



ЛЕНИН-
ЖИЛ,
ЛЕНИН-
ЖИВ,
ЛЕНИН-
БУДЕТ ЖИТЬ!

В.А. МАЯКОВСКИЙ.

Revolution, Socialism, and Global Conflict

The Rise and Fall of World Communism 1917–present

Global Communism Revolutions as a Path to Communism

Russia: Revolution in a Single Year
China: A Prolonged Revolutionary
Struggle

Building Socialism

Communist Feminism
Socialism in the Countryside
Communism and Industrial
Development
The Search for Enemies

East versus West: A Global Divide and a Cold War

Military Conflict and the Cold War
Nuclear Standoff and Third-World
Rivalry
The Cold War and the Superpowers

Paths to the End of Communism

China: Abandoning Communism
and Maintaining the Party
The Soviet Union: The Collapse of
Communism and Country

Reflections: To Judge or Not to Judge

Zooming In: Anna Dubova, a Russian Peasant Girl and Urban Woman

Zooming In: The Cuban Revolution Working with Evidence: Poster Art in Mao's China

An upstanding Soviet citizen entered a medical clinic one day and asked to see an ear-and-eye doctor. Asked about his problem, the man replied, "Well, I keep hearing one thing and seeing another."

A Frenchman, an Englishman, and a Soviet Russian are admiring a painting of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The Frenchman says, "They must be French; they're naked and they're eating fruit." The Englishman says, "Clearly, they're English; observe how politely the woman is offering fruit to the man." The Russian replies, "No, they are Russian communists, of course. They have no house, nothing to wear, little to eat, and they think they are in Paradise."

These are two of an endless array of jokes that had long circulated in the Soviet Union as a means of expressing in private what could not be said in public. A major theme of those jokes involved the hypocrisy of a communist system that promised equality and abundance for all but delivered a dismal and uncertain economic life for the many and great privileges for the few. The growing disbelief in the ability or willingness of the communist regime to provide a decent life for its people was certainly an important factor in the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the end of communism in the land of its birth. Amid that disillusionment, it was hard to remember that earlier in the century communism had been greeted with enthusiasm by many people—in Russia, China, Cuba, Vietnam, and elsewhere—as a promise of liberation from inequality, oppression, exploitation, and backwardness.

Lenin Vladimir Ulyanov, better known as Lenin, was the Bolshevik leader of the Russian Revolution. He became the iconic symbol of world communism and in his own country was the focus of a semi-religious cult. This widely distributed Soviet propaganda poster reads, "Lenin lived; Lenin lives; Lenin will live."

Communism was a phenomenon of enormous significance in the world of the twentieth century. Communist regimes came to power almost everywhere in the tumultuous wake of war, revolution, or both. Once established, those regimes set about a thorough and revolutionary transformation of their societies—“building socialism,” as they so often put it. Internationally, world communism posed a profound military and political/ideological threat to the Western world of capitalism and democracy, particularly during the decades of the cold war from the late 1940s through 1991. That struggle divided continents, countries, and cities into communist and noncommunist halves. It also prompted a global rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union (USSR) for influence in the Global South. Most hauntingly, it spawned an arms race in horrendously destructive nuclear weapons that sent schoolchildren scrambling under their desks during air raid drills, while sober scientists speculated about the possible extinction of human life, and perhaps all life, in the event of a major war.

Then, to the amazement of everyone, it was over, more with a whimper than a bang. The last two decades of the twentieth century witnessed the collapse of communist regimes or the abandonment of communist principles practically everywhere. The great global struggle of capitalism and communism, embodied in the United States and the Soviet Union, was resolved in favor of the former far more quickly and much more peacefully than anyone had imagined possible.

SEEKING THE MAIN POINT

What was the appeal of communism, both in terms of its promises and its achievements? To what extent did promises match achievements?

AP® EXAM TIP

Look back at Marx's theories in Chapter 17 and note their twentieth-century outcomes. Also remember that the rise, fall, and features of communism are some of the most important developments in the twentieth century.

Guided Reading Question

DESCRIPTION

When and where did communism exercise influence during the twentieth century?

Global Communism

Modern communism found its political and philosophical roots in nineteenth-century European socialism, inspired by the teachings of Karl Marx. Although most European socialists came to believe that they could achieve their goals peacefully and through the democratic process, those who defined themselves as communists in the twentieth century disdained such reformism and advocated uncompromising revolution as the only possible route to a socialist future. Russia, later called the Soviet Union, was the first country to experience such a revolution. Other movements that later identified or allied with the Soviet Union likewise defined themselves as communist. In Marxist theory, communism also referred to a final stage of historical development when social equality and collective living would be most fully developed, largely without private property. Socialism was an intermediate stage along the way to that final goal.

