

alliance owed more to Tkachev and to the People's Will than to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the developers of Marxism. Young Bolsheviks such as Joseph V. Stalin and Nikolai I. Bukharin looked to Lenin as their leader.

Imperialism in Asia and the Russo-Japanese War, 1894–1905

At the turn of the century, Russia gained maneuvering room in Asia because of its alliance with France and the growing rivalry between Britain and Germany. Tsar Nicholas failed to orchestrate a coherent Far Eastern policy because of ministerial conflicts. Russia's uncoordinated and aggressive moves in the region ultimately led to the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05).

By 1895 Germany was competing with France for Russia's favor, and British statesmen hoped to negotiate with the Russians to demarcate spheres of influence in Asia. This situation enabled Russia to intervene in northeastern Asia after Japan's victory over China in 1895. Japan was forced to make concessions in the Liaotung Peninsula and Port Arthur in southern Manchuria. The next year, Witte used French capital to establish the Russo-Chinese Bank. The goal of the bank was to finance the construction of a railroad across northern Manchuria and thus shorten the Trans-Siberian Railway. Within two years, Russia had acquired leases on the Liaotung Peninsula and Port Arthur and had begun building a trunk line from Harbin to Port Arthur.

In 1900 China reacted to foreign encroachments on its territory with an armed popular uprising, the Boxer Rebellion. Russian military contingents joined forces from Europe, Japan, and the United States in restoring order in northern China. A force of 180,000 Russian troops fought to pacify part of Manchuria and to secure its railroads. The Japanese, however, backed by Britain and the United States, insisted that Russia evacuate Manchuria. Witte and some Russian diplomats wanted to compromise with Japan and trade Manchuria for Korea, but a group of Witte's reactionary enemies, courtiers, and army and naval leaders refused to compromise. The tsar favored their viewpoint, and, disdaining Japan's threats—despite the latter's formal alliance with Britain—the Russian government equivocated until Japan declared war in early 1904.

Japan's location, technological superiority, and higher morale gave it command of the seas, and Russia's sluggishness and incompetent commanders were the cause of continuous setbacks on land. In January 1905, after an eight-month siege, Port Arthur surrendered, and in March the Japanese forced the Russians to withdraw north of Mukden. In May, at the Tsushima Straits, the

Japanese destroyed Russia's last hope in the war, a fleet assembled from the navy's Baltic and Mediterranean squadrons. Theoretically, Russian army reinforcements could have driven the Japanese from the Asian mainland, but revolution at home and diplomatic pressure forced the tsar to seek peace. Russia, accepting American mediation, ceded southern Sakhalin to Japan, and it acknowledged Japan's ascendancy in Korea and southern Manchuria.

The Last Years of Tsardom

The Russo-Japanese War was a turning point in Russian history. It led to a popular uprising against the government that forced the regime to respond with domestic economic and political reforms. Advocates of counterreform and groups serving parochial interests, however, actively sought control of the regime's policies. In foreign affairs, Russia again became an intrusive participant in Balkan affairs and in the international political intrigues of major European powers. As a consequence of its foreign policies, Russia was drawn into a world war that its domestic policies rendered it poorly prepared to wage. The regime, severely weakened by internal turmoil and a lack of strong leadership, was ultimately unable to surmount the traumatic events that would lead to the fall of tsarism and initiate a new era in Russian and world history.

The Revolution of 1905 and Counterrevolution, 1905-07

The Russo-Japanese War accelerated the rise of political movements among all classes and the major nationalities, including propertied Russians. By early 1904, Russian liberals active in assemblies of nobles, zemstvos, and the professions had formed an organization called the Union of Liberation. In the same year, they joined with Finns, Poles, Georgians, Armenians, and with Russian members of the Socialist Revolutionary Party to form an anti-autocratic alliance. They later promoted the broad, professional Union of Unions. In early 1905, Father Georgii Gapon, a Russian Orthodox priest who headed a police-sponsored workers' association, led a huge, peaceful march in St. Petersburg to present a petition to the tsar. Nervous troops responded with gunfire, killing several hundred people, and thus the Revolution of 1905 began. Called "Bloody Sunday," this event, along with the failures incurred in the war with Japan, prompted opposition groups to instigate more strikes, agrarian disorders, army mutinies, and terrorist acts and to form a workers' council, or soviet (see Glossary), in St. Petersburg. Armed uprisings occurred in Moscow, the Urals, Latvia, and parts of Poland. Activists from the zemstvos and the Union

of Unions formed the Constitutional Democratic Party, whose members were known as Kadets.

Some upper-class and propertied activists were fearful of these disorders and were willing to compromise. In late 1905, Nicholas, under pressure from Witte, issued the so-called October Manifesto, giving Russia a constitution and proclaiming basic civil liberties for all citizens. The constitution envisioned a ministerial government responsible to the tsar, not to the proposed national Duma—a state assembly to be elected on a broad, but not wholly equitable, franchise. Those who accepted this arrangement formed a center-right political party, the Octobrists. The Kadets held out for a ministerial government and equal, universal suffrage. Because of their political principles and continued armed uprisings, Russia's leftist parties were in a quandary over whether or not to participate in the Duma elections. At the same time, rightists, who had been perpetrating anti-Jewish pogroms, actively opposed the reforms. Several monarchist and profascist groups wishing to subvert the new order also arose. Nevertheless, the regime continued to function, eventually restoring order in the cities, the countryside, and the army. In the process, several thousand officials were murdered by terrorists, and an equal number of terrorists were executed by the government. Because the government was successful in restoring order and in securing a loan from France before the Duma met, Nicholas was in a strong position and therefore able to dismiss Witte, who had been serving as Russia's chief minister.

The First Duma, which was elected in 1906, was dominated by the Kadets and their allies, with the mainly nonparty radical leftists slightly weaker than the Octobrists and the nonparty center-rightists combined. The Kadets and the government were deadlocked over the adoption of a constitution and peasant reform, leading to the dissolution of the Duma and the scheduling of new elections. In spite of an upsurge of leftist terror, radical leftist parties participated in the election and, together with the nonparty left, gained a plurality of seats, followed by a loose coalition of Kadets and of Poles and other nationalities in the political center. The impasse continued, however, when the Second Duma met in 1907.

The Tenuous Regimes of Stolypin and Kokovstev, 1907–14

In 1907 Petr Stolypin, the new chief minister, instituted a series of major reforms. In June 1907, he dissolved the Second Duma and promulgated a new electoral law, which vastly reduced the electoral weight of lower class and non-Russian voters and increased the weight of the nobility. This political coup succeeded to the extent

that the government restored order. New elections in the fall returned a more conservative Third Duma, which was dominated by Octobrists. Even this Duma, however, quarreled with the government over a variety of issues: the composition of the naval staff, the autonomous status of Finland, the introduction of zemstvos into the western provinces, the reform of the peasant court system, and the establishment of workers' insurance organizations under police supervision. In these disputes, the Duma, with the appointed aristocratic-bureaucratic upper house, was sometimes more conservative than the government, and at other times it was more legally or constitutionally minded. The Fourth Duma, elected in 1912, was similar in composition to the Third Duma, but a progressive faction of Octobrists split from the right and joined the political center.

Stolypin's boldest measure was his peasant reform program, which allowed, and sometimes forced, the breakup of communes as well as the establishment of full private property. Through the reform program, Stolypin hoped to create a class of conservative landowning farmers loyal to the tsar. Most peasants, however, did not want to lose the safety of the commune or to permit outsiders to buy village land. By 1914 only about 10 percent of all peasant communes had been dissolved. Nevertheless, the economy recovered and grew impressively from 1907 to 1914, not only quantitatively but also in terms of the formation of rural cooperatives and banks and the generation of domestic capital. By 1914 Russian steel production equaled that of France and Austria-Hungary, and Russia's economic growth rate was one of the highest in the world. Although Russia's external debt was very high, it was declining as a percentage of the gross national product (GNP—see Glossary), and the empire's overall trade balance was favorable.

In 1911 a double agent working for the Okhrana assassinated Stolypin. He was replaced by Vladimir N. Kokovtsev, Witte's successor as finance minister. Although very able and a supporter of the tsar, the cautious Kokovtsev could not compete with the powerful court factions that dominated the government.

Historians have debated whether or not Russia had the potential to develop a constitutional government between 1905 and 1914. At any rate, it failed to do so, in part because the tsar was not completely willing to give up autocratic rule or share power. By manipulating the franchise, the authorities obtained more conservative, but less representative, Dumas. Moreover, the regime sometimes bypassed the conservative Dumas and ruled by decree.

During this period, the government's policies were inconsistent—some reformist, others repressive. The bold reform plans of

Witte and Stolypin have led historians to speculate as to whether or not such reforms could have “saved” the Russian Empire. But the reforms were hampered by court politics, and both the tsar and the bureaucracy remained isolated from the rest of society. Suspensions of civil liberties and the rule of law continued in many places, and neither workers nor the Orthodox Church had the right to organize themselves as they chose. Discrimination against Poles, Jews, Ukrainians, and Old Believers was common. Domestic unrest was on the rise, while the empire’s foreign policy was becoming more adventurous.

The Return to an Active Balkan Policy, 1906–13

The logic of Russia’s earlier Far Eastern policy had required holding Balkan issues in abeyance—a strategy also followed by Austria-Hungary between 1897 and 1906. Japan’s victory in 1905 forced Russia to make deals with the British and the Japanese. In 1907 Russia’s new, more liberal foreign minister, Aleksandr P. Izvol’skii, concluded agreements with both nations. To maintain its sphere of influence in northern Manchuria and northern Iran, Russia agreed to Japanese ascendancy in southern Manchuria and Korea and to British ascendancy in southern Iran, Afghanistan, and Tibet. The logic of this policy demanded that Russia and Japan unite to prevent the United States from organizing a consortium to develop Chinese railroads and, after China’s republican revolution of 1911, to recognize each other’s spheres of influence in Outer Mongolia. In an extension of this logic, Russia traded recognition of German economic interests in the Ottoman Empire and Iran for German recognition of various Russian security interests in the region. Similarly, Russia’s strategic and financial position required that it remain faithful to its alliance with France and that it bolster the Anglo-French and Anglo-Russian rapprochements with the informal Triple Entente of Britain, France, and Russia, but without antagonizing Germany or provoking a war.

Nevertheless, following the Russo-Japanese War, Russia and Austria-Hungary resumed their Balkan rivalry, focusing on the South Slavic Kingdom of Serbia and the provinces of Bosnia and Hercegovina. The two provinces had been occupied by Austria-Hungary since 1878. Only a handful of Russian and Austrian statesmen knew that in 1881 Russia secretly had agreed to Austria’s future annexation of the provinces. But in 1908, Izvol’skii foolishly consented to their formal annexation in return for Austria’s support for a revision of the international agreement that had insured the neutrality of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles. This arrangement would have given Russia special navigational rights of passage.

When Britain blocked the revision, Austria nonetheless proceeded with the annexation and, backed by German threats of war, forced Russia to disavow support for Serbia—a pointed demonstration of Russian weakness.

After Austria's annexation of Bosnia and Hercegovina, Russian diplomacy increased tension and conflict in the Balkans. In 1912 Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro defeated the Ottoman Empire but continued to quarrel among themselves. Then in 1913, the Bulgarians were defeated by the Serbians, Greeks, and Romanians. Austria became Bulgaria's patron, while Germany remained the Ottoman Empire's protector. Russia tied itself more closely to Serbia. When a Serbian terrorist assassinated the heir to the Austrian throne in late June 1914, Austria delivered an ultimatum to Serbia. Russia, fearing another humiliation in the Balkans, supported Serbia. The system of alliances began to operate automatically, with Germany supporting Austria and with France backing Russia. When Germany invaded France through Belgium, the conflict escalated into a world war.

Russia at War, 1914–16

Russia's large population enabled it to field a greater number of troops than Austria-Hungary and Germany combined, but its underdeveloped industrial base meant that its soldiers were as poorly armed as those of the Austrian army. Russian forces were inferior to Germany's in every respect except numbers. Generally, the larger Russian armies defeated the Austro-Hungarians but suffered reverses against German or combined German-Austrian forces unless the latter were overextended.

In the initial phase of the war, Russia's offensives into East Prussia drew enough German troops from the Western Front to allow the French, Belgians, and British to stabilize it. One of Russia's two invading armies was almost totally destroyed, however. Meanwhile, the Russians turned back an Austrian offensive and pushed into eastern Galicia. The Russians halted a combined German-Austrian winter counteroffensive into Russian Poland, and in early 1915 they pushed more deeply into Galicia. Then in the spring and summer of that year, a German-Austrian offensive drove the Russians out of Galicia and Poland and destroyed several Russian army corps. In 1916 the Germans planned to drive France out of the war with a large-scale attack in the Verdun area, but a new Russian offensive against Austria-Hungary once again drew German troops from the west. These actions left both major fronts stable and both Russia and Germany despairing of victory: Russia because of exhaustion, Germany because of its opponents' superior

resources. Toward the end of 1916, Russia came to the rescue of Romania, which had just entered the war, and extended the Eastern Front south to the Black Sea. Russia had between 4 and 5 million casualties in World War I.

Wartime agreements among the Allies reflected the imperialist aims of the Triple Entente and the Russian Empire's relative weakness outside eastern Europe. Russia nonetheless expected impressive gains from a victory: territorial acquisitions in eastern Galicia from Austria, in East Prussia from Germany, and in Armenia from the Ottoman Empire; control of Constantinople and the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits; and territorial and political alteration of Austria-Hungary in the interests of Romania and the Slavic peoples of the region. Britain was to acquire the middle zone of Iran and share much of the Arab Middle East with France; Italy—not Russia's ally Serbia—was to acquire Dalmatia; Japan was to control more territory in China; and France was to regain Alsace-Lorraine and to have increased influence in western Germany.

The Strains of the War Effort and the Weakening of Tsarism

The onset of World War I had a drastic effect on domestic policies and a weak regime. A show of national unity had accompanied Russia's entrance into the war, but military reversals and the government's incompetence soon soured the attitude of much of the population. German control of the Baltic Sea and German-Ottoman control of the Black Sea severed Russia from most of its foreign supplies and potential markets. In addition, inept Russian preparations for war and ineffective economic policies hurt the country financially, logistically, and militarily. Inflation became a serious problem. Because of inadequate matériel support for military operations, the War Industries Committee was formed to ensure that necessary supplies reached the front. But army officers quarreled with civilian leaders, seized administrative control of front areas, and would not work with the committee. The central government disliked independent support activities organized by zemstvos and various cities. The Duma quarreled with the bureaucracy, and center and center-left deputies eventually formed the Progressive Bloc, which was aimed at forming a genuinely constitutional government.

After Russian military reversals in 1915, Nicholas II went to the front to assume nominal leadership of the army. His German-born wife, Aleksandra, and Rasputin, a debauched faith healer, who was able to stop the bleeding of the hemophiliac heir to the throne, tried to dictate policy and make ministerial appointments. Although their

true influence has been debated, they undoubtedly decreased the regime's prestige and credibility.

While the central government was hampered by court intrigue, the strain of the war began to cause popular unrest. In 1916 high food prices and a lack of fuel caused strikes in some cities. Workers, who won for themselves separate representative sections of the War Industries Committee, used them as organs of political opposition. The countryside was becoming restive. Soldiers, mainly newly recruited peasants who had been used as cannon fodder in the inept conduct of the war, were increasingly insubordinate.

The situation continued to deteriorate. In an attempt to alleviate the morass at the tsar's court, a group of nobles murdered Rasputin in December 1916. But his death brought little change. In the winter of 1917, however, deteriorating rail transport caused acute food and fuel shortages, which resulted in riots and strikes. Troops were summoned to quell the disorders. Although troops had fired on demonstrators and saved tsarism in 1905, in 1917 the troops in Petrograd (the name of St. Petersburg after 1914) turned their guns over to the angry crowds. Support for the tsarist regime simply evaporated in 1917, ending three centuries of Romanov rule.

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A good summary of Russian history is provided in *New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Macropaedia, "Russia and the Soviet Union, History of." Three excellent one-volume surveys of Russian history are Nicholas Riasanovsky's *A History of Russia*, David MacKenzie and Michael W. Curran's *A History of Russia and the Soviet Union*, and Robert Auty and Dmitry Obolensky's *An Introduction to Russian History*. The most useful thorough study of Russia before the nineteenth century is Vasily Kliuchevsky's five-volume collection, *Course of Russian History*. Good translations exist, however, only for the third volume, *The Seventeenth Century*, and part of the fourth volume, *Peter the Great*. For the 1800-1917 period, two excellent comprehensive works are the second volume of Michael T. Florinsky's *Russia: A History and Interpretation* and Hugh Seton-Watson's *The Russian Empire, 1801-1917*. The roots and nature of Russian autocracy are probed in Richard Pipes's controversial *Russia under the Old Regime*. A useful, if dated, translation of a Soviet interpretation of this subject is P.I. Liashchenko's *A History of the National Economy of Russia to the 1917 Revolution*. Social history is treated by Jerome Blum in *Lord and Peasant in Russia from the Ninth to the Nineteenth Century*. Cultural history is discussed in James H. Billington's *The Icon and the Axe* and Marc Raeff's *Russian Intellectual History*. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Chapter 2. Historical Setting: 1917 to 1982



Vladimir I. Lenin, founder of the Soviet state and the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)

THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS (Soviet Union) was established in December 1922 by the leaders of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) on territory generally corresponding to that of the old Russian Empire. A spontaneous popular uprising in Petrograd overthrew the imperial government in March 1917, leading to the formation of the Provisional Government, which intended to establish democracy in Russia. At the same time, to ensure the rights of the working class, workers' councils (soviets—see Glossary) sprang up across the country. The Bolsheviks (see Glossary), led by Vladimir I. Lenin, agitated for socialist revolution in the soviets and on the streets, and they seized power from the Provisional Government in November 1917. Only after the ensuing Civil War (1918–21) and foreign intervention was the new communist government secure.

