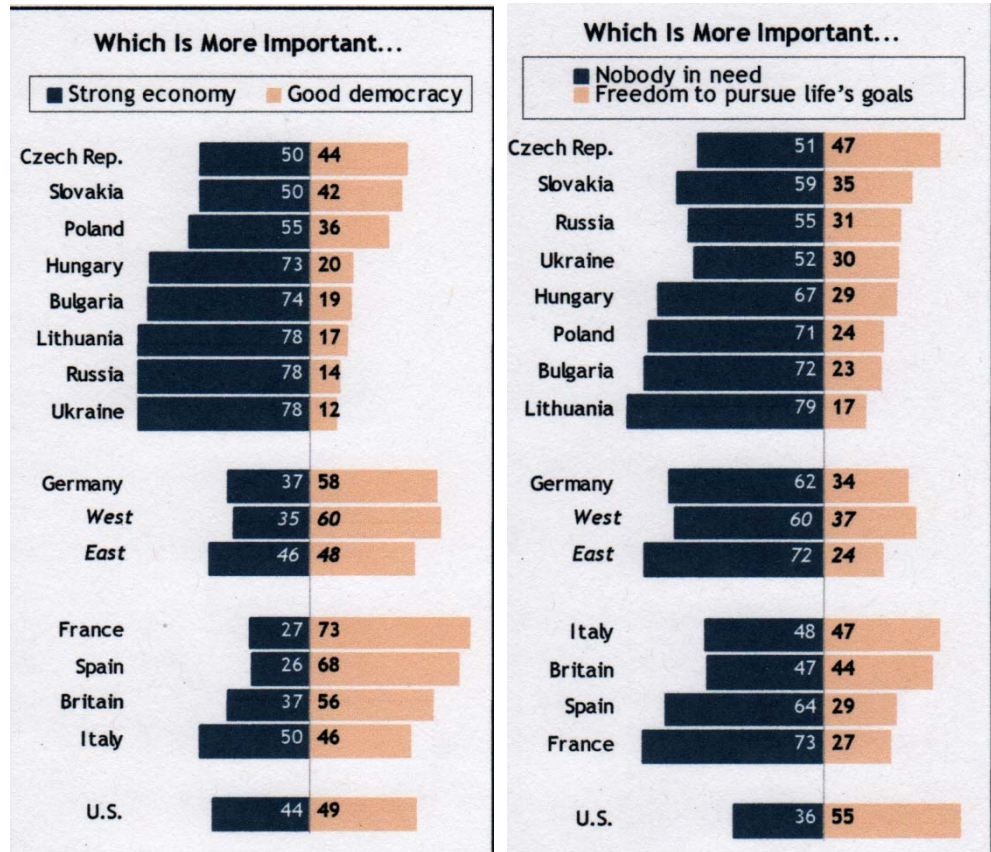
3. The future – are you more optimistic or pessimistic about the next five years?



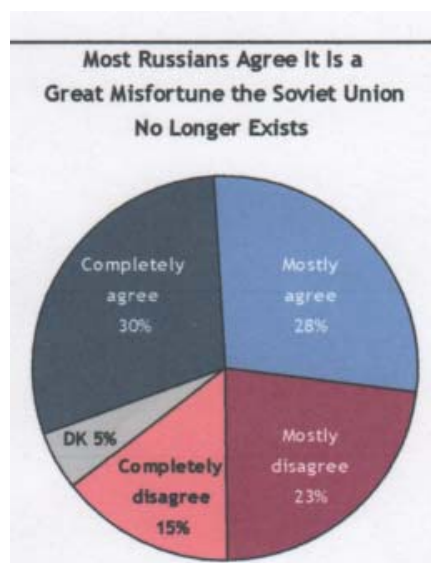
4. Are you satisfied with how democracy is working?



5. Which is more important good democracy or a strong economy? And
6. Which is more important – individualism or ensuring that nobody is in need?

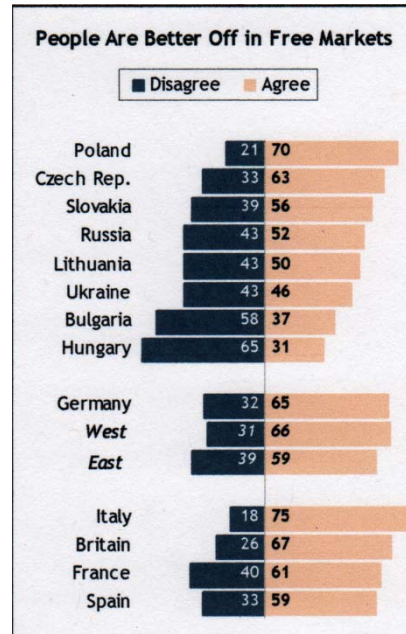


7. (Russians only) Do you think it's unfortunate that the USSR no longer exists?



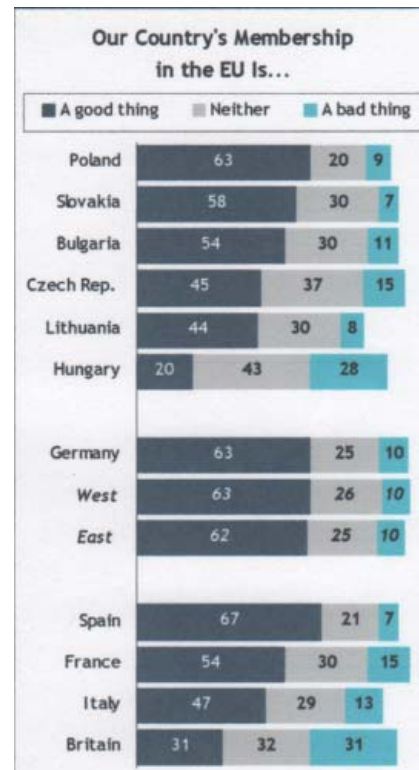
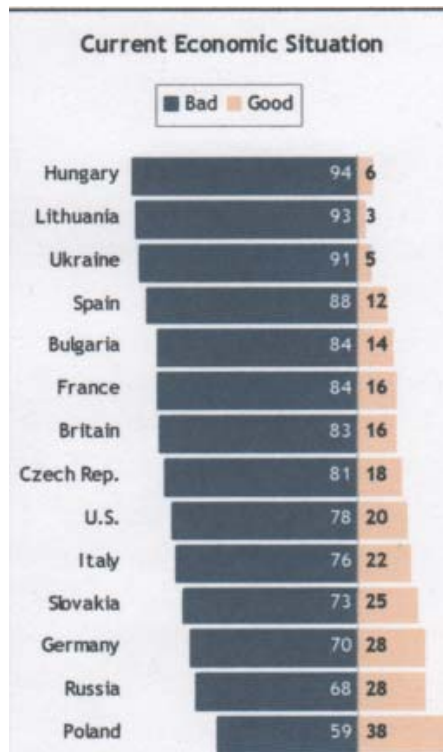
8. Do you approve of the move from state-controlled to the free market? And

9. Are people better off in free markets?



10. Are you satisfied with the current economic situation? And

11. Are you happy with your country's membership of the EU?



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