By the 1970s, almost one-third of the world's population lived in societies governed by communist regimes. By far the most significant were the Soviet Union, the world's largest country in size, and China, the world's largest country in population. But Mongolia had come under communist rule in 1924 as a spillover of the Russian Revolution. Communist regimes came to power in Eastern Europe in the wake of World War II and the extension of the Soviet military presence there. Fol-

A MAP OF TIME

1917	Russian Revolution
1921	Founding of Chinese Communist Party
1929–1953	Stalin in power in Soviet Union
1934–1935	Long March in China
1945–1950	Imposition of communist regimes in Eastern Europe
1949	Communist triumph in China
1950–1953	Korean War
1958–1961	China's Great Leap Forward and massive famine
1959	Cuban Revolution
1962	Cuban missile crisis
1965–1973	U.S.-Vietnam war
1966–1976	China's Cultural Revolution
1968	Prague Spring: communist reform movement in Czechoslovakia
1975–1979	Genocide in communist Cambodia
1976–early 1990s	Deng Xiaoping and beginnings of communist reforms in China
1979	Soviet invasion of Afghanistan
1985–1991	Gorbachev reforms in USSR
1989	Collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe
1991	Disintegration of Soviet Union
1990s	Economic contraction in the former Soviet Union and economic expansion in China
2007–2009	Communist North Korea acquires nuclear weapons
2008	Fidel Castro steps down as leader of communist Cuba
2014	United States proposes to restore diplomatic relations with Cuba

Following Japan's defeat in World War II, its Korean colony was partitioned, with the northern half coming under Soviet and therefore communist control. In Vietnam, a much more locally based communist movement, under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, embodied both a socialist vision and Vietnamese nationalism as it battled Japanese, French, and later American invaders and established communist control

first in the northern half of the country and after 1975 throughout the whole country. The victory of the Vietnamese communists spilled over into neighboring Laos and Cambodia, where communist parties took power in the mid-1970s. In Latin America, Fidel Castro led a revolutionary nationalist movement against a repressive, American-backed government in Cuba. On coming to power in 1959, Castro moved toward communism and an alliance with the Soviet Union. Finally, a shaky communist regime took power in Afghanistan in 1979, propped up briefly by massive Soviet military support. None of these countries had achieved the kind of advanced industrial capitalism that Karl Marx had viewed as a prerequisite for revolution and socialism. Indeed, in one of history's strange twists, the communist revolutions of the twentieth century took place in largely agrarian societies. (See Map 21.3, page 950, for a global view of the communist world in the 1970s, the period of its greatest extent.)

In addition to those countries where communist governments controlled state power, communist movements took root in still other places, where they exercised various degrees of influence. In the aftermath of World War II, communist parties played important political roles in Greece, France, and Italy. In the 1950s, a small communist party in the United States became the focus of an intense wave of fear and political repression known as McCarthyism. Revolutionary communist movements threatened established governments in the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Bolivia, Peru, and elsewhere, sometimes provoking brutal crackdowns by those governments. A number of African states in the 1970s proclaimed themselves Marxist for a time and aligned with the Soviet Union in international affairs. All of this was likewise part of global communism.

These differing expressions of communism were linked to one another in various ways. They shared a common ideology derived from European Marxism, although it was substantially modified in many places. That ideology minimized the claims of national loyalty and looked forward to an international revolutionary movement of the lower classes and a worldwide socialist federation. The Russian Revolution of 1917 served as an inspiration and an example to aspiring revolutionaries elsewhere, and the new Soviet Communist Party and government provided them aid and advice. Through an organization called Comintern (Communist International), Soviet authorities also sought to control their policies and actions.

During the cold war decades, the Warsaw Pact brought the Soviet Union and Eastern European communist states together in a military alliance designed to counter the threat from the Western capitalist countries of the NATO alliance. A parallel organization called the Council on Mutual Economic Assistance tied Eastern European economies tightly to the economy of the Soviet Union. A Treaty of Friendship between the Soviet Union and China in 1950 joined the two communist giants in an alliance that caused many in the West to view communism as a unified international movement aimed at their destruction. Nevertheless, rivalry, outright hostility, and on occasion military conflict marked the communist world as much as or more than solidarity and cooperation. Eastern European nations'

AP® EXAM TIP

You need to know ways that communism changed from Marx's ideas to different forms as it spread around the world.

resentment of their Soviet overlords boiled over in periodic rebellions, even as the Soviet Union and China came close to war in the late 1960s.

Although the globalization of communism found expression primarily in the second half of the twentieth century, that process began with two quite distinct and different revolutionary upheavals—one in Russia and the other in China—in the first half of the century.

Revolutions as a Path to Communism

Communist movements of the twentieth century quite self-consciously drew on the mystique of the earlier French Revolution, which suggested that new and better worlds could be constructed by human actions. Like their French predecessors, communist revolutionaries ousted old ruling classes and dispossessed landed aristocracies. Those twentieth-century upheavals also involved vast peasant upheavals in the countryside and an educated leadership with roots in the cities. All three revolutions—French, Russian, and Chinese—found their vision of the good society in a modernizing future, not in some nostalgic vision of the past. Communists also worried lest their revolutions end up in a military dictatorship like that of Napoleon following the French Revolution.