From its first years, government in the Soviet Union was based on the one-party rule of the Communists, as the Bolsheviks called themselves beginning March 1918. After unsuccessfully attempting to centralize the economy during the Civil War, the Soviet government permitted some private enterprise to coexist with nationalized industry in the 1920s. Debate over the future of the economy provided the background for Soviet leaders to contend for power in the years after Lenin's death in 1924. By gradually consolidating influence and isolating his rivals within the party, Joseph V. Stalin became the sole leader of the Soviet Union by the end of the 1920s.

In 1928 Stalin introduced the First Five-Year Plan for building a socialist economy. In industry, the state assumed control over all existing enterprises and undertook an intensive program of industrialization; in agriculture, the state appropriated the peasants' property to establish collective farms. These sweeping economic innovations produced widespread misery, and millions of peasants perished during forced collectivization. Social upheaval continued in the mid-1930s when Stalin began a purge of the party; out of this purge grew a campaign of terror that led to the execution or imprisonment of untold millions of people from all walks of life. Yet despite this turmoil, the Soviet Union developed a powerful industrial economy in the years before World War II.

Stalin tried to avert war with Germany by concluding the Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact with Adolf Hitler in 1939, but in 1941 Germany invaded the Soviet Union. The Red Army stopped the

Nazi offensive at the Battle of Stalingrad in 1943 and then overran much of eastern Europe before Germany surrendered in 1945. Although severely ravaged in the war, the Soviet Union emerged from the conflict as one of the world's great powers.

During the immediate postwar period, the Soviet Union first rebuilt and then expanded its economy. The Soviet Union consolidated its control over postwar Eastern Europe, supplied aid toward the victory of the communists in China, and sought to expand its influence elsewhere in the world. The active Soviet foreign policy helped bring about the Cold War, which turned its wartime allies, Britain and the United States, into foes. Within the Soviet Union, repressive measures continued in force; Stalin apparently was about to launch a new purge when he died in 1953.

In the absence of an acceptable successor, Stalin's closest associates opted to rule the Soviet Union jointly, although behind the public display of collective leadership a struggle for power took place. Nikita S. Khrushchev, who acquired the dominant position in the country in the mid-1950s, denounced Stalin's use of terror and effectively reduced repressive controls over party and society. Khrushchev's reforms in agriculture and administration, however, were generally unproductive, and foreign policy toward China and the United States suffered reverses. Khrushchev's colleagues in the leadership removed him from power in 1964.

Following the ouster of Khrushchev, another period of rule by collective leadership ensued, which lasted until Leonid I. Brezhnev established himself in the early 1970s as the preeminent figure in Soviet political life. Brezhnev presided over a period of détente with the West while at the same time building up Soviet military strength; the arms buildup contributed to the demise of détente in the late 1970s. Also contributing to the end of détente was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979.

After some experimentation with economic reforms in the mid-1960s, the Soviet leadership reverted to established means of economic management. Industry showed slow but steady gains during the 1970s, while agricultural development continued to lag. In contrast to the revolutionary spirit that accompanied the birth of the Soviet Union, the prevailing mood of the Soviet leadership at the time of Brezhnev's death in 1982 was one of cautious conservatism and aversion to change.

Revolutions and Civil War

The February Revolution

By early 1917, the existing order in Russia verged on collapse. The country's involvement in World War I had already cost millions

of lives and caused severe disruption in Russia's backward economy. In an effort to reverse the steadily worsening military situation, Emperor Nicholas II commanded Russian forces at the front, abandoning the conduct of government in Petrograd (St. Petersburg before 1914; Leningrad after 1924) to his unpopular wife and a series of incompetent ministers. As a consequence of these conditions, the morale of the people rapidly deteriorated.

The spark to the events that ended tsarist rule was ignited on the streets of Petrograd in February 1917 (according to the old Julian calendar [see Glossary] then in use in Russia). Provoked by shortages of food and fuel, crowds of hungry citizens and striking workers began spontaneous rioting and demonstrations on March 7 (February 23, according to the Julian calendar). Local reserve troops, called in to suppress the riots, refused to fire on the crowds, and some soldiers joined the workers and other rioters. On March 12, with tsarist authority in Petrograd rapidly disintegrating, two separate bodies emerged, each claiming to represent the Russian people. One was the Executive Committee of the Duma, which the Duma (see Glossary) had established in defiance of the tsar's orders of March 11. The other body was the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, founded on the model of the St. Petersburg Soviet of 1905. With the consent of the Petrograd Soviet, the Executive Committee of the Duma organized the Provisional Government on March 15. Delegates of the new government met Nicholas that evening at Pskov, where rebellious railroad workers had stopped the imperial train as the tsar attempted to return to the capital. Advised by his generals that he lacked the support of the country, Nicholas informed the delegates that he was abdicating in favor of his brother, Grand Duke Michael. When Michael in turn refused the throne on March 16 (March 3), the rule of tsars and emperors in Russia came to an end.

The Period of Dual Power

The collapse of the monarchy left two rival political institutions—the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet—to share administrative authority over the country. The Petrograd Soviet, drawing its membership from socialist deputies elected in factories and regiments, coordinated the activities of other soviets that sprang up across Russia at this time. The Petrograd Soviet was dominated by moderate socialists of the Socialist Revolutionary Party and by the Menshevik (see Glossary) faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. The Bolshevik faction of the latter party provided the opposition. While representing the interests of Russia's working classes, the Petrograd Soviet at first did not seek to undermine the

Provisional Government's authority directly. Nevertheless, the Petrograd Soviet's "Order No. 1" of March 14 (March 1) instructed soldiers and sailors to obey their officers and the government only if their orders did not contradict the decrees of the Petrograd Soviet, thereby effectively limiting the Provisional Government's control over the armed forces.

The Provisional Government, in contrast to the socialist Petrograd Soviet, chiefly represented the propertied classes. Headed by ministers of a moderate or liberal bent, the new government pledged to convene a constituent assembly that would usher in a new era of bourgeois democracy. In the meantime, the government granted unprecedented rights—full freedom of speech, press, and religion, as well as legal equality—to all citizens. The government did not take up the matter of land redistribution, however, leaving it for the constituent assembly. Even more damaging, the ministers favored keeping Russia's military commitments to its allies, a position that became increasingly unpopular as the war dragged on. The government suffered its first crisis in the "April Days," when demonstrations against the government's annexationist war aims forced two ministers to resign, leading to the appointment of moderate socialist Aleksandr Kerensky as war minister. Kerensky, quickly assuming de facto leadership of the government, ordered the army to launch a major offensive in June, which, after early successes, turned into a full-scale retreat in July.

While the Provisional Government grappled with foreign foes, the Bolsheviks, who were opposed to bourgeois democracy, gained new strength. Lenin, the Bolshevik leader, returned to Petrograd in April 1917 from his wartime residence in Switzerland. Although he had been born into a noble family, from his youth Lenin espoused the cause of the common workers. A committed revolutionary and pragmatic Marxist thinker, Lenin astounded the Bolsheviks already in Petrograd by his *April Theses*, boldly calling for the overthrow of the Provisional Government, the transfer of "all power to the soviets," and the expropriation of factories by workers and of land belonging to the church, the nobility, and the gentry by peasants. Lenin's dynamic presence quickly won the other Bolshevik leaders to his position, and the radicalized orientation of the Bolshevik faction attracted new members. Inspired by Lenin's slogans, crowds of workers, soldiers, and sailors took to the streets of Petrograd in July to wrest power from the Provisional Government. But the spontaneity of the "July Days" caught the Bolshevik leaders by surprise, and the Petrograd Soviet, controlled by moderate Mensheviks, refused to take power or enforce Bolshevik demands. After the uprising died down, the Provisional Government

outlawed the Bolsheviks and jailed Leon Trotsky (Lev Trotskii, originally Lev Bronstein), an active Bolshevik leader. Lenin fled to Finland.

In the aftermath of the “July Days,” conservatives sought to reassert order in society. The army’s commander in chief, General Lavr Kornilov, who protested the influence of the soviets on both the army and the government, appeared as a counterrevolutionary threat to Kerensky, now prime minister. Kerensky dismissed Kornilov from his command, but Kornilov, disobeying the order, launched an extemporaneous revolt on September 10 (August 28). To defend the capital, Kerensky sought help from all quarters and relaxed his ban on Bolshevik activities. Railroad workers sympathetic to the Bolsheviks halted Kornilov’s troop trains, and Kornilov soon surrendered, ending the only serious challenge to the Provisional Government from the right.

The Bolshevik Revolution

Although the Provisional Government survived the Kornilov revolt, popular support for the government faded rapidly as the national mood swung to the left in the fall of 1917. Workers took control of their factories through elected committees; peasants expropriated lands belonging to the state, church, nobility, and gentry; and armies melted away as peasant soldiers deserted to take part in the land seizures. The Bolsheviks, skillfully exploiting these popular trends in their propaganda, dominated the Petrograd Soviet and the Moscow Soviet by September, with Trotsky, freed from prison after the Kornilov revolt, now chairman of the Petrograd Soviet.

Realizing that the time was ripe for seizing power by armed force, Lenin returned to Petrograd in October and convinced a majority of the Bolshevik Central Committee, which had hoped to take power legally, to accept armed uprising in principle. Trotsky won the Petrograd garrison over to Soviet authority, depriving the Provisional Government of its main military support in Petrograd.

The actual insurrection—the Bolshevik Revolution—began on the morning of November 6 (October 24) when Kerensky ordered the Bolshevik press closed. Interpreting this action as a counterrevolutionary move, the Bolsheviks called on their supporters to defend the Petrograd Soviet. By evening the Bolsheviks controlled utilities and most government buildings in Petrograd, allowing Lenin to proclaim the downfall of the Provisional Government on the morning of November 7 (October 25). The Bolsheviks captured the Provisional Government’s cabinet at its Winter Palace headquarters that night with hardly a shot fired in the government’s

defense. Kerensky left Petrograd to organize resistance, but his counter-coup failed and he fled Russia. Bolshevik uprisings soon took place elsewhere; the Bolsheviks gained control of Moscow by November 15 (November 2). The Second Congress of Soviets, meeting in Petrograd on November 7 (October 25), ratified the Bolshevik takeover after moderate deputies (mainly Mensheviks and right-wing members of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, or SRs) quit the session. The remaining Bolsheviks and left-wing SRs declared the soviets the governing bodies of Russia and named the Council of People's Commissars (*Sovet narodnykh komissarov*—*Sovnarkom*) to serve as the cabinet. Lenin became chairman of this council (see table 5, Appendix A). Trotsky took the post of commissar of foreign affairs; Stalin, a Georgian, became commissar of nationalities. By acting decisively while their opponents vacillated, the Bolsheviks succeeded in effecting their coup d'état.

On coming to power, the Bolsheviks issued a series of revolutionary decrees that ratified peasants' seizures of land and workers' control of industry; abolished legal class privileges; nationalized the banks; and set up revolutionary tribunals in place of the courts. At the same time, the revolutionaries now constituting the regime worked to secure power inside and outside the government. Deeming Western forms of parliamentary democracy irrelevant, Lenin argued for a dictatorship of the proletariat (see Glossary) based on one-party Bolshevik rule, although for a time left-wing SRs also participated in the *Sovnarkom*. The Soviet government created a secret police, the *Vecheka* (see Glossary) to persecute enemies of the state (including bourgeois liberals and moderate socialists) (see Predecessors of the Committee for State Security and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, ch. 19). Having convened the Constituent Assembly, which had been elected in November with the Bolsheviks winning only a quarter of the seats, the Soviet government dissolved the assembly in January after a one-day session, ending a short-lived experiment in parliamentary democracy in Russia.

In foreign affairs, the Soviet government, seeking to disengage Russia from the world war, called on the belligerent powers for an armistice and peace without annexations. The Allied Powers rejected this appeal, but Germany and its allies agreed to a cease-fire and began negotiations in December 1917. After dictating harsh terms that the Soviet government would not accept, however, Germany resumed its offensive in February 1918, meeting scant resistance from disintegrating Russian armies. Lenin, after bitter debate with leading Bolsheviks who favored prolonging the war in hopes of precipitating class warfare in Germany, persuaded a slim majority of the Bolshevik Central Committee that peace must

be made at any cost. On March 3, Soviet government officials signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, relinquishing Poland, the Baltic lands, Finland, and Ukraine to German control and giving up a portion of the Caucasus region to Turkey. With the new border dangerously close to Petrograd, the government was soon transferred to Moscow. An enormous part of the population and resources of the Russian Empire was lost by this treaty, but Lenin understood that no alternative could ensure the survival of the fledgling Soviet state.

Civil War and War Communism

Soon after buying peace with Germany, the Soviet state found itself under attack from other quarters. By the spring of 1918, elements dissatisfied with the Communists (as the Bolsheviks started calling themselves, conforming with the name change from Russian Social Democratic Labor Party to Russian Communist Party [Bolshevik] in March) established centers of resistance in southern and Siberian Russia against the Communist-controlled area (see fig. 4). Anti-Communists, often led by former officers of the tsarist army, clashed with the Red Army, founded and organized by Trotsky, now serving as commissar of war. A civil war to determine the future of Russia had begun.

The White armies (see Glossary) enjoyed, to varying degrees, the support of the Allied Powers. Desiring to defeat Germany in any way possible, Britain, France, and the United States landed troops in Russia and provided logistical support to the Whites, whom the Allies trusted to resume Russia's struggle against Germany after overthrowing the Communist regime. (Japan also sent troops, but with the intention of seizing territory in Siberia.) After the Allies defeated Germany in November 1918, they opted to continue their intervention in the Russian Civil War against the Communists in the interests of averting world socialist revolution.

During the Civil War, the Soviet regime also had to deal with struggles for independence in regions that it had given up under the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (which the regime immediately repudiated after Germany's defeat by the Allies in November 1918). By force of arms, the Communists established Soviet republics in Belorussia (January 1919), Ukraine (March 1919), Azerbaydzhan (April 1920), Armenia (November 1920), and Georgia (March 1921), but they were unable to win back the Baltic region, where the independent states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania had been founded shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution. In December 1917, during a civil war between Finnish Reds and Whites, the Soviet government recognized the independence of Finland but was disappointed



Source: Based on information from David MacKenzie and Michael W. Curran, *A History of Russia and the Soviet Union*, Chicago, 1987, 611.

Figure 4. Red Army Line, March 1920

when that country became a parliamentary republic in 1918. Poland, reborn after World War I, fought a successful war with Soviet Russia from April 1920 to March 1921 over the location of the frontier between the two states.

During its struggle for survival, the Soviet state placed great hope on revolution's breaking out in the industrialized countries. To coordinate the socialist movement under Soviet auspices, Lenin founded the Communist International (Comintern) in March 1919. Although no successful socialist revolutions occurred elsewhere immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution, the Comintern provided the Communist leadership with the means through which they later controlled foreign communist parties. By the end of 1920, the Communists had clearly triumphed in the Civil War. Although in 1919 Soviet Russia had shrunk to the size of sixteenth-century Muscovy, the Red Army had the advantage of defending the heartland with Moscow at its center. The White armies, divided geographically and

without a clearly defined cause, went down in defeat one by one. The monarchical cause was effectively killed when Communists shot the imperial family in July 1918. The Allied governments, lacking support for intervention from their war-weary citizenry, withdrew most of their forces by 1920. The last foreign troops departed Siberia in 1922, leaving the Soviet state unchallenged from abroad.

During the Civil War, the Communist regime took increasingly repressive measures against its opponents within the country. The Soviet constitution of 1918 deprived members of the former “exploiting classes”—nobles, priests, and capitalists—of civil rights. Left-wing SRs, formerly partners of the Bolsheviks, became targets for persecution during the Red Terror that followed an attempt on Lenin’s life in August 1918. In those desperate times, both Reds and Whites murdered and executed without trial large numbers of suspected enemies. The party also took measures to ensure greater discipline among its members by tightening its organization and creating specialized administrative organs.

In the economic life of the country, too, the Communist regime sought to exert control through a series of drastic measures that came to be known as war communism. To coordinate what remained of Russia’s economic resources after years of war, in 1918 the government nationalized industry and subordinated it to central administrations in Moscow. Rejecting workers’ control of factories as inefficient, the regime brought in expert managers to run the factories and organized and directed the factory workers as in a military mobilization. To feed the urban population, the Soviet government carried out mass requisitions of grain from the peasantry.

The results of war communism were unsatisfactory. Industrial production continued to fall. Workers received wages in kind because inflation had made the ruble practically worthless. In the countryside, peasants rebelled against payments in valueless money by curtailing or consuming their agricultural production. In late 1920, strikes broke out in the industrial centers, and peasant uprisings sprang up across the land as famine ravaged the countryside. To the Soviet government, however, the most disquieting manifestation of dissatisfaction with war communism was the rebellion in March 1921 of sailors at the naval base at Kronstadt (near Petrograd), which had earlier won renown as a bastion of the Bolshevik Revolution. Although Trotsky and the Red Army succeeded in putting down the mutiny, the rebellion signaled to the party leadership that the austere policies of war communism had to be abolished. The harsh legacy of the Civil War period,

however, would have a profound influence on the future development of the country.

The Era of the New Economic Policy

Lenin's Leadership

While the Kronshtadt base rebelled against the severe policies of war communism, the Tenth Party Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) met in March 1921 to hear Lenin argue for a new course in Soviet policy. Lenin realized that the radical approach to communism was unsuited to existing conditions and jeopardized the survival of his regime. Now the Soviet leader proposed a tactical retreat, convincing the congress to adopt a temporary compromise with capitalism under the program that came to be known as the New Economic Policy (NEP). Under NEP, market forces and the monetary system regained their importance. The state scrapped its policy of grain requisitioning in favor of taxation, permitting peasants to dispose of their produce as they pleased. NEP also denationalized service enterprises and much small-scale industry, leaving the "commanding heights" of the economy—large-scale industry, transportation, and foreign trade—under state control. Under the mixed economy of NEP, agriculture and industry staged recoveries, with most branches of the economy attaining prewar levels of production by the late 1920s. In general, standards of living improved during this time, and the "NEP man"—the independent private trader—became a symbol of the era.

About the time that the party sanctioned partial decentralization of the economy, it also approved a quasi-federal structure for the state. During the Civil War years, the non-Russian nationalities on the periphery of the former Russian Empire were theoretically independent, but in fact Moscow attempted to control them through the party and the Red Army. Some Communists favored a centralized Soviet state, while nationalists wanted autonomy for the borderlands. A compromise between the two positions was reached in December 1922 by the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The constituent republics of this Soviet Union (the Russian, Belorussian, Ukrainian, and Transcaucasian republics) exercised a degree of cultural and linguistic autonomy, while the Communist, predominantly Russian, leadership in Moscow retained political authority over the entire country.

The party consolidated its authority throughout the country, becoming a monolithic presence in state and society. Potential rivals outside the party, including prominent members of the abolished

Menshevik faction and the Socialist Revolutionary Party, were exiled. Within the party, Lenin denounced the formation of factions, particularly by radical-left party members. Central party organs subordinated local soviets under their authority. Purges of party members periodically removed the less committed from the rosters. The Politburo (see Glossary) created the new post of general secretary for supervising personnel matters and assigned Stalin to this office in April 1922. Stalin, a minor member of the Central Committee at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, was thought to be a rather lackluster personality and therefore well suited to the routine work required of the general secretary.

From the time of the Bolshevik Revolution and into the early NEP years, the actual leader of the Soviet state was Lenin. Although a collective of prominent Communists nominally guided the party and the Soviet Union, Lenin commanded such prestige and authority that even such brilliant theoreticians as Trotsky and Nikolai I. Bukharin generally yielded to his will. But when Lenin became temporarily incapacitated after a stroke in May 1922, the unity of the Politburo fractured, and a troika (triumvirate) formed by Stalin, Lev B. Kamenev, and Grigorii V. Zinov'ev assumed leadership in opposition to Trotsky. Lenin recovered late in 1922 and found fault with the troika, and particularly with Stalin. Stalin, in Lenin's view, had used coercion to force non-Russian republics to join the Soviet Union; he was "rude"; and he was accumulating too much power through his office of general secretary. Although Lenin recommended that Stalin be removed from that position, the Politburo decided not to take action, and Stalin remained general secretary when Lenin died in January 1924.

As important as Lenin's activities were to the foundation of the Soviet Union, his legacy to the Soviet future was perhaps even more significant. By willingly changing his policies to suit new situations, Lenin had developed a pragmatic interpretation of Marxism (later called Marxism-Leninism—see Glossary) that implied that the party should follow any course that would ultimately lead to communism. His party, while still permitting intraorganizational debate, insisted that its members adhere to its decisions once they were adopted, in accordance with the principle of democratic centralism (see Glossary). Finally, because his party embodied the dictatorship of the proletariat, organized opposition could not be tolerated, and adversaries would be prosecuted (see Lenin's Conception of the Party, ch. 7). Thus, although the Soviet regime was not totalitarian when he died, Lenin had nonetheless laid the foundations upon which such a tyranny might later arise.

Stalin's Rise to Power

After Lenin's death, two conflicting schools of thought regarding the future of the Soviet Union arose in party debates. Left-wing Communists believed that world revolution was essential for the survival of socialism in the economically backward Soviet Union. Trotsky, one of the primary proponents of this position, called for Soviet support for permanent revolution (see Glossary) around the world. As for domestic policy, the left wing advocated the rapid development of the economy and the creation of a socialist society. In contrast with these militant Communists, the right wing of the party, recognizing that world revolution was unlikely in the immediate future, favored the gradual development of the Soviet Union through NEP programs. Yet even Bukharin, one of the major right-wing theoreticians, believed that socialism could not triumph in the Soviet Union without assistance from more economically advanced socialist countries.

Against this backdrop of contrasting perceptions of the Soviet future, the leading figures of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)—the new name of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) as of December 1925—competed for influence. The Kamenev-Zinov'ev-Stalin troika, supporting the militant international program, successfully maneuvered against Trotsky and engineered his removal as commissar of war in 1925. In the meantime, Stalin gradually consolidated his power base and, when he had sufficient strength, broke with Kamenev and Zinov'ev. Belatedly recognizing Stalin's political power, Kamenev and Zinov'ev made amends with Trotsky to join against their former partner. But Stalin countered their attacks on his position with his well-timed formulation of the theory of "socialism in one country." This doctrine, calling for construction of a socialist society in the Soviet Union regardless of the international situation, distanced Stalin from the left and won support from Bukharin and the party's right wing. With this support, Stalin ousted the leaders of the "Left Opposition" from their positions in 1926 and 1927 and forced Trotsky into exile. By the end of the NEP era, free debate within the party thus became progressively limited as Stalin gradually eliminated his opponents.

Foreign Policy, 1921-28

In the 1920s, as the new Soviet state temporarily retreated from the revolutionary path to socialism, the party also adopted a less ideological approach in its relations with the rest of the world. Lenin, ever the practical leader, having become convinced that socialist

revolution would not break out in other countries in the near future, realized that his government required normal relations with the Western world for it to survive. Not only were good relations important for national security, but the economy also required trade with the industrial countries. Blocking Soviet attainment of these desires were lingering suspicions of communism on the part of the Western powers and concern over the foreign debts incurred by the tsarist government that the Soviet government had unilaterally canceled. In April 1922, the Soviet commissar of foreign affairs, Georgii Chicherin, circumvented these difficulties by achieving an understanding with Germany, the other pariah state of Europe, at Rapallo, Italy. In the Treaty of Rapallo, Germany and Russia agreed on mutual recognition, cancellation of debt claims, normalization of trade relations, and secret cooperation in military development. After concluding the treaty, the Soviet Union soon obtained diplomatic recognition from other major powers, beginning with Britain in February 1924. Although the United States withheld recognition until 1933, private American firms began to extend technological assistance and develop commercial links beginning in the 1920s.

Toward the non-Western world, the Soviet leadership limited its policy to promoting opposition among the indigenous populations against imperialist exploitation. Moscow did pursue an active policy in China, aiding the rise of the Nationalist Party, a non-Marxist organization committed to reform and national sovereignty. After the triumph of the Nationalists, a debate developed among Soviet leaders concerning the future status of relations with China. Stalin wanted the Chinese Communist Party to join the Nationalists and infiltrate the government from within, while Trotsky proposed an armed communist uprising and forcible imposition of socialism in that country. Although Stalin's plan was finally accepted, it came to nought when in 1926 the Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek ordered the Chinese communists massacred and Soviet advisers expelled.

Society and Culture in the 1920s

In many respects, the NEP period was a time of relative freedom and experimentation for the social and cultural life of the Soviet Union. The government tolerated a variety of trends in these fields, provided they were not overtly hostile to the regime. In art and literature, numerous schools, some traditional and others radically experimental, proliferated. Communist writers Maksim Gorky and Vladimir Maiakovskii were active during this time, but other authors, many of whose works were later repressed, published work

lacking socialist political content. Film, as a means of influencing a largely illiterate society, received encouragement from the state; much of cinematographer Sergei Eisenstein's best work dates from this period.

Education, under Commissar Anatolii Lunacharskii, entered a phase of experimentation based on progressive theories of learning. At the same time, the state expanded the primary and secondary school system and introduced night schools for working adults. The quality of higher education suffered, however, because admissions policies preferred entrants from the proletarian class over those of bourgeois backgrounds, regardless of the applicants' qualifications.

Under NEP the state eased its active persecution of religion begun during war communism but continued to agitate on behalf of atheism. The party supported the Living Church reform movement within the Russian Orthodox Church in hopes that it would undermine faith in the church, but the movement died out in the late 1920s.

In family life, attitudes generally became more permissive. The state legalized abortion, and it made divorce progressively easier to obtain. In general, traditional attitudes toward such institutions as marriage were subtly undermined by the party's promotion of revolutionary ideals.

Transformation and Terror

Industrialization and Collectivization

At the end of the 1920s, a dramatic new phase in economic development began when Stalin decided to carry out a program of intensive socialist construction. To some extent, Stalin chose to advocate accelerated economic development at this point as a political maneuver to eliminate rivals within the party. Because Bukharin and some other party members would not give up the gradualistic NEP in favor of radical development, Stalin branded them as "right-wing deviationists" and used the party organization to remove them from influential positions in 1929 and 1930. Yet Stalin's break with NEP also revealed that his doctrine of building "socialism in one country" paralleled the line that Trotsky had originally supported early in the 1920s. Marxism supplied no basis for Stalin's model of a planned economy, although the centralized economic controls of the war communism years seemingly furnished a Leninist precedent. Nonetheless, between 1927 and 1929 the State Planning Commission (Gosplan—see Glossary) worked out the First Five-Year Plan for intensive economic growth; Stalin began to implement this plan—his "revolution from above"—in 1928.

The First Five-Year Plan called for rapid industrialization of the economy, with particular growth in heavy industry. The economy was centralized: small-scale industry and services were nationalized, managers strove to fulfill Gosplan's output quotas, and the trade unions were converted into mechanisms for increasing worker productivity. But because Stalin insisted on unrealistic production targets, serious problems soon arose. With the greatest share of investment put into heavy industry, widespread shortages of consumer goods occurred, and inflation grew.

To satisfy the state's need for increased food supplies, the First Five-Year Plan called for the organization of the peasantry into collective units that the authorities could easily control. This collectivization program entailed compounding the peasants' lands and animals into collective farms (see Glossary) and state farms (see Glossary) and restricting the peasants' movements from these farms, thus in effect reintroducing a kind of serfdom into the countryside. Although the program was designed to affect all peasants, Stalin in particular sought to liquidate the wealthiest peasants, the kulaks. Generally speaking, the kulaks were only marginally better off than other peasants, but the party claimed that the kulaks ensnared the rest of the peasantry in capitalistic relationships. Yet collectivization met widespread resistance not only from kulaks but from poorer peasants as well, and a desperate struggle of the peasantry against the authorities ensued. Peasants slaughtered their cows and pigs rather than turn them over to the collective farms, with the result that livestock resources remained below the 1929 level for years afterward. The state in turn forcibly collectivized reluctant peasants and deported kulaks and active rebels to Siberia. Within the collective farms, the authorities in many instances exacted such high levels of procurements that starvation was widespread. In some places, famine was allowed to run its course; millions of peasants in the Ukrainian Republic starved to death when the state deliberately withheld food shipments.

By 1932 Stalin realized that both the economy and society were seriously overstrained. Although industry failed to meet its production targets and agriculture actually lost ground in comparison with 1928 yields, Stalin declared that the First Five-Year Plan had successfully met its goals in four years. He then proceeded to set more realistic goals. Under the Second Five-Year Plan (1933-37), the state devoted attention to consumer goods, and the factories built during the first plan helped increase industrial output in general. The Third Five-Year Plan, begun in 1938, produced poorer results because of a sudden shift of emphasis to armaments production in response to the worsening international climate. All in all,

however, the Soviet economy had become industrialized by the end of the 1930s. Agriculture, which had been exploited to finance the industrialization drive, continued to show poor returns throughout the decade.

The Period of the Purges

The complete subjugation of the party to Stalin, its leader, paralleled the subordination of industry and agriculture to the state. After squelching Bukharin and the "right-wing deviationists" in 1929 and 1930, Stalin's position was assured. To secure his absolute control over the party, however, Stalin began to purge from party ranks those leaders and their followers whose loyalty he doubted.

The period of Stalin's purges began in December 1934 when Sergei Kirov, a popular Leningrad party chief who advocated a moderate policy toward the peasants, was assassinated. Although details remain murky, many Western historians believe that Stalin instigated the murder to rid himself of a potential opponent. In any event, in the resultant mass purge of the local Leningrad party, thousands were deported to camps in Siberia. Zinov'ev and Kamenev, Stalin's former political partners, received prison sentences for their alleged role in Kirov's murder. At the same time, the NKVD (see Glossary), the secret police, stepped up surveillance through its agents and informers and claimed to uncover anti-Soviet conspiracies among prominent long-term party members. At three publicized show trials held in Moscow between 1936 and 1938, dozens of these Old Bolsheviks, including Zinov'ev, Kamenev, and Bukharin, confessed to improbable crimes against the Soviet state and were executed. (The last of Stalin's old enemies, Trotsky, who had supposedly masterminded the conspiracies against Stalin from abroad, was murdered in Mexico in 1940, presumably by the NKVD.) Coincident with the show trials against the original leadership of the party, unpublicized purges swept through the ranks of younger leaders in party, government, industrial management, and cultural affairs. Party purges in the non-Russian republics were particularly severe. The Ezhovshchina ("era of Ezhov," named for NKVD chief Nikolai Ezhov) ravaged the military as well, leading to the execution or incarceration of about half the entire military officer corps. The secret police also terrorized the general populace, with untold numbers of common people punished for spurious crimes. By the time the purges subsided in 1938, millions of Soviet leaders, officials, and other citizens had been executed, imprisoned, or exiled.

The reasons for this period of widespread purges remain unclear. Western historians variously hypothesize that Stalin created the

terror out of a desire to goad the population to carry out his intensive modernization program, or to atomize society to preclude dissent, or simply out of brutal paranoia. Whatever the causes, the purges must be viewed as a counterproductive episode that weakened the Soviet state and caused incalculable suffering.

In 1936, just as the purges were intensifying the Great Terror (see Glossary), Stalin approved a new Soviet constitution to replace that of 1924. Hailed as “the most democratic constitution in the world,” the 1936 document stipulated free and secret elections based on universal suffrage and guaranteed the citizenry a range of civil and economic rights. But in practice the freedoms implied by these rights were denied by provisions elsewhere in the constitution that indicated that the basic structure of Soviet society could not be changed and that the party retained all political power (see *Early Soviet Constitutions*, ch. 8).

The power of the party, in turn, now was concentrated in the persons of Stalin and his handpicked Politburo. Symbolic of the lack of influence of the party rank and file, party congresses (see Glossary) met less and less frequently. State power, far from “withering away” after the revolution as Karl Marx had predicted, instead grew in strength. Stalin’s personal dictatorship found reflection in the adulation that surrounded him; the reverence accorded Stalin in Soviet society gradually eclipsed that given to Lenin.

Mobilization of Society

Concomitant with industrialization and collectivization, society also experienced wide-ranging regimentation. Collective enterprises replaced individualistic efforts across the board: not only did the regime abolish private farms and businesses, but it collectivized scientific and literary endeavors as well. As the 1930s progressed, the revolutionary experimentation that had characterized many facets of cultural and social life gave way to conservative norms.

Considerations of order and discipline dominated social policy, which became an instrument for the modernization effort. Workers came under strict labor codes demanding punctuality and discipline, and labor unions served as extensions of the industrial ministries. At the same time, higher pay and privileges accrued to productive workers and labor brigades. To provide greater social stability, the state aimed to strengthen the family by restricting divorce and abolishing abortion.

Literature and the arts came under direct party control during the 1930s as mandatory membership in unions of writers, musicians, and other artists entailed adherence to established standards. After 1934, the party dictated that creative works had to express

socialistic spirit through traditional forms. This officially sanctioned doctrine, called socialist realism (see Glossary), applied to all fields of artistic endeavor. The state repressed works that were stylistically innovative or lacked appropriate content.

The party also subjected science and the liberal arts to its scrutiny. Development of scientific theory in a number of fields had to be based upon the party's understanding of the Marxist dialectic, which derailed serious research in certain disciplines. The party took a more active role in directing work in the social sciences. In the writing of history, the orthodox Marxist interpretation employed in the late 1920s was modified to include nationalistic themes and to stress the role of great leaders to foster legitimacy for Stalin's dictatorship.

Education returned to traditional forms as the party discarded the experimental programs of Lunacharskii after 1929. Admission procedures underwent modification: candidates for higher education now were selected by their academic records, rather than by class origins.

Religion suffered from a state policy of increased repression, starting with the closure of numerous churches in 1929. Persecution of clergy was particularly severe during the purges of the late 1930s, when many of the faithful went underground.

Foreign Policy, 1928-39

Soviet foreign policy underwent a series of changes during the first decade of Stalin's rule. Soon after assuming control of the party, Stalin oversaw a radicalization of Soviet foreign policy that complemented his strenuous domestic policies. To heighten the urgency of his demands for modernization, Stalin portrayed the Western powers, particularly France, as warmongers eager to attack the Soviet Union. The diplomatic isolation practiced by the Soviet Union in the early 1930s seemed ideologically justified by the Great Depression; world capitalism appeared destined for destruction. To aid the triumph of communism, Stalin resolved to weaken the moderate social democrats of Europe, the communists' rivals for working-class support. Conversely, the Comintern ordered the Communist Party of Germany to aid the anti-Soviet National Socialist German Workers' Party (the Nazi Party) in its bid for power in the hopes that a Nazi regime would exacerbate social tensions and produce conditions that would lead to a communist revolution in Germany. Stalin thus shares responsibility for Hitler's rise to power in 1933 and its tragic consequences for the Soviet Union and the rest of the world.