But the communist revolutions were distinctive as well. They were made by highly organized parties guided by a Marxist ideology, were committed to an industrial future, pursued economic as well as political equality, and sought the abolition of private property. In doing so, they mobilized, celebrated, and claimed to act on behalf of society's lower classes—exploited urban workers and impoverished rural peasants. The middle classes, who were the chief beneficiaries of the French Revolution, numbered among the many victims of the communist upheavals. And unlike the French or American revolutionaries, communists also carried an explicit message of gender equality. The Russian and Chinese revolutions shared these general features, but in other respects they differed sharply from each other.

Russia: Revolution in a Single Year

In Russia, communists came to power on the back of a revolutionary upheaval that took place within a single year, 1917. The immense pressures of World War I, which was going very badly for the Russians, represented the catalyst for that revolution as the accumulated tensions of Russian society exploded. Much exploited and suffering from wartime shortages, workers—men and women alike—took to the streets to express their outrage at the incompetence and privileges of the elites. In St. Petersburg, some 100,000 wives of soldiers demonstrated for bread and peace. Activists from various parties, many of them socialist, recruited members, organized demonstrations, published newspapers, and plotted revolution. By February 1917, Tsar Nicholas II had lost almost all support and was forced to abdicate the throne, thus ending the Romanov dynasty, which had ruled Russia for more than three centuries.

AP® EXAM TIP

Take notes on these comparisons of the French, Russian, and Chinese revolutions.

Guided Reading Question

COMPARISON

Identify the major differences between the Russian and Chinese revolutions.

AP® EXAM TIP

Return to Chapter 3 and compare the causes of the fall of the Russian Empire with those of the Han and Roman empires.



Map 21.1 Russia in 1917

In 1917 during the First World War, the world's largest state, bridging both Europe and Asia, exploded in revolution. The Russian Revolution brought to power the twentieth century's first communist government and launched an international communist movement that eventually incorporated about one-third of the world's people.

That historic event opened the door for a massive social upheaval. Ordinary soldiers, seeking an end to a terrible war and despising their upper-class officers, deserted in substantial numbers. In major industrial centers such as St. Petersburg and Moscow, new trade unions arose to defend workers' interests, and some workers seized control of their factories. Grassroots organizations of workers and soldiers, known as soviets, emerged to speak for ordinary people. Peasants, many of whom had been serfs only a generation or two earlier, seized landlords' estates, burned their manor houses, and redistributed the land among themselves. Non-Russian nationalists in Ukraine, Poland, Muslim Central Asia, and the Baltic region demanded greater autonomy or even independence (see Map 21.1).

This was social revolution, and it quickly demonstrated the inadequacy of the Provisional Government, which had come to power after the tsar abdicated. Consisting of middle-class politicians and some moderate socialist leaders, that government was divided and ineffectual, unable or unwilling to meet the demands of

Russia's revolutionary masses. It was also unwilling to take Russia out of the war, as many were now demanding. Impatience and outrage against the Provisional Government provided an opening for more radical groups. The most effective were the Bolsheviks (BOHL-shih-vehks), a small socialist party with a determined and charismatic leader, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, more commonly known as Lenin. He had long believed that Russia, despite its industrial backwardness, was nonetheless ready for a socialist revolution that would, he expected, spark further revolutions in the more developed countries of Europe. Thus backward Russia would be a catalyst for a more general socialist breakthrough. It was a striking revision of Marxist thinking to accommodate the conditions of a largely agrarian Russian society.

In the desperate circumstances of 1917, his party's message—an end to the war, land for the peasants, workers' control of factories, self-determination for non-Russian nationalities—resonated with an increasingly rebellious public mood, particularly in the major cities. On the basis of this program, the Bolsheviks—claiming to act on behalf of the highly popular soviets—seized power in late October during an overnight coup in the capital city of St. Petersburg.

Taking or claiming power was one thing; holding on to it was another. A three-year civil war followed in which the Bolsheviks, now officially calling their party “communist,” battled an assortment of enemies—tsarist officials, landlords, disaffected socialists, and regional nationalist forces, as well as troops from the United States, Britain, France, and Japan, all of which were eager to crush the fledgling communist regime. Remarkably, the Bolsheviks held on and by 1921 had staggered to victory over their divided and uncoordinated opponents. That remarkable victory was assisted by the Bolsheviks' willingness to sign a separate peace treaty with Germany, thus taking Russia out of World War I in early 1918, but at a great, though temporary, loss of Russian territory.

During the civil war (1918–1921), the Bolsheviks harshly regimented the economy, seized grain from angry peasants, suppressed nationalist rebellions, and perpetrated bloody atrocities, as did their enemies as well. But they also integrated many lower-class men into the Red Army, as Bolshevik military forces were known, and into new local governments, providing them a fresh avenue of social mobility. By battling foreign troops, the Bolsheviks claimed to be defending Russia from imperialists and protecting the downtrodden masses from their exploiters. The civil war exaggerated even further the Bolsheviks' authoritarian tendencies and their inclination to use force. Shortly after that war ended, they renamed their country the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR or Soviet Union) and set about its transformation.