The dynamics of Soviet foreign relations changed drastically after Stalin recognized the danger posed by Nazi Germany. From 1934 through 1937, the Soviet Union tried to restrain German militarism by building coalitions hostile to fascism. In the international communist movement, the Comintern adopted the popular front (see Glossary) policy of cooperation with socialists and liberals against fascism, thus reversing its line of the early 1930s. In 1934 the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations, where Maksim M. Litvinov, the commissar of foreign affairs, advocated disarmament and collective security against fascist aggression. In 1935 the Soviet Union concluded defensive military alliances with France and Czechoslovakia, and from 1936 to 1939 it gave assistance to antifascists in the Spanish Civil War. The menace of fascist militarism to the Soviet Union increased when Germany and Japan (itself a threat to Soviet Far Eastern territory in the 1930s) signed the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1936. But the West proved unwilling to counter German provocative behavior, and after France and Britain acquiesced to Hitler's demands for Czechoslovak territory at Munich in 1938, Stalin abandoned his efforts to forge a collective security agreement with the West.

Convinced now that the West would not fight Hitler, Stalin decided to come to an understanding with Germany. Signaling a shift in foreign policy, Viacheslav Molotov, Stalin's loyal assistant, replaced Litvinov (who was Jewish) as commissar of foreign affairs in May 1939. Hitler, who had decided to attack Poland despite the guarantees of Britain and France to defend that country, soon responded to the changed Soviet stance. While Britain and France dilatorily attempted to induce the Soviet Union to join them in pledging to protect Poland, the Soviet Union and Germany engaged in intensive negotiations. The product of the talks between the former ideological foes—the Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact of August 23, 1939—shocked the world. The open provisions of the agreement pledged absolute neutrality in the event one of the parties should become involved in war, while a secret protocol partitioned Poland between the parties and assigned Romanian territory as well as Estonia and Latvia (and later Lithuania) to the Soviet sphere of influence. With his eastern flank thus secured, Hitler began the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939; Britain and France declared war on Germany two days later. World War II had begun.

War Years

Prelude to War

When German troops invaded Poland, the Soviet Union was ill prepared to enter a major war. Although military expenditures

had increased dramatically during the 1930s and the standing army was expanded in 1939, Soviet weaponry was inferior to that of the German army. More important, the purges had deprived the armed services of many capable leaders, resulting in diminished morale and effectiveness. The time gained through the pact with the Nazis was therefore critical to the development of Soviet defenses, particularly after Hitler's forces had overrun much of western Europe, against little resistance, by the summer of 1940.

To strengthen its western frontier, the Soviet Union quickly secured the territory located in its sphere of interest. Soviet forces seized eastern Poland in September 1939; entered Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (which were later converted into Soviet republics) in October 1939; and seized the Romanian territories of Bessarabia (later incorporated into the Moldavian Republic) and northern Bukovina (later added to the Ukrainian Republic) in June 1940. Only Finland resisted Stalin's program of expansion, first by refusing to cede territory and then by putting up a determined defense when the Red Army invaded in November 1939. Although the Soviet Union finally won its original demands in March 1940, the Soviet-Finnish War (also known as the Winter War) pointed out grave deficiencies in Soviet military capabilities, which Hitler undoubtedly noted.

As the European war continued and the theaters of the conflict widened, Hitler began to chafe under his pact with the Soviet Union. The German dictator refused to grant Stalin a free hand in the Balkans and instead moved the German forces deeper into eastern Europe and strengthened his ties with Finland. Hitler thus prepared for war against the Soviet Union under a plan that he officially approved in December 1940. Stalin, however, apparently believed that the Soviet Union could avert war by not offending Germany. The Soviet Union continued its regular shipments of resources to Germany and maintained its armed forces at a low stage of readiness. But despite Stalin's efforts to mollify Hitler, Germany declared war on the Soviet Union just as 180 German divisions swept across the border early on the morning of June 22, 1941.

The Great Patriotic War

The German blitzkrieg nearly succeeded in defeating the Soviet Union within the first months. The Soviet forces, caught unprepared, lost whole armies and vast quantities of equipment to the German onslaught in the first weeks of the war. By November the German army had seized the Ukrainian Republic, begun its siege of Leningrad, and threatened the security of Moscow itself (see fig. 5). The Great Patriotic War, as the Soviet Union calls the phase

of World War II involving that country, thus began inauspiciously for the Soviet Union.

By the end of 1941, however, the German forces had lost their momentum. Harsh winter weather, attacks from bands of partisans, and difficulties in obtaining supplies over long distances restricted German movements. At the same time the Red Army, after recovering from the initial blow, launched its first counterattacks against the invaders in December. To ensure the army's ability to fight the war, the Soviet authorities evacuated thousands of factories and key personnel from the war zone to the interior of the country, where the plants began producing war matériel. Finally, the country was bolstered by the prospect of receiving assistance from Britain and the United States.

After a lull in active hostilities during the winter of 1941–42, the German army renewed its offensive, scoring a number of victories in the Ukrainian Republic, Crimea, and southern Russia in the first half of 1942. Then, in an effort to gain control of the lower Volga River region, the German forces attempted to capture the city of Stalingrad (present-day Volgograd) on the west bank of the river. Here, Soviet forces put up fierce resistance even after Hitler's determined actions to take the city had reduced it to rubble. Finally, Soviet forces led by General Georgii K. Zhukov surrounded the German attackers and forced their surrender in February 1943. The Soviet victory at Stalingrad proved decisive; after losing this battle the Germans lacked the strength to sustain their offensive operations against the Soviet Union.

After Stalingrad, the Soviet Union held the initiative for the rest of the war. By the end of 1943, the Red Army had broken through the German siege of Leningrad and recaptured much of the Ukrainian Republic. By the end of 1944, the front had moved beyond the 1939 Soviet frontiers into eastern Europe. With a decisive superiority in troops and weaponry, Soviet forces drove into eastern Germany, capturing Berlin in May 1945. The war with Germany thus ended triumphantly for the Soviet Union.

In gaining the victory, the Soviet government had to rely on the support of the people. To increase popular enthusiasm for the war, Stalin changed his domestic policies to heighten patriotic spirit. Nationalistic slogans replaced much of the communist rhetoric in official pronouncements and the mass media. Active persecution of religion ceased, and in 1943 Stalin allowed the Russian Orthodox Church to name a patriarch after the office had stood vacant for nearly two decades. In the countryside, authorities permitted greater freedom on the collective farms. Harsh German rule in the occupied territories also aided the Soviet cause. Nazi administrators of



Source: Based on information from David MacKenzie and Michael W. Curran, *A History of Russia and the Soviet Union*, Chicago, 1987, 742.

Figure 5. Military Operations Against Germany, 1941-45

conquered Soviet territories made little attempt to exploit the population's dissatisfaction with Soviet political and economic policies. Instead, the Nazis preserved the collective-farm system, systematically carried out genocidal policies against Jews, and deported others (mainly Ukrainians) to work in Germany. Under these circumstances, the great majority of the Soviet people fought and worked on their country's behalf, thus ensuring the regime's survival.

The war with Germany also brought about a temporary alliance with the two greatest powers in the "imperialist camp," namely, Britain and the United States. Despite deep-seated mistrust between

the Western democracies and the Soviet state, the demands of war made cooperation critical. The Soviet Union benefited from shipments of weaponry and equipment from the Western Allies; during the course of the war the United States alone furnished supplies worth over US\$11 billion. At the same time, by engaging considerable German resources, the Soviet Union gave the United States and Britain time to prepare to invade German-occupied western Europe. Relations began to sour, however, when the war turned in the Allies' favor. The postponement of the European invasion to June 1944 became a source of irritation to Stalin, whose country meanwhile bore the brunt of the struggle with Germany. Then, as Soviet armies pushed into eastern Europe, the question of the postwar order increased the friction within the coalition. At the Yalta Conference in February 1945, Stalin clashed with President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill over his plans to extend Soviet influence to Poland after the war. At the same time, however, Stalin promised to join the war against Japan ninety days after Germany had been defeated. Breaking the neutrality pact that the Soviet Union had concluded with Japan in April 1941, the Red Army entered the war in East Asia several days before Japan surrendered in August 1945. Now, with all common enemies defeated, little remained to preserve the alliance between the Western democracies and the Soviet Union.

The end of World War II saw the Soviet Union emerge as one of the world's two great military powers. Its battle-tested forces occupied most of postwar Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union won island holdings from Japan and further concessions from Finland (which had joined in the German invasion in 1941) in addition to the territories the Soviet Union had seized as a consequence of the Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact. But these achievements had been bought at a high cost. An estimated 20 million Soviet soldiers and civilians perished in the war, the heaviest loss of life of any of the combatant countries. The war also inflicted severe material losses throughout the vast territory that had been included in the war zone. The suffering and losses resulting from the war made a lasting impression on the Soviet people and leaders that cannot be overlooked.

Reconstruction and Cold War

Reconstruction Years

Although the Soviet Union was victorious in World War II, its economy had been devastated in the struggle. Roughly a quarter of the country's capital resources had been destroyed, and industrial

and agricultural output in 1945 fell far short of prewar levels. To help rebuild the country, the Soviet government obtained limited credits from Britain and Sweden but refused economic assistance proposed by the United States under the Marshall Plan. Instead, the Soviet Union compelled Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe to supply machinery and raw materials. Germany and former Nazi satellites (including Finland) made reparations to the Soviet Union. The Soviet people bore much of the cost of rebuilding because the reconstruction program emphasized heavy industry while neglecting agriculture and consumer goods. By the time of Stalin's death in 1953, steel production was twice its 1940 level, but the production of many consumer goods and foodstuffs was lower than it had been in the late 1920s.

During the postwar reconstruction period, Stalin tightened domestic controls, justifying the repression by playing up the threat of war with the West. Many repatriated Soviet citizens who had lived abroad during the war, whether as prisoners of war, forced laborers, or defectors, were executed or sent to prison camps. The limited freedoms granted in wartime to the church and to collective farmers were revoked. The party tightened its admission standards and purged many who had become party members during the war.

In 1946 Andrei Zhdanov, a close associate of Stalin, helped launch an ideological campaign designed to demonstrate the superiority of socialism over capitalism in all fields. This campaign, colloquially known as the Zhdanovshchina (era of Zhdanov), attacked writers, composers, economists, historians, and scientists whose work allegedly manifested Western influence. Although Zhdanov died in 1948, the cultural purge continued for several years afterward, stifling Soviet intellectual development. Another campaign, related to the Zhdanovshchina, lauded the real or purported achievements of past and present Russian inventors and scientists. In this intellectual climate, the genetic theories of biologist Trofim D. Lysenko, which were supposedly derived from Marxist principles but lacked scientific bases, were imposed upon Soviet science to the detriment of research and agricultural development. The antic cosmopolitan trends of these years adversely affected Jewish cultural and scientific figures in particular. In general, a pronounced sense of Russian nationalism, as opposed to socialist consciousness, pervaded Soviet society.

The Cold War

After World War II, the Soviet Union and its Western allies soon parted ways as mutual suspicions of the other's intentions and

*Monument at Babi Yar, Kiev,
Ukrainian Republic, in
memory of the more than
100,000 Soviet citizens
murdered by German
troops during World War II
Courtesy Jimmy Pritchard*



actions flourished. Eager to consolidate influence over a number of countries near the Soviet Union, Stalin pursued aggressive policies after World War II that provoked strong Western reaction. The United States worked to contain Soviet expansion in this period of international relations that has come to be known as the Cold War.

Mindful of the numerous invasions of Russia and the Soviet Union from the West throughout history, Stalin sought to create a buffer zone of subservient East European countries, most of which the Red Army (known as the Soviet armed forces after 1946) had occupied in the course of the war. Taking advantage of its military occupation of these countries, the Soviet Union actively assisted local communist parties in coming to power. By 1948 seven East European countries had communist governments. The Soviet Union initially maintained control behind the “iron curtain” (to use Churchill’s phrase) through troops, security police, and its diplomatic service. Unequal trade agreements with the East European countries permitted the Soviet Union access to valued resources.

Soviet actions in Eastern Europe helped produce Western hostility toward their former ally, but the Western powers could do nothing to halt consolidation of Soviet authority in that region short of going to war. However, the United States and its allies had greater success in halting Soviet expansion in areas where Soviet influence was more tenuous. British and American diplomatic support for Iran

forced the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops from the northeastern part of that country in 1946. Soviet efforts to acquire territory from Turkey and establish a communist government in Greece were stymied when the United States extended military and economic support to those countries under the Truman Doctrine in 1947. Later that year, the United States introduced the Marshall Plan for the economic recovery of other countries of Europe. The Soviet Union forbade the countries it dominated from taking part in the program, and the Marshall Plan contributed to reducing Soviet influence in the participating West European nations.

Tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union became especially strained over the issue of Germany. At the Potsdam Conference of July–August 1945, the Allied Powers confirmed their decision to divide Germany and the city of Berlin into zones of occupation (with the eastern sectors placed under Soviet administration) until such time as the Allies would permit Germany to establish a central government. Disagreements between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies soon arose over their respective occupation policies and the matter of reparations. In June 1948, the Soviet Union cut off the West's land access to the American, British, and French sectors of Berlin in retaliation for steps taken by the United States and Britain to unite Germany. Britain and the United States thereupon sponsored an airlift to keep the beleaguered sectors provisioned until the Soviet Union lifted the blockade in May 1949. Following the Berlin blockade, the West and the Soviet Union divided Germany into two countries, one oriented to the West, the other to the East. The crisis also provided the catalyst for the Western countries in 1949 to form the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a collective security system designed to use conventional armies and nuclear weapons to offset Soviet forces.

While the Soviet Union gained a new satellite nation in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), it lost its influence in Yugoslavia. The local communists in Yugoslavia had come into power without Soviet assistance, and their leader, Josip Broz Tito, refused to subordinate the country to Stalin's control. Tito's defiance led the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform—founded in 1947 to partially replace the Comintern, which had been abolished in 1943) to expel the Yugoslav party from the international communist movement in 1948. To guard against the rise of other independent leaders, Stalin purged many of the chief communists in other East European states.

In Asia, the Chinese Communists, headed by Mao Zedong and assisted by the Soviet Union, achieved victory over the Nationalists in 1949. Several months afterward, in 1950, China and the

Soviet Union concluded a mutual defense treaty against Japan and the United States. Hard negotiations over concessions and aid between the two communist countries served as an indication that China, with its independent party and enormous population, would not become a Soviet satellite, although for a time their relations appeared particularly close. Elsewhere in Asia, the Soviet Union pursued a vigorous policy of support for national liberation movements, especially in Malaya and Indochina, which were still colonies of Britain and France, respectively. Thinking that the West would not defend the Republic of Korea (South Korea), Stalin allowed or encouraged the Soviet-equipped forces of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) to invade South Korea in 1950. But forces from the United States and other members of the United Nations came to the aid of South Korea, leading China to intervene militarily on behalf of North Korea, probably on Soviet instigation. Although the Soviet Union avoided direct participation in the conflict (which would end in 1953), the Korean War inspired the United States to strengthen its military capability and to conclude a peace treaty and security pact with Japan. Chinese participation in the war also strengthened China's independent position in relation to the Soviet Union.

Death of Stalin

In the early 1950s, Stalin, now an old man, apparently permitted his subordinates in the Politburo (enlarged and called the Presidium by the Nineteenth Party Congress in October 1952) greater powers of action within their spheres. (Also at the Nineteenth Party Congress, the name of the party was changed from the All-Union Communist Party [Bolshevik] to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union—CPSU.) Indicative of the Soviet leader's waning strength, Secretary Georgii M. Malenkov delivered the political report to the Nineteenth Party Congress in place of Stalin (see Party Congress, ch. 7). Although the general secretary took a smaller part in the day-to-day administration of party affairs, he maintained his animosity toward potential enemies. In January 1953, the party newspaper announced that a group of predominantly Jewish doctors had murdered high Soviet officials, including Zhdanov. Western historians speculate that the disclosure of this "doctors' plot" may have been a prelude to an intended purge directed against Malenkov, Molotov, and secret police chief Lavrenty Beria. In any case, when Stalin died on March 5, 1953 (under circumstances that are still unclear), his inner circle, which had feared him for years, secretly rejoiced.

During his quarter-century of dictatorial control, Stalin had overseen impressive development in the Soviet Union. From a comparatively backward agricultural society, the country had been transformed into a powerful industrial state. But in the course of that transformation, millions of people had been killed, and Stalin's use of repressive controls had become an integral function of his regime. How Stalin's system would be maintained or altered would be a question of vital concern to Soviet leaders for years after him.

The Khrushchev Era

Collective Leadership and the Rise of Khrushchev

Stalin died without naming an heir, and none of his associates had the power to immediately claim supreme leadership. The deceased dictator's colleagues initially tried to rule jointly through a collective leadership, with Malenkov holding the top positions of prime minister (chairman of the Council of Ministers; the name changed from Council of People's Commissars in 1946) and general secretary (the latter office for only two weeks). The arrangement was first challenged in 1953 when Beria, the powerful head of the security forces, plotted a coup. Beria's associates in the Presidium, however, ordered Marshal Zhukov to arrest him, and he was secretly executed. With Beria's death came the end of the inordinate power of the secret police; the party has maintained strict control over the state security organs ever since.

After the elimination of Beria, the succession struggle became more subtle. Malenkov found a formidable rival in Nikita S. Khrushchev, whom the Presidium elected first secretary (Stalin's title of general secretary was abolished) in September. Of peasant background, Khrushchev had served as head of the Ukrainian party organization during and after World War II and was a member of the Soviet political elite during the Stalin period. The rivalry between Malenkov and Khrushchev surfaced publicly through Malenkov's support for increased production of consumer goods, while Khrushchev conservatively stood for development of heavy industry. After a poor showing by light industry and agriculture, Malenkov resigned as prime minister in February 1955. The new prime minister, Nikolai A. Bulganin, had little influence or real power; Khrushchev was now the most important figure within the collective leadership.

At the Twentieth Party Congress, held in February 1956, Khrushchev further advanced his position within the party by denouncing Stalin's crimes in a dramatic "secret speech." Khrushchev revealed



Statue "Motherland" on Mamayev Hill, Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad), Russian Republic. During the Battle of Stalingrad, some of the fiercest fighting took place here before the German troops surrendered in February 1943.

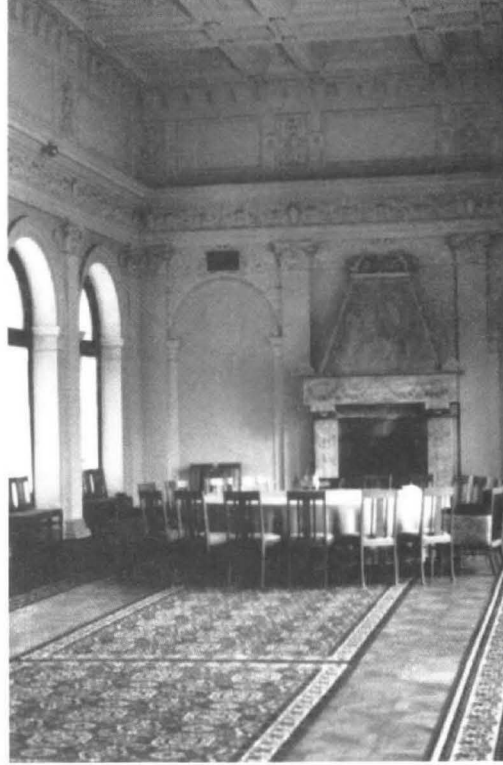
Courtesy Jimmy Pritchard

that Stalin had arbitrarily liquidated thousands of party members and military leaders (thereby contributing to the initial Soviet defeats in World War II) and had established a pernicious cult of personality (see Glossary). With this speech Khrushchev not only distanced himself from Stalin and from Stalin's close associates, Molotov, Malenkov, and Lazar M. Kaganovich, but also abjured the dictator's policies of terror. As a direct result of the "de-Stalinization" campaign launched by the speech, the release of political prisoners, which had begun in 1953, was stepped up, and some of Stalin's victims were posthumously rehabilitated (see Glossary). Khrushchev later intensified his campaign against Stalin at the Twenty-Second Party Congress in 1961, winning approval to remove Stalin's body from the Lenin Mausoleum, where it had originally been interred. De-Stalinization encouraged many in artistic and intellectual circles to speak out against the abuses of the former regime. Although Khrushchev's tolerance of critical creative works vacillated during his years of leadership, the new cultural period—known as the "thaw"—represented a clear break with the repression of the arts under Stalin.

After the Twentieth Party Congress, Khrushchev continued to expand his influence, although he still faced opposition. Khrushchev's rivals in the Presidium, spurred by reversals in Soviet foreign policy in Eastern Europe in 1956, potentially threatening economic reforms, and the de-Stalinization campaign, united to vote him out of office in June 1957. Khrushchev, however, demanded that the question be put to the Central Committee of the CPSU, where he enjoyed strong support. The Central Committee overturned the Presidium's decision and expelled Khrushchev's opponents (Malenkov, Molotov, and Kaganovich), whom Khrushchev labeled the "anti-party group." In a departure from Stalinist procedure, Khrushchev did not order the imprisonment or execution of his defeated rivals but instead placed them in relatively minor offices. Khrushchev moved to consolidate his power further in the ensuing months. In October he removed Marshal Zhukov (who had helped Khrushchev squelch the "anti-party group") from the office of defense minister, presumably because he feared Zhukov's influence in the armed forces. Khrushchev became prime minister in March 1958 when Bulganin resigned, thus formally confirming his predominant position in the state as well as in the party.

Despite his rank, Khrushchev never exercised the dictatorial authority of Stalin, nor did he ever completely control the party even at the peak of his power. His attacks on members of the "anti-party group" at the Twenty-First Party Congress in 1959 and the Twenty-Second Party Congress in 1961 suggest that his opponents

*Room in the Livadia Palace
where Stalin, Churchill, and
Roosevelt met for the Yalta
Conference in February 1945
Courtesy Jimmy Pritchard*



still retained support within the party. Khrushchev's relative political insecurity probably accounted for some of his grandiose pronouncements (for example, his 1961 promise that the Soviet Union would attain communism by 1980). His desire to undermine opposition and mollify critics explained the nature of many of his domestic reforms and the vacillations in his foreign policy toward the West.

Foreign Policy under Khrushchev

Almost immediately after Stalin died, the collective leadership began altering the conduct of Soviet foreign policy to permit better relations with the West and new approaches to the nonaligned countries. Malenkov introduced a change in tone by speaking out against nuclear war as a threat to civilization. Khrushchev initially contradicted this position, saying capitalism alone would be destroyed in a nuclear war, but he adopted Malenkov's view after securing his preeminent position. In 1955, to ease tensions between East and West, Khrushchev recognized permanent neutrality for Austria. Meeting President Dwight D. Eisenhower in Geneva, Switzerland, later that year, Khrushchev confirmed Soviet commitment to "peaceful coexistence" with capitalism. Regarding the developing nations, Khrushchev tried to win the goodwill of their national leaders, instead of following the established Soviet policy of shunning the governments while supporting local communist

parties. Soviet influence in the international alignments of India and Egypt, as well as of other Third World countries, began in the middle of the 1950s. Cuba's entry into the socialist camp in 1961 was a coup for the Soviet Union.

With the gains of the new diplomacy came reversals as well. By conceding the independence of Yugoslavia in 1955 as well as by his de-Stalinization campaign, Khrushchev provoked unrest in Eastern Europe, where the policies of the Stalin era weighed heavily. In Poland, riots brought about a change in communist party leadership, which the Soviet Union reluctantly recognized in October 1956. A popular uprising against Soviet control then broke out in Hungary, where the local communist leaders, headed by Imre Nagy, called for a multiparty political system and withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, the defensive alliance founded by the Soviet Union and its East European satellites in 1955 (see Appendix C). The Soviet army crushed the revolt early in November 1956, causing numerous casualties. Although the Hungarian Revolution hurt Soviet standing in world opinion, it demonstrated that the Soviet Union would use force if necessary to maintain control over its satellite states in Eastern Europe.

Outside the Soviet sphere of control, China grew increasingly restive under Chinese Communist Party chairman Mao Zedong. Chinese discontent with the new Soviet leadership stemmed from low levels of Soviet aid, feeble Soviet support for China in its disputes with Taiwan and India, and the new Soviet doctrine of peaceful coexistence with the West (which Mao viewed as a betrayal of Marxism-Leninism). Against Khrushchev's wishes, China embarked on a nuclear arms program, declaring in 1960 that nuclear war could defeat imperialism. The dispute between militant China and the more moderate Soviet Union escalated into a schism in the world communist movement after 1960. Albania left the Soviet camp and became an ally of China, Romania distanced itself from the Soviet Union in international affairs, and communist parties around the world split over orientation to Moscow or Beijing. The monolithic bloc of world communism had shattered.

Soviet relations with the West, especially the United States, seesawed between moments of relative relaxation and periods of tension and crisis. For his part, Khrushchev wanted peaceful coexistence with the West, not only to avoid nuclear war but also to permit the Soviet Union to develop its economy. Khrushchev's meetings with President Eisenhower in 1955 and President John F. Kennedy in 1961 and his tour of the United States in 1959 demonstrated the Soviet leader's desire for fundamentally smooth relations between the West and the Soviet Union and its allies. Yet

Khrushchev also needed to demonstrate to Soviet conservatives and militant Chinese that the Soviet Union was a firm defender of the socialist camp. Thus in 1958 Khrushchev challenged the status of Berlin; when the West would not yield to his demands that the western sectors be incorporated into East Germany, he approved the erection of the Berlin Wall around those sectors in 1961. To maintain national prestige, Khrushchev canceled a summit meeting with Eisenhower in 1960 after Soviet air defense troops shot down a United States U-2 reconnaissance aircraft over Soviet territory. Finally, mistrust over military intentions hobbled East-West relations during this time. The West feared the Soviet lead in space technology and saw in the buildup of the Soviet military an emerging "missile gap" in the Soviet Union's favor. By contrast, the Soviet Union felt threatened by a rearmed Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), by the United States alliance system encircling the Soviet Union, and by the West's superior strategic and economic strength. To offset the United States military advantage and thereby improve the Soviet negotiating position, Khrushchev in 1962 tried to install nuclear missiles in Cuba, but he agreed to withdraw them after Kennedy ordered a blockade around the island nation. After coming close to war in the Cuban missile crisis, the Soviet Union and the United States took steps to reduce the nuclear threat. In 1963 the two countries established the "hot line" between Washington and Moscow to reduce the likelihood of accidental nuclear war. In the same year, the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty, which forbade testing nuclear weapons in the atmosphere.

Khrushchev's Reforms and Fall

Throughout his years of leadership, Khrushchev attempted to carry out reform in a range of fields. The problems of Soviet agriculture, a major concern of Khrushchev, had earlier attracted the attention of the collective leadership, which introduced important innovations in this area of the Soviet economy. The state encouraged peasants to grow more on their private plots, increased payments for crops grown on the collective farms, and invested more heavily in agriculture. In his dramatic virgin land campaign (see Glossary) in the mid-1950s, Khrushchev opened to farming vast tracts of land in the northern part of the Kazakh Republic and neighboring areas of the Russian Republic. These new farmlands turned out to be susceptible to droughts, but in some years they produced excellent harvests. Later innovations by Khrushchev, however, proved counterproductive. His plans for growing maize and increasing meat and dairy production failed miserably,

and his reorganization of collective farms into larger units produced confusion in the countryside.

Khrushchev's reforms in industry and administrative organization created even greater problems. In a politically motivated move to weaken the central state bureaucracy, in 1957 Khrushchev did away with the industrial ministries in Moscow and replaced them with regional economic councils. Although Khrushchev intended these economic councils to be more responsive to local needs, the decentralization of industry led to disruption and inefficiency. Connected with this decentralization was Khrushchev's decision in 1962 to reorganize party organizations along economic, rather than administrative, lines. The resulting bifurcation of the party apparatus into industrial and agricultural sectors at the oblast (see Glossary) level and below contributed to the disarray and alienated many party officials at all levels. Symptomatic of the country's economic difficulties was the abandonment in 1963 of Khrushchev's special seven-year economic plan (1959-65) two years short of its completion.

By 1964 Khrushchev's prestige had been injured in a number of areas. Industrial growth slowed, while agriculture showed no new progress. Abroad, the split with China, the Berlin crisis, and the Cuban fiasco hurt the Soviet Union's international stature, and Khrushchev's efforts to improve relations with the West antagonized many in the military. Lastly, the 1962 party reorganization caused turmoil throughout the Soviet political chain of command. In October 1964, while Khrushchev was vacationing in Crimea, the Presidium voted him out of office and refused to permit him to take his case to the Central Committee. Khrushchev retired as a private citizen after his successors denounced him for his "hare-brained schemes, half-baked conclusions, and hasty decisions." Yet along with his failed policies, Khrushchev must also be remembered for his public disavowal of Stalinism and the cult of personality.

The Brezhnev Era

Collective Leadership and the Rise of Brezhnev

After removing Khrushchev from power, the leaders of the Politburo (as the Presidium was renamed in 1966 by the Twenty-Third Party Congress) and Secretariat again established a collective leadership. As was the case following Stalin's death, several individuals, including Aleksei N. Kosygin, Nikolai V. Podgornyi, and Leonid I. Brezhnev, contended for power behind a facade of unity. Kosygin accepted the position of prime minister, which he held until his

retirement in 1980. Brezhnev, who took the post of first secretary, may have originally been viewed as an interim appointment by his fellows.

Born to a Russian worker's family in 1906, Brezhnev became a protégé of Khrushchev early in his career and through his influence rose to membership in the Presidium. As his own power grew, Brezhnev built up a coterie of followers whom he, as first secretary (the title reverted to general secretary after April 1966), gradually maneuvered into powerful positions. At the same time, Brezhnev slowly demoted or isolated possible contenders for his office. He succeeded in elevating Podgorni to the ceremonial position of chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the highest legislative organization in the government, in December 1965, thus eliminating him as a rival. But Brezhnev's rise was very gradual; only in 1971, when Brezhnev succeeded in appointing four close associates to the Politburo, did it become clear that his was the most influential voice in the collective leadership. After several more personnel changes, Brezhnev assumed the chairmanship of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in 1977, confirming his primacy in both party and state.

The years after Khrushchev were notable for the stability of cadres (see Glossary) in the party and state apparatus. By introducing the slogan "Trust in Cadres" in 1965, Brezhnev won the support of many bureaucrats wary of the constant reorganizations of the Khrushchev era and eager for security in established hierarchies. As an example of the new stability, nearly half of the Central Committee members in 1981 were holdovers from fifteen years earlier. The corollary to this stability was the aging of Soviet leaders; the average age of Politburo members rose from fifty-five in 1966 to sixty-eight in 1982. The Soviet leadership (or the "gerontocracy," as it was referred to in the West) became increasingly conservative and ossified.

Conservative policies characterized the regime's agenda in the years after Khrushchev. Upon assuming power, the collective leadership not only reversed such policies of Khrushchev's as the bifurcation of the party but also halted de-Stalinization, and positive references to the dead dictator began to appear. The Soviet Constitution of 1977, although differing in certain respects from the 1936 Stalin document, retains the general thrust of the latter (see *The 1977 Constitution*, ch. 8). In contrast to the relative cultural freedom tolerated during the early Khrushchev years, Brezhnev and his colleagues continued the more restrictive line of the later Khrushchev era. The leadership was unwilling or unable to employ Stalinist means to control Soviet society; instead, it opted

to exert repressive tactics against political dissidents even after the Soviet Union acceded to the Helsinki Accords (see Glossary) in 1975. Dissidents persecuted during this time included writers and activists in outlawed religious, nationalist, and human rights movements. In the latter part of the Brezhnev era, the regime tolerated popular expressions of anti-Semitism. Under conditions of “developed socialism” (the historical stage that the Soviet Union attained in 1977 according to the CPSU), the study of Marxism-Leninism served as a means to bolster the authority of the regime rather than as a tool for revolutionary action.

Foreign Policy of a Superpower

A major concern of Khrushchev’s successors was to reestablish Soviet primacy in the community of communist states by undermining the influence of China. Although the new leaders originally approached China without hostility, Mao’s condemnation of Soviet foreign policy as “revisionist” and his competition for influence in the Third World soon led to a worsening of relations between the two countries. Sino-Soviet relations reached a low point in 1969 when clashes broke out along the disputed Ussuri River in the Far East. Later the Chinese, intimidated by Soviet military strength, agreed not to patrol the border area claimed by the Soviet Union; but strained relations between the two countries continued into the early 1980s.

Under the collective leadership, the Soviet Union again used force in Eastern Europe, this time in Czechoslovakia. In 1968 reform-minded elements of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia rapidly began to liberalize their rule, loosen censorship, and strengthen Western ties. In response, Soviet and other Warsaw Pact troops entered Czechoslovakia and installed a new regime. Out of these events arose the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine, which warned that the Soviet Union would act to maintain its hegemony in Eastern Europe (see Soviet-East European Relations, ch. 10). Soviet suppression of the reform movement reduced blatant gestures of defiance on the part of Romania and served as a threatening example to the Polish Solidarity trade union movement in 1980. But it also helped disillusion communist parties in Western Europe to the extent that by 1977 most of the leading parties embraced Eurocommunism, which freed them to pursue political programs independent of Moscow’s dictates.

Soviet influence in the developing world expanded somewhat during this period. New communist or Marxist governments having close relations with the Soviet Union rose to power in several countries, including Vietnam, Ethiopia, and Nicaragua. In the Middle



*Veterans of the Great Patriotic War (World War II) pose in Moscow.
Courtesy Irene Steckler*

East, the Soviet Union vied for influence by backing the Arabs in their dispute with Israel. After the June 1967 War, the Soviet Union rebuilt the defeated Syrian and Egyptian armies, but it suffered a setback when Egypt expelled Soviet advisers from the country in 1972 and subsequently entered a closer relationship with the United States. The Soviet Union retained ties with Syria and supported Palestinian claims for their right to an independent state. But Soviet prestige among moderate Muslim states suffered in the 1980s as a result of Soviet military activities in Afghanistan. Attempting to shore up a communist government in that country, Brezhnev sent in Soviet armed forces in December 1979, but a large part of the Afghan population resisted both the occupiers and the Afghan regime. The resulting war in Afghanistan continued to be an unresolved problem for the Soviet Union at the time of Brezhnev's death in 1982.