For the next twenty-five years, the Soviet Union remained a communist island in a capitalist sea. The next major extension of communist control occurred in Eastern Europe in the aftermath of World War II, but it took place quite differently than in Russia. That war ended with Soviet military forces occupying much of Eastern Europe. Stalin, the USSR's longtime leader, determined that Soviet security

Guided Reading Question

■ CHANGE

Why were the Bolsheviks able to ride the Russian Revolution to power?



The Russian Civil War through Bolshevik Eyes

This Bolshevik poster from 1921, titled “Electrification and Counterrevolution,” presents a communist view of the civil war that followed the Russian Revolution. It shows a worker bringing electricity and more generally the light of modernity and progress to a backward country, while depicting their opponents, which include a priest, a general, and a businessman, as seeking to extinguish that light. (The New York Public Library/Art Resource, NY)

AP® EXAM TIP

Make a list of the actions Stalin took to counter Western policies in Europe after World War II.

example, communist pressures led to the redistribution of much land to poor or landless peasants, and in free elections in Czechoslovakia in 1946 communists received 38 percent of the vote. The situation in Yugoslavia differed sharply from that of the rest of Eastern Europe. There a genuinely popular communist movement had played a leading role in the struggle against Nazi occupation and came to power on its own with little Soviet help. Its leader, Josef Broz, known as Tito, openly defied Soviet efforts to control Yugoslav communism. He proclaimed, “Our goal is that everyone should be master in his own house.”¹

China: A Prolonged Revolutionary Struggle

Communism triumphed in the ancient land of China in 1949, about thirty years after the Russian Revolution, likewise on the heels of war and domestic upheaval. But that revolution, which was a struggle of decades rather than a single year, was far different from its earlier Russian counterpart. The Chinese imperial system had collapsed in 1911, under the pressure of foreign imperialism, its own inadequacies, and mounting internal opposition (see Chapter 19, pages 834–44). Unlike in Russia, where intellectuals had been discussing socialism for half a century or more before the revolution, in China the ideas of Karl Marx were barely known in the early twentieth century. Not until 1921 was a small Chinese Communist Party (CCP) founded, aimed initially at organizing the country’s minuscule urban working class.

required “friendly” governments in the region to permanently end the threat of invasion from the West. When the Marshall Plan seemed to suggest American efforts to incorporate Eastern Europe into a Western economic network, Stalin acted to install fully communist governments, loyal to himself, in Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. Backed by the pressure and presence of the Soviet army, communism was largely imposed on Eastern Europe from outside rather than growing out of a domestic revolution, as had happened in Russia itself.

Local communist parties, however, had some domestic support, deriving from their role in the resistance against the Nazis and their policies of land reform. In Hungary and Poland, for

Over the next twenty-eight years, that small party, with an initial membership of only sixty people, grew enormously, transformed its strategy, found a charismatic leader in Mao Zedong, engaged in an epic struggle with its opponents, fought the Japanese heroically, and in 1949 emerged victorious as the rulers of China. That victory was all the more surprising because the CCP faced a far more formidable foe than the weak Provisional Government over which the Bolsheviks had triumphed in Russia. That opponent was the Guomindang (GWOH-mihn-dahng) (Nationalist Party), which governed China after 1928. Led by a military officer, Chiang Kai-shek, that party promoted a measure of modern development (railroads, light industry, banking, airline services) in the decade that followed. However, the impact of these achievements was limited largely to the cities, leaving the rural areas, where most people lived, still impoverished. The Guomindang's base of support was also narrow, deriving from urban elites, rural landlords, and Western powers.

Chased out of China's cities in a wave of Guomindang-inspired anticommunist terror in 1927, the CCP groped its way toward a new revolutionary strategy, quite at odds with both classical Marxism and Russian practice. Whereas the Bolsheviks had found their primary audience among workers in Russia's major cities, Chinese communists increasingly looked to the country's peasant villages for support. Thus European Marxism was adapted once again, this time to fit the situation of a mostly peasant China. Still, it was no easy sell. Chinese peasants did not rise up spontaneously against their landlords, as Russian peasants had. However, years of guerrilla warfare, experiments with land reform in areas under communist control, and the creation of a communist military force to protect liberated areas slowly gained for the CCP a growing measure of respect and support among China's peasants. In the process, Mao Zedong, the son of a prosperous Chinese peasant family and a professional revolutionary since the early 1920s, emerged as the party's leader.

To recruit women for the revolution, communists drew on a theoretical commitment to the liberation of women and in the areas under communist control established a Marriage Law that outlawed arranged or "purchased" marriages, made divorce easier, and gave women the right to vote and own property. Early experiments with land reform offered equal shares to men and women alike. Women's associations enrolled

Guided Reading Question

■ CHANGE

What was the appeal of communism in China before 1949?

AP® EXAM TIP

You need to know ways that communism in China differed from communism in Russia.