Soviet relations with the West first improved, then deteriorated in the years after Khrushchev. The gradual winding down of the United States commitment to the war in Vietnam after 1968 opened the way for negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union on the subject of nuclear arms. After the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was signed in July 1968, the two countries began the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) in

1969. At the Moscow Summit of May 1972, Brezhnev and President Richard M. Nixon signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the Interim Agreement on the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. Both agreements essentially froze the deployment of strategic defensive and offensive weapons. A period of *détente*, or relaxation of tensions, between the two superpowers emerged, with a further agreement concluded to establish ceilings on the number of offensive weapons on both sides in 1974. The crowning achievement of the era of *détente* was the signing in 1975 of the Helsinki Accords, which ratified the postwar status quo in Europe and bound the signatories to respect basic principles of human rights. But even during the period of *détente*, the Soviet Union increased weapons deployments, with the result that in the 1970s it achieved rough parity with the United States in strategic nuclear weaponry (see *Arms Control and Military Objectives*, ch. 17). The Soviet Union also heightened its condemnation of the NATO alliance in an attempt to weaken Western unity. Although a second SALT agreement was signed by Brezhnev and President Jimmy Carter in Vienna in 1979, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan the Carter administration withdrew the agreement from consideration by the United States Senate, and *détente* effectively came to an end. In reaction to the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, the United States imposed a grain embargo on the Soviet Union and boycotted the Summer Olympics in Moscow in 1980. Tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union continued up to Brezhnev's death.

The Economy

Despite Khrushchev's tinkering with economic planning, the economic system remained dependent on central plans drawn up with no reference to market mechanisms. Reformers, of whom the economist Evsei Liberman was most noteworthy, advocated greater freedom for individual enterprises (see *Glossary*) from outside controls and sought to turn the enterprises' economic objectives toward making a profit. Prime Minister Kosygin championed Liberman's proposals and succeeded in incorporating them into a general economic reform program approved in September 1965. This reform included scrapping Khrushchev's regional economic councils in favor of resurrecting the central industrial ministries of the Stalin era. Opposition from party conservatives and cautious managers, however, soon stalled the Liberman reforms, forcing the state to abandon them.

After this short-lived attempt at revamping the economic system, planners reverted to drafting comprehensive centralized plans

of the type first developed under Stalin. In industry, plans stressed the heavy and defense-related branches, with the light consumer-goods branches slighted (see Economic Policy, ch. 11). As a developed industrial country, the Soviet Union by the 1970s found it increasingly difficult to maintain the high rates of growth in the industrial sector that it had sustained in earlier years. Increasingly large investment and labor inputs were required for growth, but these inputs were becoming more difficult to obtain. Although the planned goals of the five-year plans of the 1970s had been scaled down from previous plans, the targets remained largely unmet. The industrial shortfalls were felt most sharply in the sphere of consumer goods, where the public steadily demanded improved quality and increased quantity.

Agricultural development continued to lag in the Brezhnev years. Despite steadily higher investments in agriculture, growth under Brezhnev fell below that attained under Khrushchev. Droughts occurring irregularly throughout the 1970s forced the Soviet Union to import large quantities of grain from the West, including the United States. In the countryside, Brezhnev continued the trend toward converting collective farms into state farms and raised the incomes of all farm workers. Despite the wage raises, peasants still devoted much time and effort to their private plots, which provided the Soviet Union with an inordinate share of its agricultural goods (see Policy and Administration, ch. 13).

The standard of living in the Soviet Union presented a problem to the Brezhnev leadership after improvements made in the late 1960s gradually leveled off at a position well below that of many Western industrial (and some East European) countries. Although certain goods and appliances became more accessible during the 1960s and 1970s, improvements in housing and food supply were slight. Shortages of consumer goods abetted pilferage of government property and growth of the black market. Vodka, however, remained readily available, and alcoholism was an important factor in both the declining life expectancy and the rising infant mortality that the Soviet Union experienced in the later Brezhnev years.

Culture and the Arts

Progress in developing the education system was mixed during the Brezhnev years. In the 1960s and 1970s, the percentage of working-age people with secondary and higher education steadily increased. Yet at the same time, access to higher education grew more difficult. By 1980 the percentage of secondary school graduates admitted to universities had dropped to only two-thirds of the 1960 figure. Students accepted into the universities increasingly

came from professional families rather than from worker or peasant households. This trend toward the perpetuation of the educated elite was not only a function of the superior cultural background of elite families but was also, in many cases, a result of their power to influence the admissions procedures.

Progress in science also enjoyed varied success under Brezhnev. In the most visible test of its ability—the race with the United States to put a man on the moon—the Soviet Union failed, but through persistence the Soviet space program continued to make headway in other areas. In general, despite leads in such fields as metallurgy and thermonuclear fusion, Soviet science lagged behind that of the West, hampered in part by the slow development of computer technology.

In literature and the arts, a greater variety of creative works became accessible to the public than had previously been available. True, the state continued to determine what could be legally published or performed, punishing persistent offenders with exile or prison. Nonetheless, greater experimentation in art forms became permissible in the 1970s, with the result that more sophisticated and subtly critical work began to be produced. The regime loosened the strictures of socialist realism; thus, for instance, many protagonists of the novels of author Iurii Trifonov concerned themselves with problems of daily life rather than with building socialism. In music, although the state continued to frown on such Western phenomena as jazz and rock, it began to permit Western musical ensembles specializing in these genres to make limited appearances. But the native balladeer Vladimir Vysotskii, widely popular in the Soviet Union, was denied official recognition because of his iconoclastic lyrics.

In the religious life of the Soviet Union, a resurgence in popular devotion to the major faiths became apparent in the late 1970s despite continued *de facto* disapproval on the part of the authorities. This revival may have been connected with the generally growing interest of Soviet citizens in their respective national traditions (see *Manifestations of National Assertiveness*, ch. 4).

Death of Brezhnev

Shortly after his cult of personality began to take root in the mid-1970s, Brezhnev began to experience periods of ill health. After Brezhnev's first stroke in 1975, Politburo members Mikhail A. Suslov and Andrei P. Kirilenko assumed some of Brezhnev's functions for a time. Then, after another bout of poor health in 1978, Brezhnev delegated more of his responsibilities to Konstantin U. Chernenko, a long-time associate who soon began to be regarded

as the heir apparent. His prospects of succeeding Brezhnev, however, were hurt by problems plaguing the general secretary in the early 1980s. Not only had economic failures hurt Brezhnev's prestige, but scandals involving his family and political allies also damaged his stature. Meanwhile, Iurii V. Andropov, chief of the secret police, the Committee for State Security (Komitet gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti—KGB), apparently also began a campaign to discredit Brezhnev. Andropov took over Suslov's functions after Suslov died in 1982, and he used his position to advance himself as the next CPSU general secretary. Brezhnev himself, despite ill health following another stroke in March, would not relinquish his office. Soon after reviewing the traditional Bolshevik Revolution parade in November 1982, Brezhnev died.

Ultimately, the Soviet Union paid a high price for the stability that prevailed during the years of the Brezhnev regime. By avoiding necessary political and economic change, the Brezhnev leadership ensured the economic and political decline that the country experienced during the 1980s. This deterioration of power and prestige stood in sharp contrast to the dynamism that marked the Soviet Union's revolutionary beginnings.

* * *

A number of comprehensive texts covering the history of the Soviet Union have recently appeared. Most worthy of recommendation to the nonspecialist is *A History of Russia and the Soviet Union* by David MacKenzie and Michael W. Curran. A thoughtful survey can be found in Geoffrey A. Hosking's *The First Socialist Society*. Other general works covering the Soviet period include Robert V. Daniels's *Russia: The Roots of Confrontation*, Donald W. Treadgold's *Twentieth Century Russia*, and Adam B. Ulam's *A History of Soviet Russia*. There are also a number of excellent books on the various phases of Soviet history. The recognized classic on the revolutionary and Civil War period is William H. Chamberlin's *The Russian Revolution, 1917-1921*. Recommended for the Stalin era is *Stalin* by Adam B. Ulam. For Khrushchev, the reader is referred to Carl A. Linden's *Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership, 1957-1964*. Khrushchev's two-volume memoirs, *Khrushchev Remembers*, are fascinating reading. Harry Gelman's *The Brezhnev Politburo and the Decline of Detente* treats the Brezhnev period in detail. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Chapter 3. Physical Environment and Population



*People of the Soviet Union against a backdrop of the Kremlin
in Moscow and mountains in the Georgian Republic*

CURVING AROUND THE North Pole and the Arctic Ocean like a huge arc, the Soviet Union spans almost half the globe from east to west and about 5,000 kilometers from north to south. It is the world's largest country, occupying the major portions of Europe and Asia and including one-sixth of the earth's inhabited land area. Its diverse terrain ranges from vast deserts to towering mountains, yielding huge stores of natural resources and enabling the country to satisfy almost all of its own essential natural resource needs. In terms of population, the Soviet Union ranks third after China and India. Its peoples, however, as its terrain, are as diverse as those of any continent.

The Ural Mountains extend more than 2,200 kilometers, forming the northern and central boundary separating Asia from Europe. The continental divide continues another 1,375 kilometers from the Ural Mountains through the Caspian Sea and along the Caucasus Mountains, splitting the Soviet Union into grossly unequal Asian and European parts. Roughly three-quarters of Soviet territory encompass a part of Asia far larger than China and India combined. Nevertheless, it is the western quarter, the European part, that is home to more than 70 percent of all Soviet citizens. Surveys of Soviet geography and population have long pointed out the acutely uneven distribution of human and natural resources throughout the country. Despite considerable attempts to settle people in Asian areas that are abundant in resources, this imbalance persists. Rapid depletion of water and fuel resources in the European part has continued to outstrip development in resource-rich Siberia, which is east of the Ural Mountains. From 1970 to 1989, the campaign to settle and exploit the inhospitable frontier region of western Siberia with its plentiful fuel and energy supplies was costly but successful.

Although the Soviet Union is richly endowed with resources, several factors severely restrict their availability and use. The extreme climate and the northern position of the country, plus the unfavorable location of major deposits, present formidable geographic impediments. Massive depopulation, firmly established patterns of settlement, and disparate birth rates have resulted in regional labor shortages and surpluses.

In the years since the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the inhabitants of the Soviet Union have suffered terrible hardships. Before the 1950s, in each decade the population experienced a cataclysmic

demographic event in the form of epidemics, wars, or famines and in state-sanctioned mass killings. Only those persons born since World War II (62 percent of the population in 1987) have been spared the havoc that ravaged their grandparents' and parents' generations. The long-term effects of these disasters on the population can hardly be overstated. The opportunity to examine in relative tranquillity the national demographic situation is a post-war phenomenon. During this time, Soviet officials have become increasingly aware of the importance of demographic issues. The most visible signs of this are the policies aimed at influencing and directing demographic processes such as reproduction and migration for the benefit of society and the economy.

Encouraged by *glasnost*' (see Glossary), in the 1980s Soviet and foreign geographers and demographers engaged in spirited and open discussions. Probing articles and books began appearing on previously sensitive or taboo topics. Alcohol and drug abuse, high rates of infant and adult mortality, environmental degradation, the decline of the Soviet family, and the frequency of divorce were among them. Population problems stemming from sharp differences in the reproduction rates and migration patterns of the numerous Soviet nationalities were also openly debated.

Physical Environment

Any geographic description of the Soviet Union is replete with superlatives. Its inventory of land and water contains the world's largest and deepest lakes, the most expansive plain, and Europe's highest mountain and longest river. Desert scenes from Soviet Central Asia resemble the Australian outback. The Crimean coast on the Black Sea is the Soviet Riviera, and the mountains rimming the southern boundary are as imposing as the Swiss Alps. However, most of the topography and climate resembles that of the northernmost portion of the North American continent. The northern forests and the plains to the south find their closest counterparts in the Yukon Territory and in the wide swath of land extending across most of Canada. Similarities in terrain, climate, and settlement patterns between Siberia and Alaska and Canada are unmistakable.

After the Bolshevik Revolution and the ensuing Civil War (1918-21), Soviet regimes transformed, often radically, the country's physical environment. In the 1970s and 1980s, Soviet citizens, from the highest officials to ordinary factory workers and farmers, began to examine negative aspects of this transformation and to call for more prudent use of natural resources and greater concern for environmental protection.

Global Position and Boundaries

Located in the middle and northern latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere, the Soviet Union on the whole is much closer to the North Pole than to the equator. Individual country comparisons are of little value in gauging the enormous size (more than twice that of the United States) and diversity of the Soviet Union. A far better perspective comes by viewing the country as a truly continental-sized landmass only slightly smaller than North America and larger than South America in both area and population.

The country's 22.4 million square kilometers include one-sixth of the earth's inhabited land area. Its western portion, more than half of all Europe, makes up just 25 percent of the Soviet Union; this, however, is where the overwhelming majority (about 72 percent) of the people live and where most industrial and agricultural activities are concentrated. It was here, roughly between the Dnepr River and the Ural Mountains, that the Russian Empire took shape, following Muscovy's gradual expansion that reached the Pacific Ocean in the seventeenth century.

Although its historical, political, economic, and cultural ties bind it firmly to Europe, the Soviet Union is largely an Asian country because of Siberia. For centuries this land between the Urals and the Pacific was infamous as a place of exile, a land of endless expanses of snow and frigid temperatures. In the post-World War II period, however, Siberia has also become known as a new frontier because of its treasure of natural resources.

The Soviet Union measures some 10,000 kilometers from Kaliningrad on the Gulf of Danzig in the west to Ratmanova Island (Big Diomedes Island) in the Bering Strait, or roughly equivalent to the distance from Edinburgh, Scotland, east to Nome, Alaska. From the tip of the Taymyr Peninsula on the Arctic Ocean to the Central Asian town of Kushka near the Afghan border extend almost 5,000 kilometers of mostly rugged, inhospitable terrain. The east-west expanse of the continental United States would easily fit between the northern and southern borders of the Soviet Union at their extremities.

Extending for over 60,000 kilometers, the Soviet border is not only one of the world's most closely guarded but also is by far the longest. Along the nearly 20,000-kilometer-long land frontier, the Soviet Union abuts twelve countries, six on each continent. In Asia, its neighbors are the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), China, Mongolia, Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey; in Europe, it borders Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Finland, and Norway. Except for the icy eighty-six kilometers of

the Bering Strait, it would have a thirteenth neighbor—the United States (see fig. 1).

Approximately two-thirds of the frontier is bounded by water, forming the longest and, owing to its proximity to the North Pole, probably the most useless coastline of any country. Practically all of the lengthy northern coast is well above the Arctic Circle and, with the important exception of Murmansk, which receives the warm currents of the Gulf Stream, is locked in ice much of the year. A dozen seas, part of the water systems of three oceans—the Arctic, Atlantic, and Pacific—wash Soviet shores.

Administrative-Political-Territorial Divisions

Since 1956 the enormous territory of the Soviet Union has consisted of fifteen union republics—the largest administrative and political units—officially known as Soviet republics or union republics (see Glossary). Nationality (see Glossary), size of the population, and location are the determinants for republic status. By far the largest and most important of the union republics is the Russian Republic, containing about 51 percent of the population (see table 6, Appendix A). Largely because it encompasses Siberia, the Russian Republic alone accounts for 75 percent of Soviet territory and forms the heartland of both the European and the Asian portions of the Soviet Union. Although in 1989 Russians made up over 51 percent of the Soviet population and were in many ways the dominant nationality, they are just one of more than 100 nationality groups that make up Soviet society. Fourteen other major nationalities also have their own republics: in the European part are the Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian, Belorussian, Ukrainian, and Moldavian republics; the Georgian, Azerbaydzhan, and Armenian republics occupy the Caucasus; and Soviet Central Asia is home to the Kazakh, Uzbek, Turkmen, Kirgiz, and Tadzhik republics (see Nationalities of the Soviet Union, ch. 4; table 13, Appendix A). The Soviet system also provides for territorial and administrative subdivisions called autonomous republics, autonomous oblasts, autonomous *okruga*, *kraia*, or most often oblasts (see Glossary). These subdivisions make the country easier to manage and at times serve to recognize additional nationalities. In terms of political and administrative authority, the more than 130 oblasts and autonomous oblasts resemble to a limited degree counties in the United States. Many oblasts, however, are about the size of states. For example, Tyumenskaya Oblast, the storehouse of Soviet fuels, is only slightly smaller than Alaska (see Fuels, ch. 12). A more appropriate comparison with counties, in terms of numbers and area,



*Panoramic view from the Trans-Siberian Railway
Dnepr River in Kiev, Ukrainian Republic
Courtesy Jimmy Prichard*

can be made with the more than 3,200 *raiony* (see Glossary), the Soviet Union's smallest administrative and political subdivision.

Topography and Drainage

Most geographers divide the vast Soviet territory into five natural zones that generally extend from west to east: the tundra zone; the taiga or forest zone; the steppe or plains zone; the arid zone; and the mountain zone. Most of the Soviet Union consists of three plains (East European Plain, West Siberian Plain, and Turan Lowland), two plateaus (Central Siberian Plateau and Kazakh Upland), and a series of mountainous areas, concentrated for the most part in the extreme northeast or extending intermittently along the southern border. The West Siberian Plain, the world's largest, extends east from the Urals to the Yenisey River (see fig. 6). Because the terrain and vegetation are uniform in each of the natural zones, the Soviet Union, as a whole, presents an illusion of uniformity. Nevertheless, the Soviet territory contains all the major vegetation zones with the exception of tropical rain forest. Almost 10 percent of Soviet territory is tundra, that is, a treeless marshy plain. The tundra is the Soviet Union's northernmost zone of snow and ice, stretching from the Finnish border in the west to the Bering Strait in the east and then running south along the Pacific coast to the earthquake and volcanic region of northern Kamchatka Peninsula. It is the land made famous by herds of wild reindeer, by "white nights" (dusk at midnight, dawn shortly thereafter) in summer, and by days of total darkness in winter. The long harsh winters and lack of sunshine allow only mosses, lichens, and dwarf willows and shrubs to sprout low above the barren permafrost (see Glossary). Although the great Siberian rivers slowly traverse this zone in reaching the Arctic Ocean, drainage of the numerous lakes, ponds, and swamps is hampered by partial and intermittent thawing. Frost weathering is the most important physical process here, shaping a landscape modified by extensive glaciation in the last Ice Age. Less than 1 percent of the Soviet population lives in this zone. The fishing and port industries of the Kola Peninsula and the huge oil and gas fields of northwestern Siberia are the largest employers in the tundra. The frontier city of Noril'sk, for example, with a population of 181,000 in 1987, is one of the largest settlements above the Arctic Circle.