Mao Zedong and the Long March

An early member of China's then-minuscule Communist Party, Mao rose to a position of dominant leadership during the Long March of 1934–1935, when beleaguered communists from southeastern China trekked to a new base area in the north. This photograph shows Mao on his horse during that epic journey of some 6,000 miles. (© Collection A. Fox/Magnum Photos)

AP® EXAM TIP

You should know how the communist revolutions in Russia and China affected women's roles in society and politics.

hundreds of thousands of women and promoted literacy, fostered discussions of women's issues, and encouraged handicraft production, such as making the clothing, blankets, and shoes that were so essential for the revolutionary forces. But resistance to such radical measures from more traditional rural villagers, especially the male peasants and soldiers on whom the communists depended, persuaded the communists to modify these measures. Women were not permitted to seek divorce from men on active military duty. Women's land deeds were often given to male family heads and were regarded as family property. Female party members found themselves limited to work with women or children.

It was Japan's brutal invasion of China that gave the CCP a decisive opening, for that attack destroyed Guomindang control over much of the country and forced it to retreat to the interior, where it became even more dependent on conservative landlords. The CCP, by contrast, grew from just 40,000 members in 1937 to more than 1.2 million in 1945, while the communist-led People's Liberation Army mushroomed to 900,000 men, supported by an additional 2 million militia troops (see Map 21.2). Much of this growing support derived from the vigor with which the CCP waged war against the Japanese invaders. Using guerrilla warfare techniques learned in the struggle against the Guomindang, communist forces established themselves behind enemy lines and, despite periodic setbacks, offered a measure of security to many Chinese faced with Japanese atrocities. The Guomindang, by contrast, sometimes seemed to be more interested in eliminating the communists than in actively fighting the Japanese. Furthermore, in the areas it controlled, the CCP reduced rents, taxes, and interest payments for peasants; established literacy programs for adults; and mobilized women for the struggle. As the war drew to a close, more radical action followed. Teams of activists encouraged poor peasants to "speak bitterness" in public meetings, to "struggle" with landlords, and to "settle accounts" with them.

Thus the CCP frontally addressed both of China's major problems—foreign imperialism and peasant exploitation. It expressed Chinese nationalism as well as a demand for radical social change. It gained a reputation for honesty that contrasted sharply with the massive corruption of Guomindang officials. It put down deep roots among the peasantry in a way that the Bolsheviks never did. And whereas the Bolsheviks gained support by urging Russian withdrawal from the highly unpopular First World War, the CCP won support by aggressively pursuing the struggle against Japanese invaders during World War II. In 1949, four years after the war's end, the Chinese communists swept to victory over the Guomindang, many of whose followers fled to Taiwan. Mao Zedong announced triumphantly in Beijing's Tiananmen Square that "the Chinese people have stood up."

Building Socialism

Once they came to power, communist parties everywhere set about the construction of socialist societies. In the Soviet Union, this massive undertaking occurred under the leadership of Joseph Stalin in the 1920s and 1930s. The corresponding



Map 21.2 The Rise of Communism in China

Communism arose in China at the same time as the country was engaged in a terrible war with Japan and in the context of a civil war with Guomindang forces.

Chinese effort took place during the 1950s and 1960s with Mao Zedong at the helm.

To communist regimes, building socialism meant first of all the modernization and industrialization of their backward societies. They sought, however, a distinctly socialist modernity. This involved a frontal attack on long-standing inequalities of class and gender, an effort to prevent the making of new inequalities as the process of modern development unfolded, and the promotion of cultural values of selflessness and collectivism that could support a socialist society.

Those imperatives generated a political system thoroughly dominated by the Communist Party. Top-ranking party members enjoyed various privileges but were

expected to be exemplars of socialism in the making by being disciplined, selfless, and utterly loyal to their country's Marxist ideology. The party itself penetrated society in ways that Western scholars called "totalitarian," for other parties were forbidden, the state controlled almost the entire economy, and political authorities ensured that the arts, education, and the media conformed to approved ways of thinking. Mass organizations for women, workers, students, and various professional groups operated under party control, with none of the independence that characterized civil society in the West.

In undertaking these tasks, the Soviet Union and China started from different places, most notably their international positions. In 1917, Russian Bolsheviks faced a hostile capitalist world alone, while Chinese communists, coming to power over thirty years later, had an established Soviet Union as a friendly northern neighbor and ally. Furthermore, Chinese revolutionaries had actually governed parts of their huge country for decades, gaining experience that the new Soviet rulers had altogether lacked, since they had come to power so quickly. And the Chinese communists were firmly rooted in the rural areas and among the country's vast peasant population, while their Russian counterparts had found their support mainly in the cities.

If these comparisons generally favored China in its efforts to "build socialism," in economic terms that country faced even more daunting prospects than did the Soviet Union. Its population was far greater, its industrial base far smaller, and the availability of new agricultural land far more limited than in the Soviet Union. Likewise, in China fewer people were literate, and the education system and transportation network were much less developed. Even more than the Soviets, Chinese communists had to build a modern society from the ground up.

Communist Feminism

Among the earliest and most revolutionary actions of these new communist regimes were efforts at liberating and mobilizing women. Communist countries in fact pioneered forms of women's liberation that only later were adopted in the West. This communist feminism was largely state directed, with the initiative coming from the top rather than bubbling up from grassroots movements as in the West. In the Soviet Union, where a small women's movement had taken shape in pre-World War I Russia, the new communist government almost immediately issued a series of laws and decrees regarding women. These measures declared full legal and political equality for women; marriage became a civil procedure among freely consenting adults; divorce was legalized and made easier, as was abortion; illegitimacy was abolished; women no longer had to take their husbands' surnames; pregnancy leave for employed women was mandated; and women were actively mobilized as workers in the country's drive to industrialization. Addressing a Congress of Women Workers and Peasants, Lenin declared: "Root out old habits. Every cook must learn to rule the state."²

In 1919, the party set up a special organization called Zhenotdel (zhen-ut-DEL) (Women's Department), whose radical leaders, all women, pushed a decidedly feminist agenda during the 1920s. They organized numerous conferences for women, trained women to run day-care centers and medical clinics, published newspapers and magazines aimed at a female audience, provided literacy and prenatal classes, and encouraged Muslim women to take off their veils. Alexandra Rodionova, a former streetcar conductor who had played an active role in the revolution, recalled the impact of participation in Zhenotdel: "This former illiterate working girl had been transformed into a person, powerful with the knowledge of her own rights, a consciousness of responsibility for everything happening in the country."³ Much of this agenda encountered opposition from male communist officials and from ordinary people as well, and Stalin abolished Zhenotdel in 1930. While it lasted, though, it was a remarkable experiment in women's liberation by means of state action, animated by an almost utopian sense of new possibilities set loose by the revolution.

Similar policies took shape in communist China. The Marriage Law of 1950 was a direct attack on patriarchal and Confucian traditions. It decreed free choice in marriage, relatively easy divorce, the end of concubinage and child marriage, permission for widows to remarry, and equal property rights for women. A short but intense campaign by the CCP in the early 1950s sought to implement these changes, often against strenuous opposition. The party also launched a Women's Federation, a mass organization that enrolled millions of women. Its leaders, however, were far less radical than the Bolshevik feminists who led Zhenotdel in the 1920s. In China, there was little talk of "free love" or the "withering away of the family," as there had been in the USSR. Nevertheless, like their Soviet counterparts, Chinese women became much more actively involved in production outside the home. By 1978, 50 percent of agricultural workers and 38 percent of nonagricultural laborers were female. "Women can do anything" became a famous party slogan in the 1960s. (See *Working with Evidence*, Source 21.3, page 971.)

Still, communist-style women's liberation had definite limits. Fearing that the "woman question" would detract from his emphasis on industrial production, Stalin declared it "solved" in 1930. Little direct discussion of women's issues was permitted

Guided Reading Question

■ CHANGE

What changes did communist regimes bring to the lives of women?



Mobilizing Women for Communism

As the Soviet Union mobilized for rapid economic development in the 1930s, women entered the workforce in great numbers. Here two young women are mastering the skills of driving a tractor on one of the large collective farms that replaced the country's private agriculture. (Sovoto/UIIG via Getty Images)

in the several decades that followed. In neither the Soviet Union nor China did the Communist Party undertake a direct attack on male domination within the family. Thus the double burden of housework and child care plus paid employment continued to afflict most women. Moreover, women appeared only very rarely in the top political leadership of either country.

Socialism in the Countryside

In their efforts to build socialism, both the Soviet Union and China first expropriated landlords' estates and redistributed that land on a much more equitable basis to the peasantry. Such actions, although clearly revolutionary, were not socialist, for peasants initially received their land as private property. In Russia, the peasants had spontaneously redistributed the land among themselves, and the victorious Bolsheviks merely ratified their actions. In China after 1949, land reform was a more prolonged and difficult process. Hastily trained teams were dispatched to the newly liberated areas, where they mobilized the poorer peasants in thousands of separate villages to confront and humiliate the landlords or the more wealthy peasants. Their land, animals, tools, houses, and money were then redistributed to the poorer members of the village. In these villages, land reform teams encountered the age-old deference that peasants traditionally had rendered to their social superiors. One young woman activist described the confrontational meetings intended to break this ancient pattern:

“Speak bitterness meetings,” as they were called, would help [the peasants] to understand how things really had been in the old days, to realize that their lives were not blindly ordained by fate . . . and that far from owing anything to the feudal landlords, it was the feudal landlords who owed them a debt of suffering beyond all reckoning.⁴

It was, as Mao Zedong put it, “not a dinner party.” Approximately 1 to 2 million landlords were killed in the process, which was largely over by 1952.