The northern forests of spruce, fir, cedar, and larch, collectively known as the taiga, make up the largest natural zone of the Soviet Union, an area about the size of the United States. Here too the winter is long and severe, as witnessed by the routine registering of the world's coldest temperatures for inhabited areas in the

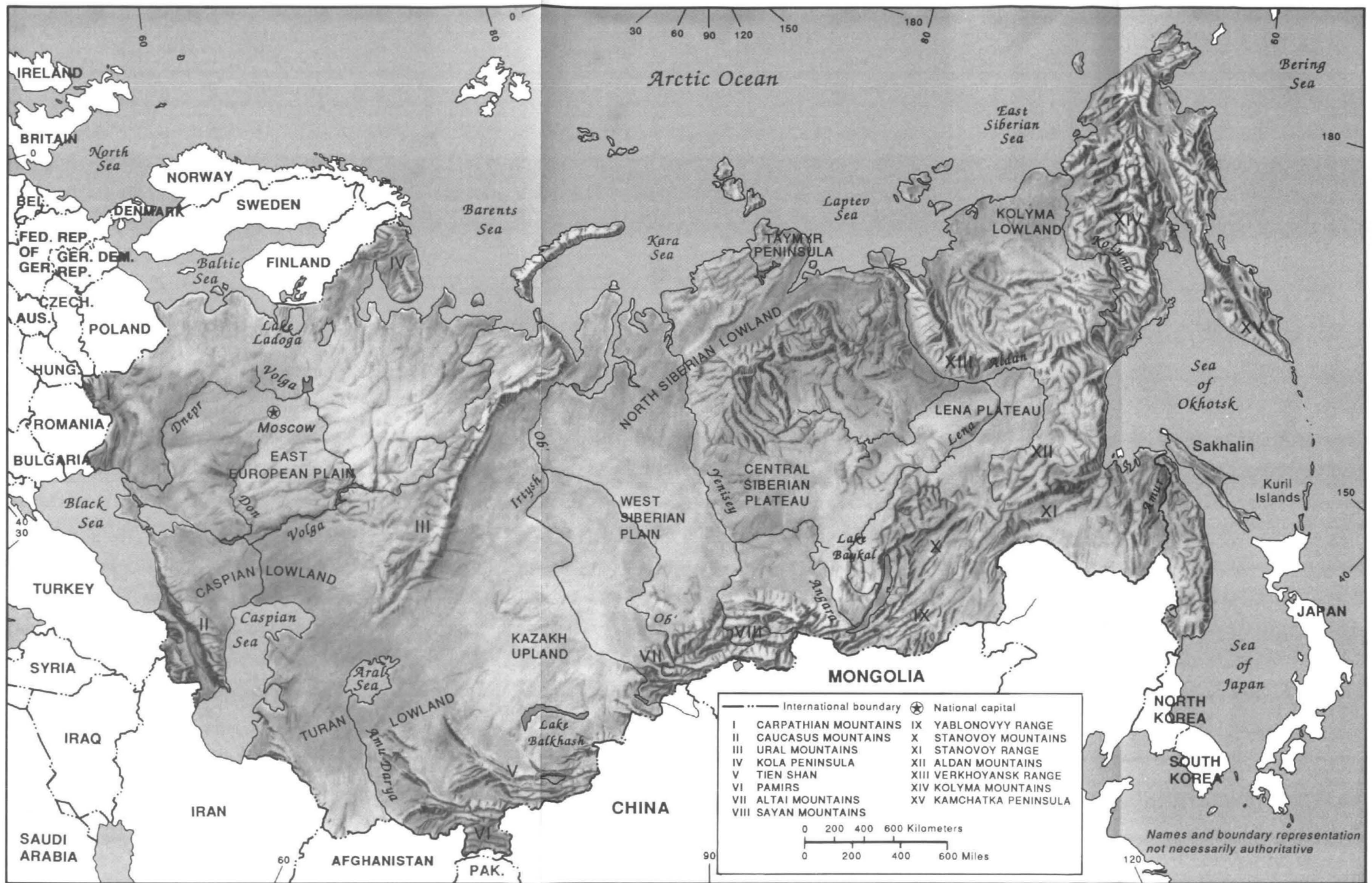


Figure 6. Topography and Drainage

northeastern portion of this belt. The taiga zone extends in a broad band across the middle latitudes, stretching from the Finnish border in the west to the Verkhoyansk Range in northeastern Siberia and as far south as the southern shores of Lake Baykal. Isolated sections of taiga are found along mountain ranges, as in the southern part of the Urals, and in the Amur River Valley in the Far East. About 33 percent of the population lives in this zone, which, with the mixed forest zone, includes most of the European part of the Soviet Union and the ancestral lands of the earliest Slavic settlers.

Long associated with traditional images of Russian landscape and cossacks (see Glossary) on horseback are the steppes, which are treeless, grassy plains. Although they cover only 15 percent of Soviet territory, the steppes are home to roughly 44 percent of the population. They extend for 4,000 kilometers from the Carpathian Mountains in the western Ukrainian Republic across most of the northern portion of the Kazakh Republic in Soviet Central Asia, between the taiga and arid zones, occupying a relatively narrow band of plains whose chernozem (see Glossary) soils are some of the most fertile on earth. In a country of extremes, the steppe zone, with its moderate temperatures and normally adequate levels of sunshine and moisture, provides the most favorable conditions for human settlement and agriculture. Even here, however, agricultural yields are sometimes adversely affected by unpredictably low levels of precipitation and occasional catastrophic droughts (see Production, ch. 13).

Below the steppes, and merging at times with them, is the arid zone: the semideserts and deserts of Soviet Central Asia and, particularly, of the Kazakh Republic. Portions of this zone have become cotton- and rice-producing regions through intensive irrigation. For various reasons, including sparse settlement and a comparatively mild climate, the arid zone has become the most prominent center for Soviet space exploration.

One-quarter of the Soviet Union consists of mountains or mountainous terrain. With the significant exceptions of the Ural Mountains and the mountains of eastern Siberia, the mountains occupy the southern periphery of the Soviet Union. The Urals, because they have traditionally been considered the natural boundary between Europe and Asia and because they are valuable sources of minerals, are the most famous of the country's nine major ranges. In terms of elevation (comparable to the Appalachians) and vegetation, however, they are far from impressive, and they do not serve as a formidable natural barrier.

Truly alpine terrain is found in the southern mountain ranges. Between the Black and Caspian seas, for example, the Caucasus

Mountains rise to impressive heights, marking a continuation of the boundary separating Europe from Asia. One of the peaks, Mount El'brus, is the highest point in Europe at 5,642 meters. This range, extending to the northwest as the Crimean and Carpathian mountains and to the southeast as the Tien Shan and Pamirs, forms an imposing natural barrier between the Soviet Union and its neighbors to the south. The highest point in the Soviet Union, at 7,495 meters, is Mount Communism (Pik Kommunistika) in the Pamirs near the border with Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China. The Pamirs and the Tien Shan are offshoots of the tallest mountain chain in the world, the Himalayas. Eastern Siberia and the Soviet Far East are also mountainous regions, especially the volcanic peaks of the long Kamchatka Peninsula, which juts down into the Sea of Okhotsk. The Soviet Far East, the southern portion of Soviet Central Asia, and the Caucasus are the Soviet Union's centers of seismic activity. In 1887, for example, a severe earthquake destroyed the city of Vernyy (present-day Alma-Ata), and in December 1988 a massive quake demolished the Armenian city of Spitak and large sections of Kirovakan and Leninakan. The 1988 quake, one of the worst in Soviet history, claimed more than 25,000 lives.

The Soviet Union's water resources are both scarce and abundant. With about 3 million rivers and approximately 4 million inland bodies of water, the Soviet Union holds the largest fresh, surface-water resources of any country. Unfortunately, most of these resources (84 percent), as with so much of the Soviet resource base, are at a great distance from consumers; they flow through sparsely populated territory and into the Arctic and Pacific oceans. In contrast, areas with the highest concentrations of population, and therefore the highest demand for water supplies, tend to have the warmest climates and highest rates of evaporation. The result is barely adequate (or in some cases inadequate) water resources where they are needed most.

Nonetheless, as in many other countries, the earliest settlements sprang up on the rivers, and that is where the majority of the urban population prefers to live. The Volga, Europe's longest river, is by far the Soviet Union's most important commercial waterway. Three of the country's twenty-three cities with more than 1 million inhabitants are located on its banks: Gor'kiy, Kazan', and Kuybyshev.

The European part of the Soviet Union has extensive, highly developed, and heavily used water resources, among them the key hydrosystems of the Volga, Kama, Dnepr, Dnestr, and Don rivers. As is the case with fuels, however, the greatest water resources are found east of the Urals, deep in Siberia. Of the sixty-three rivers in the Soviet Union longer than 1,000 kilometers, forty are east of the Urals, including the four mighty rivers that drain Siberia



*Siberian village in winter
Courtesy Jimmy Pritchard*

as they flow northward to the Arctic Ocean: the Irtysh, Ob', Yenisey, and Lena rivers. The Amur River forms part of the winding and sometimes tense boundary between the Soviet Union and China. Taming and exploiting the hydroelectric potential of these systems has been a monumental and highly publicized national project. Some of the world's largest hydroelectric stations operate on these rivers. Hundreds of smaller hydroelectric power plants and associated reservoirs have also been constructed on the rivers. Thousands of kilometers of canals link river and lake systems and provide essential sources of irrigation for farmland.

The Soviet Union's 4 million inland bodies of water are chiefly a legacy of extensive glaciation. Most prominent among them are the Caspian Sea, the world's largest inland sea, and Lake Baykal, the world's deepest and most capacious freshwater lake. Lake Baykal alone holds 85 percent of the freshwater resources of the lakes in the Soviet Union and 20 percent of the world's total. Other water resources include swampland, a sizable portion of territory (10 percent), and glaciers in the northern areas.

Climate

Notorious cold and long winters have, understandably, been the focus of discussions on the Soviet Union's weather and climate.

From the frozen depths of Siberia have come baby mammoths perfectly preserved, locked in ice for several thousand years. Millions of square kilometers experience half a year of subfreezing temperatures and snow cover over subsoil that is permanently frozen in places to depths of several hundred meters. In northeastern Siberia, not far from Yakutsk, hardy settlers cope with January temperatures that consistently average -50°C . Transportation routes, including entire railroad lines, have been redirected in winter to traverse rock-solid waterways and lakes.

Howling Arctic winds that produce coastal wind chills as low as -152°C and the *burany*, or blinding snowstorms of the steppe, are climatic manifestations of a relatively unfavorable position in the Northern Hemisphere. The dominance of winter in the Soviet Union is a result of the proximity to the North Pole—the southernmost point of the country is about on the same latitude as Oklahoma City, Oklahoma—and remoteness from oceans that tend to moderate the climate. As a result, cold, high-pressure systems in the east—the “Siberian high”—and wet, cold cyclonic systems in the west largely determine the overall weather patterns.

The prolonged period of cold weather has a profound impact on almost every aspect of life in the Soviet Union. It affects where and how long people live and work and what kinds of crops are grown and where they are grown (no part of the country has a year-round growing season). The length and severity of winterlike weather, along with the sharp fluctuations in the mean summer and winter temperatures, impose special requirements on many branches of the economy: in regions of permafrost, buildings must be constructed on pilings, and machinery must be made of specially tempered steel; transportation systems must be engineered to perform reliably in extremely low and high temperatures; the health care field and the textile industry are greatly affected by the ramifications of six to eight months of wintry weather; and energy demands are multiplied by extended periods of darkness and cold.

Despite its well-deserved reputation as a generally snowy, icy northern country, the Soviet Union includes other major climatic zones as well. According to Soviet geographers, most of their country is located in the temperate zone, which for them includes all of the European portion except the southern part of Crimea and the Caucasus, all of Siberia, the Soviet Far East, and the plains of Soviet Central Asia and the southern Kazakh Republic. Within this belt are the taiga, the steppes, and the deserts of Soviet Central Asia. In fact, the climate in much of this zone is anything but temperate; it varies from the moderate maritime climate of the Baltic republics, which is similar to the American Northwest, to the



Apartment house in Spitak, Armenian Republic, destroyed by an earthquake in December 1988 that registered 6.9 on the Richter scale. Such apartment houses were not designed, or built, to withstand seismic activity of that magnitude. The earthquake claimed 25,000 victims. Courtesy United States Geological Survey

continental climate of the east and northeast, which is akin to that of the Yukon Territory. Leningrad and Yakutsk, although roughly on the same latitude, have average January temperatures of -7°C and -50°C , respectively.

Two areas outside the temperate zone demonstrate the climatic diversity of the Soviet Union: the Soviet Far East, under the influence of the Pacific Ocean, with a monsoonal climate; and the subtropical band of territory extending along the southern coast of the Soviet Union's most popular resort area, Crimea, through the Caucasus and into Soviet Central Asia, where there are deserts and oases.

With most of the land so far removed from the oceans and the moisture they provide, levels of precipitation in the Soviet Union are low to moderate. More than half the country receives fewer than forty centimeters of rainfall each year, and most of Soviet Central Asia and northeastern Siberia can count on barely one-half that amount. The wettest parts are found in the small, lush subtropical region of the Caucasus and in the Soviet Far East along the Pacific coast.

Natural Resources

The Soviet Union is richly endowed with almost every major category of natural resource. Drawing upon its vast holdings, it has become the world leader in the production of oil, iron ore, manganese, and asbestos. It has the world's largest proven reserves of natural gas, and in 1984 it surpassed the United States in the production of this increasingly important fuel. It has enormous coal reserves and is in second place in coal production (see fig. 7).

Self-sufficiency has traditionally been a powerful stimulus for exploring and developing the country's huge, yet widely dispersed, resource base. It remains a source of national pride that the Soviet Union, alone among the industrialized countries of the world, can claim the ability to satisfy almost all the requirements of its economy using its own natural resources.

The abundance of fossil fuels supplies not only the Soviet Union's domestic needs; for many years, an ample surplus has been exported to consumers in Eastern Europe and Western Europe, where it earns most of the Soviet Union's convertible currency (see *Raw Materials; Fuels*, ch. 12).

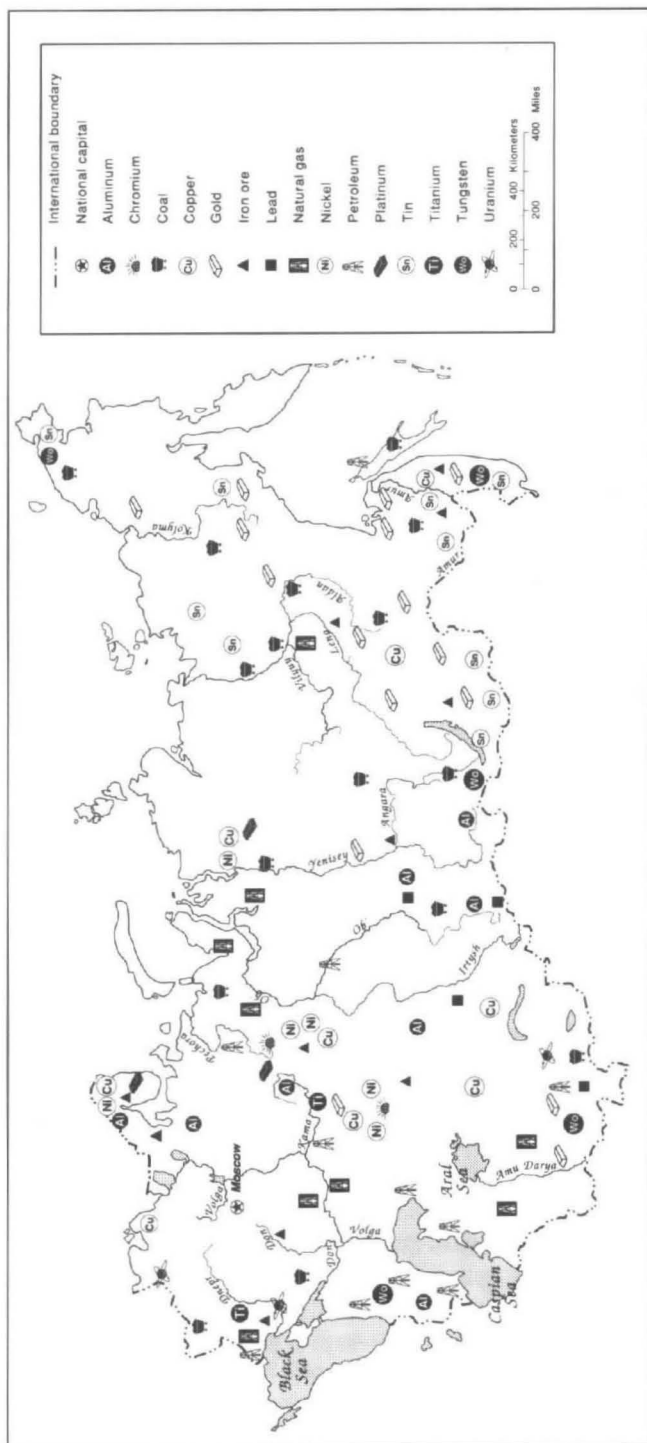
However, as resource stocks have been depleted in the heavily populated European section, tapping the less accessible but vital riches east of the Urals has become a national priority. The best example of this process is fuels and energy. The depletion of readily accessible fuel resources west of the Urals has caused development

and exploitation to shift to the inhospitable terrain of western Siberia, which in the 1970s and 1980s displaced the Volga-Ural and the southern European regions as the country's primary supplier of fuel and energy (see table 7, Appendix A). Fierce cold, permafrost, and persistent flooding have made this exploitation costly and difficult.