A second and more distinctly socialist stage of rural reform sought to end private property in land by collectivizing agriculture. In China, despite brief resistance from richer peasants, collectivization during the 1950s was a generally peaceful process, owing much to the close relationship between the Chinese Communist Party and the peasantry, which had been established during three decades of struggle. This contrasted markedly with the earlier experience of the Soviet Union from 1928 to 1933, when peasants were forced into collective farms and violence was extensive. Russian peasants slaughtered and consumed hundreds of thousands of animals rather than surrender them to the collectives. Stalin singled out the richer peasants, known as *kulaks* (koo-LAHKS), for exclusion from the new collective farms. Some were killed, and many others were deported to remote areas of the country. With little support or experience in the countryside, Soviet communists, who came mostly from the cities, were viewed as intrusive outsiders in Russian peasant vil-

AP® EXAM TIP

You must remember that most revolutions since the French Revolution have promised some type of land reform.

Guided Reading Question

■ COMPARISON

How did the collectivization of agriculture differ between the USSR and China?

lages. A terrible famine ensued, with some 5 million deaths from starvation or malnutrition. China, however, pushed collectivization even further than the Soviet Union did, particularly in huge “people’s communes” during the Great Leap Forward in the late 1950s. It was an effort to mobilize China’s enormous population for rapid development and at the same time to move toward a more fully communist society with an even greater degree of social equality and collective living. (See Working with Evidence, Source 21.2, page 969, for more on communes.) Administrative chaos, disruption of marketing networks, and bad weather combined to produce a massive famine that killed an amazing 20 million people or more between 1959 and 1962, dwarfing even the earlier Soviet famine.

Communism and Industrial Development

Both the Soviet Union and China defined industrialization as a fundamental task of their regimes. That process was necessary to end humiliating backwardness and poverty, to provide the economic basis for socialism, and to create the military strength that would enable their revolutions to survive in a hostile world. Though strongly anticapitalist, communists everywhere were ardent modernizers.

When the Chinese communists began their active industrialization efforts in the early 1950s, they largely followed the model pioneered by the Soviet Union in the late 1920s and the 1930s. That model involved state ownership of property, centralized planning embodied in successive five-year plans, priority to heavy industry, massive mobilization of the nation’s human and material resources, and intrusive Communist Party control of the entire process. Both countries experienced major—indeed unprecedented—economic growth. The Soviet Union constructed the foundations of an industrial society in the 1930s that proved itself in the victory over Nazi Germany in World War II and that by the 1960s and 1970s had generated substantially improved standards of living. China also quickly expanded its output. (See Snapshot, page 944.) In addition, both countries achieved massive improvements in their literacy rates and educational opportunities, allowing far greater social mobility for millions of people than ever before. In both countries, industrialization fostered a similar set of social outcomes: rapid urbanization, exploitation of the countryside to provide resources for modern industry in the cities, and the growth of a privileged bureaucratic and technological elite intent on pursuing their own careers and passing on their new status to their children.

Perhaps the chief difference in the industrial histories of the Soviet Union and China lies in the leadership’s response to these social outcomes. In the Soviet Union under Stalin and his successors, they were largely accepted. Industrialization was centered in large urban areas, which pulled from the countryside the most ambitious and talented people. A highly privileged group of state and party leaders emerged in the Stalin era and largely remained the unchallenged ruling class of the country until the 1980s. Even in the 1930s, the outlines of a conservative society, which had discarded much of its revolutionary legacy, were apparent. Stalin himself

AP® EXAM TIP

Take notes on these features of communist-led planned economies.

Guided Reading Question

WE CHANGE

What were the achievements of communist efforts at industrialization? What problems did these achievements generate?

SNAPSHOT China under Mao, 1949–1976

The following table reveals some of the achievements, limitations, and tragedies of China's communist experience during the era of Mao Zedong.⁵

Steel production	from 1.3 million to 23 million tons
Coal production	from 66 million to 448 million tons
Electric power generation	from 7 million to 133 billion kilowatt-hours
Fertilizer production	from 0.2 million to 28 million tons
Cement production	from 3 million to 49 million tons
Industrial workers	from 3 million to 50 million
Scientists and technicians	from 50,000 to 5 million
"Barefoot doctors" posted to countryside	1 million
Annual growth rate of industrial output	11 percent
Annual growth rate of agricultural output	2.3 percent
Total population	from 542 million to 1 billion
Average population growth rate per year	2 percent
Per capita consumption of rural dwellers	from 62 to 124 yuan annually
Per capita consumption of urban dwellers	from 148 to 324 yuan
Overall life expectancy	from 35 to 65 years
Counterrevolutionaries killed (1949–1952)	between 1 million and 3 million
People labeled "rightists" in 1957	550,000
Deaths from famine during Great Leap Forward	20 million or more
Deaths during Cultural Revolution	500,000
Officials sent down to rural labor camps during Cultural Revolution	3 million or more
Urban youth sent down to countryside	17 million (1967–1976)

endorsed Russian patriotism, traditional family values, individual competition, and substantial differences in wages to stimulate production, as an earlier commitment to egalitarianism was substantially abandoned. Increasingly the invocation of revolutionary values was devoid of real content, and by the 1970s the perception of official hypocrisy was widespread.