Environmental Concerns

In spite of a series of environmental laws and regulations passed in the 1970s, authentic environmental protection in the Soviet Union did not become a major concern until General Secretary Mikhail S. Gorbachev came to power in March 1985. Without an established regulatory agency and an environmental protection infrastructure, enforcement of existing laws was largely ignored. Only occasional and isolated references appeared on such issues as air and water pollution, soil erosion, and wasteful use of natural resources in the 1970s. This lack of concern was prompted by several factors. First, after collectivization in the 1930s, all of the land became state owned and managed. Thus, whenever air and water were polluted, the state was most often the agent of this pollution. Second, and this was true especially under Joseph V. Stalin's leadership, the resource base of the country was viewed as limitless and free. Third, in the rush to modernize and to develop heavy industry, concern for damage to the environment and related damage to the health of Soviet citizens would have been viewed as detrimental to progress. Fourth, pollution control and environmental protection itself is an expensive, high-technology industry, and even in the mid-1980s many of the Soviet Union's systems to control harmful emissions were inoperable or of foreign manufacture.

Under Gorbachev's leadership, the official attitude toward the environment changed. Various social and economic factors helped produce this change. To maintain economic growth through the 1980s, a period in which the labor force had been declining significantly, intensive and more prudent use of both natural and human resources was required. At the same time, *glasnost* provided an outlet for widespread discussion of environmental issues, and a genuine grass-roots ecological movement arose to champion causes similar to the ecological concerns of the West. Public campaigns were mounted to protect Lake Baykal from industrial pollution and to halt the precipitous decline in the water levels of the Caspian Sea, the Sea of Azov, and, most urgently, the Aral Sea. A grandiose scheme to divert the northern rivers southward had been counted on to replenish these seas, but for both economic and environmental reasons, the project was canceled in 1986.



Source: Based on information from William Henry Parker, *The Soviet Union*, New York, 1983, 7.

Figure 7. Major Mineral Deposits

Without this diversion project, the Aral Sea, once a body of water larger than any of the Great Lakes except Lake Superior, seemed destined to become the world's largest salt flat as early as the year 2010. By 1987 so much water had been siphoned off for irrigation of cotton and rice fields south and east of the sea that all shipping and commercial fishing had ceased. Former seaports, active as late as 1973, were reported to be forty to sixty kilometers from the water's edge. Belatedly recognizing the gravity of the situation for the 3 million inhabitants of the Aral region, government officials declared it an ecological disaster area.

With respect to air pollution, mass demonstrations protesting unhealthful conditions were held in cities such as Yerevan in the Armenian Republic. Official reports confirmed that more than 100 of the largest Soviet cities registered air quality indexes ten times worse than permissible levels. In one of the most publicized cases, the inhabitants of Kirishi, a city not far from Leningrad, succeeded in closing a chemical plant whose toxic emissions were found to be harming—and in some cases killing—the city's residents. Finally, separate, highly publicized cases of man-made disasters, the most prominent of which was the Chernobyl' (see Glossary) nuclear power plant accident in 1986, highlighted the fragility of the man-production-nature relationship in the Soviet Union and forced a reconsideration of traditional attitudes and policies toward industrialization and development.

As part of the process of restructuring (*perestroika*—see Glossary), in the 1980s concrete steps were taken to strengthen environmental protection and to provide the country with an effective mechanism for implementing policy and ensuring compliance. Two specific indications of this were the inclusion of a new section devoted to environmental protection in the annual statistical yearbook and the establishment of the State Committee for the Protection of Nature (Gosudarstvennyi komitet po okhrane prirody—Goskompriroda) early in 1988.

Despite these measures, decades of environmental degradation caused by severe water and air pollution and land abuse were unlikely to be remedied soon or easily. Solving these critical problems will require not only a major redirection of capital and labor but also a fundamental change in the entire Soviet approach to industrial and agricultural production and resource exploitation and consumption.

Population

Seven official censuses have been taken in the Soviet Union (1920, 1926, 1939, 1959, 1970, 1979, and 1989). Both the quality and the

quantity of the data have varied: in 1972 seven volumes totaling 3,238 pages were published on the 1970 census. In contrast, the results of the 1979 census were published more than five years later in a single volume of 366 pages.

According to the census of 1989, on the day of the census, January 12, the population of the Soviet Union was estimated to be 286,717,000. This figure maintained the country's long-standing position as the world's third most populous country after China and India. In the intercensal period (1979-88), the population of the Soviet Union grew from 262.4 million to 286.7 million, a 9 percent increase.

During the 1970s and early 1980s, the Soviet Union experienced declining birth rates, increasing divorce rates, a trend toward smaller nuclear families, and increasing mobility and urbanization. Major problems associated with such factors as migration, tension among nationality groups, uneven fertility rates, and high infant and adult mortality became increasingly acute, and various social programs and incentives were introduced to deal with them.

Vital Statistics

In the period after World War II, annual population growth rates gradually declined from a high of 1.4 percent during the 1961-65 period to 0.9 percent, the rate throughout the 1970s and most of the 1980s. Such a rate of increase is typical for an industrialized urbanized society, and it closely matched the 1.0 percent growth rate recorded in the United States for the same period.

Between 1971 and 1986, average life expectancy fluctuated and actually decreased in some years before stabilizing at about seventy years (see table 8, Appendix A). The difference of eight to ten years between male and female life expectancy in favor of women was somewhat greater than in most Western countries. Life expectancy was longest (73.3 years in 1985-86) in the Armenian Republic and shortest (64.8 years) in the Turkmen Republic.

More than any other demographic index, infant mortality underscored most sharply the tremendous regional differences in the population and its health care. Beginning in the mid-1970s, reporting of infant mortality rates was discontinued; in October 1986, however, Soviet sources revealed that infant mortality rates had actually increased between 1970 and 1986, from 24.7 per 1,000 to 25.4 per 1,000 births. While the rate for the Russian Republic, which is generally better supplied with health facilities, declined by 19 percent, the rate increased for most Soviet Central Asian republics. In one case, the Uzbek Republic, the rate increased by almost 50 percent, to 46.2 per 1,000. In 1986 infant mortality was



Satellite imagery of the Aral Sea in 1987. A catastrophic loss of 60 percent of the sea's volume of water followed the near total diversion of inflow for agricultural irrigation south and east of the sea (see shaded areas). The dotted line shows the 1973 shoreline. The formerly active ports of Aral'sk and Muynak were stranded in a desert forty to sixty kilometers from the water in 1987.

Courtesy United States Air Force Defense Meteorological Satellite Program and CIRES/National Snow and Ice Data Center

lowest (11.6 per 1,000) in the Lithuanian Republic and highest (58.2 per 1,000) in the Turkmen Republic.

Analysts proposed a number of reasons to explain what was viewed as an abnormally high rate of infant mortality for a developed country. Among the reasons given were excessive consumption of alcohol and heavy smoking among women; widespread use of abortion as a means of birth control, a procedure that could impair the health of the mother and of children carried to term; teenage pregnancy; unsanitary conditions; and a deteriorating health care system (see *Health Care*, ch. 6).

In the Soviet Union, virtually all national growth has been the result of natural increase because of traditionally rigid control over immigration and emigration. Growth, however, varies considerably from region to region and from nationality to nationality. In terms of population, there is a clear trend toward the Soviet Union's becoming more Asian and less European. Birth rates in parts of Soviet Central Asia are in some cases ten times higher than birth rates among Slavs. In the intercensal period 1970-78, population growth in the Asian part of the Soviet Union was almost triple the rate of growth in the European section, 16.8 percent versus 5.9 percent.

Although most facets of the population were dynamic, some demographic aspects remained constant: women have outnumbered men since the Bolshevik Revolution, and the overwhelming majority of the people have opted to live in the cities and on the collective farms (see *Glossary*) and state farms (see *Glossary*) of the European part of the country. In more than seven decades of Soviet power, the population has experienced periodic cataclysmic demographic events, some of them self-inflicted and some of them of external origin. These wars, famines, purges, and epidemics have left an enduring imprint on the society and on its ability to reproduce and renew itself. The magnitude of human loss in the Soviet Union can be shown by estimating the 1987 population as if it had grown at a relatively modest annual rate of 1 percent from 1917 to 1987. At that rate, the population would have reached approximately 325 million citizens by the seventieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. Instead, that figure is expected to be reached only in 2016, a delay of more than one generation. The difference between this estimate of 325 million and the actual population in 1987 of 281 million suggests that some 45 to 50 million lives were lost in wars, famines, forced collectivization, and purges.

The single most devastating event by far was World War II, commonly referred to in the Soviet Union as the Great Patriotic War (see *The Great Patriotic War*, ch. 2). Estimates vary, but an

absolute population decline of some 20 to 25 million seems quite plausible. There were 194 million people reportedly living in the Soviet Union in 1940. Only 209 million were counted by the census of 1959 instead of the roughly 234 million that might have been expected, given a moderate rate of growth. Since the end of the war, the population has increased by more than 100 million.

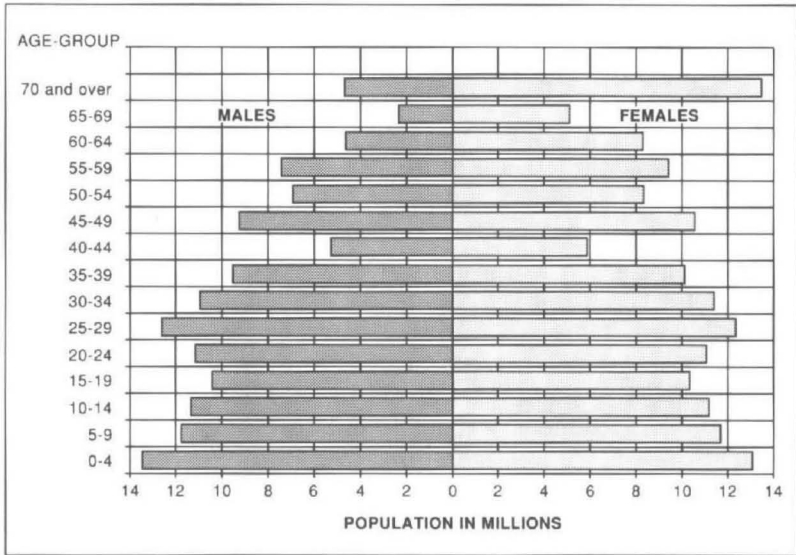
Age and Sex Structure

The aspect of the population most affected by the cataclysmic demographic events was its age and sex structure. The consequences of World War II ensured that the existing surplus of women would persist for at least another generation; more than four decades after its conclusion, women, most of whom were born before the war, still outnumbered men by about 16 million (see table 9, Appendix A). This imbalance has had a profound impact on the economy, social structure, and population reproduction in the Soviet Union. Before the war, just under 40 percent of women were in the work force: since 1970 they have been a slight majority of all workers. The female component of the work force since the start of the war has become an indispensable feature of the Soviet economy, and the overwhelming majority of working-age women were employed in 1987.

Because a significant portion of an entire generation perished in the war, marriages and births were fewer for some time thereafter. The decline in the marriage and birth rates produced a population pyramid with bulges and contractions in specific age and sex groups and with significantly higher percentages of older women at the top of the pyramid (see fig. 8). Expressed another way, in 1987 for every one *dedushka* (grandfather), there were almost three *babushki* (grandmothers).

Because both the economic and the military might of a country largely depend upon its labor force, the able-bodied population (defined in the Soviet Union as males sixteen to fifty-nine years of age and females sixteen to fifty-four years of age) was for Soviet planners an increasing cause of concern. Additions to the working-age population peaked in the 1970s, with a growth of almost 23 million; projected increases in the 1980s were expected to be one-quarter that number, with a gradual improvement to one-half (11.6 million) in the 1990s. This slowed growth placed a strain on the economy in the late 1970s and early 1980s by requiring continuous boosts in productivity (see Labor, ch. 11).

In 1985 the sexes were in rough balance, with a slight male preponderance up to the population median age of 33.4 years. Beyond the median age, however, women outnumbered men in the



Source: Based on information from "Naselenie SSSR," *Vestnik statistiki* [Moscow], No. 12, December 1987, 44.

Figure 8. Population Distribution by Age and Sex, 1987

population and in the work force. In some professions and economic sectors (health care, trade, food services, social services, and physical education, for example), more than 80 percent of all workers were women.

Mortality and Fertility

Between 1970 and 1986, the mortality rate in the Soviet Union increased from 8.2 per 1,000 to 9.8 per 1,000. Some of this increase was attributable to the aging of the population, as the number of old-age (fifty-five for women, sixty for men) pensioners grew from 36.5 million to 47.4 million. Other factors, however, contributed to this upswing, one of the most disturbing of which was an increase in the mortality of infants and able-bodied men. The male mortality increase was highlighted by the almost ten-year differential in male and female life expectancies. Intense urbanization and the attendant pressures of living and working in an urban environment undoubtedly exacerbated the mortality rate. As in most developed countries, the leading causes of death in the Soviet Union were cardiovascular diseases, malignant tumors, and injuries and accidents. Suicide cases in 1987 were officially recorded at 54,105, or 19.1 per 100,000 population.

Under Gorbachev a concerted effort has been made to reduce mortality and improve productivity. The government initiated active campaigns to limit the number of deaths from accidents and chronic degenerative diseases by drastically curtailing the availability of alcohol and by attempting to persuade the more than 70 million (in 1986 about 25 percent of the population) smokers to renounce the habit. The overall health of the population, the state of Soviet health care, and the environment became recurrent topics of open discussion and debate. By 1986 these measures seemed to be having some effect: one year was added to average male life expectancy, and mortality started to decline. Some Soviet demographers stressed, however, that long-term improvements would only be ensured by focusing on four factors that they believed to be major determinants of the level of mortality: the quality of life, including working and living conditions, nutrition, and clothing; the quality of the environment; the quality and accessibility of health care; and the people's sanitary and hygienic habits.

In the 1970-78 intercensal period, overall fertility rates in the Soviet Union declined slightly. Regionally, however, there were sharp differences. In Soviet Central Asia, for example, women consistently expected to have at least twice as many children as their counterparts in the European part of the Russian Republic. The Caucasus region registered rates between these two extremes. The government addressed the issue of declining fertility by enacting a series of measures in the late 1970s and early 1980s aimed at making it easier for women to cope with the onerous burden of being mother, wife, and worker (see *Population Problems and Policies*, this ch.; *Role of Women*, ch. 5).

Urbanization

In a span of over seventy years, the Soviet Union has undergone a transition from a largely rural agricultural society to an urban industrial society. In 1917 only about 17 percent of the population lived in cities or urban settlements; in 1961 the urban and rural population was in balance; and by 1987 two of every three Soviet citizens were urban dwellers (see table 10, Appendix A).

The levels of urbanization in 1989 highlighted the uneven development of the regions and nationalities. The populations of the Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Russian republics were 70 percent urbanized, approximating levels found in Western Europe and the United States. Four of the five Central Asian republics (the Kirgiz, Tadzhik, Uzbek, and Turkmen republics), however, continued to have a majority of the population living in rural areas, and the Tadzhik Republic's 33 percent rate of urbanization was

only slightly higher than that of Albania. In the European part, the Moldavian Republic with a rural majority was an exception to the rule of higher rates of urbanization.

Until the early 1980s, the growth of large cities and the concentration of industry there went mostly unchecked. However, because of such problems as a chronic housing shortage, pollution, and a declining birth rate, authorities attempted to exercise greater control over migration to the major cities; among other things, the government encouraged greater development and growth in small and medium-sized cities. Nevertheless, the scope and tempo of big-city growth has continued. In 1970 ten cities had a population of 1 million or more, but in 1989 the number had risen to twenty-three (see table 11, Appendix A). Most of these cities, including the three largest—Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev—were located west of the Urals. Only five of the largest cities were east of the Urals, and the largest city in the entire eastern half of the Soviet Union (beyond the Yenisey River) was Vladivostok (615,000 inhabitants in 1987).

Despite its size and the length of its coastline, the Soviet Union's global position and climate have restricted the number of seaports to fewer than a dozen key cities (Leningrad, Odessa, Murmansk, and Vladivostok, among them). Many of the largest cities, however, are located on water, primarily on rivers, that have long been powerful settlement-forming influences and key transportation arteries. The Volga and its tributaries remain the key geographic features toward which people and commerce continue to gravitate. Two of the youngest and fastest growing cities, Tol'yatti and Naberezhnyye Chelny, were boom towns that sprang up in the 1970s around giant automobile and truck plants on the Volga and Kama rivers, respectively.

Migration

Two aspects of the Soviet system tended to act as impediments to voluntary migration: state ownership of the land and, in theory at least, a rigid system of internal passports that regulated where people live and work. Despite these impediments, in the 1980s approximately 15 million citizens (5 percent of the total population), some with the state's approval and some without it, changed their place of residence each year. The overwhelming majority of the migrants were young males sixteen years of age and older. Many of these were students. Millions of pioneers arrived at or departed from newly explored territories in western Siberia or the Soviet Far East. Many of the migrants abandoned the hard work and