The unique feature of Chinese history under Mao Zedong's leadership was a recurrent effort to combat these perhaps inevitable tendencies of any industrializing process and to revive and preserve the revolutionary spirit, which had animated the

Communist Party during its long struggle for power. By the mid-1950s, Mao and some of his followers had become persuaded that the Soviet model of industrialization was leading China away from socialism and toward new forms of inequality, toward individualistic and careerist values, and toward an urban bias that privileged the cities at the expense of the countryside. The Great Leap Forward of 1958–1960 marked Mao’s first response to these distortions of Chinese socialism. It promoted small-scale industrialization in the rural areas rather than focusing wholly on large enterprises in the cities; it tried to foster widespread and practical technological education for all rather than relying on a small elite of highly trained technical experts; and it envisaged an immediate transition to full communism in the “people’s communes” rather than waiting for industrial development to provide the material basis for that transition. The massive famine that followed temporarily discredited Mao’s radicalism.

Nonetheless, in the mid-1960s Mao launched yet another campaign—the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution—to combat the capitalist tendencies that he believed had penetrated even the highest ranks of the Communist Party itself. The Cultural Revolution also involved new policies to bring health care and education to the countryside and to reinvigorate earlier efforts at rural industrialization under local rather than central control. In these ways, Mao struggled, though without great success, to overcome the inequalities associated with China’s modern development and to create a model of socialist modernity quite distinct from that of the Soviet Union.

The Cultural Revolution also rejected feminism, any specific concern with women’s issues, and much that was feminine. A popular slogan stated: “The times have changed; men and women are the same.” Yet the supposedly gender-neutral model seemed strikingly masculine. Women cut their hair short, wore army clothes, and learned to curse; they were depicted in propaganda posters as “iron girls,” strong, muscular, and performing heavy traditionally male work. (See *Working with Evidence*, Source 21.3, page 971.) Art, literature, ballet, and opera cast them as militant revolutionary participants. And yet, factory managers continued to prefer women workers because of their alleged patience and manual dexterity. Young women sent to the countryside to work with peasants found themselves subject to



The Great Leap Forward

This Chinese poster from 1960 celebrates both the agricultural and industrial efforts of the Great Leap Forward. The caption reads: “Start the movement to increase production and practice thrift, with foodstuffs and steel at the center, with great force!” The great famine that accompanied this “great leap” belied the optimistic outlook of the poster. (Stefan R. Landsberger Collections/ International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam/www.chineseposters.net)

sexual abuse by male officials. Thus strenuous Maoist efforts to eliminate differences between classes, between urban and rural life, and between men and women largely failed.

A final commonality among communist industrializers lay in their great confidence in both human rationality and the centralized planning embodied in huge projects—enormous factories, large collective farms, gigantic dams. Soviet officials saw the environment as an enemy, spoke about “the struggle against nature,” and looked forward to “a profound rearrangement of the entire living world.”⁶ This attitude, no less than capitalist assumptions, led to immense environmental devastation and a very difficult legacy for postcommunist regimes. In the Soviet Union, for example, huge industrial complexes such as Magnitogorsk concentrated air and water pollution. A scheme to bring millions of acres of semi-arid land under cultivation in Central Asia depleted and eroded the fragile soil. Diverting the waters of several rivers feeding the Aral Sea for irrigating cotton fields reduced the size of that huge inland sea by 90 percent. By the late 1980s, such environmental heedlessness meant that about half of the cultivated land in the country was endangered by erosion, salinization, or swamping; some 30 percent of food products were contaminated by pesticides or herbicides; 75 percent of the surface water was severely polluted; and 70 million people lived in cities with air pollution five or more times the acceptable level.⁷ But nothing brought Soviet environmental problems to public attention more dramatically than the explosion of a nuclear reactor at Chernobyl in 1986. It scattered highly radioactive material over parts of Ukraine and Belorussia, while the cloud from the explosion swept across parts of Eastern Europe and Scandinavia, terrifying millions even much farther away.

AP® EXAM TIP

Compare ways the French (in Chapter 16), Russian, and Chinese revolutions attacked perceived “enemies” to chart how revolutions deal with opposition.

The Search for Enemies

Despite their totalitarian tendencies, the communist societies of the Soviet Union and China were laced with conflict. Under both Stalin and Mao, those conflicts erupted in a search for enemies that disfigured both societies. An elastic concept of “enemy” came to include not only surviving remnants from the prerevolutionary elites but also, and more surprisingly, high-ranking members and longtime supporters of the Communist Party who allegedly had been corrupted by bourgeois ideas. Refracted through the lens of Marxist thinking, these people became class enemies who had betrayed the revolution and were engaged in a vast conspiracy, often linked to foreign imperialists, to subvert the socialist enterprise and restore capitalism. In the rhetoric of the leadership, the class struggle continued and even intensified as the triumph of socialism drew closer.

In the Soviet Union, that process culminated in the Terror, or the Great Purges, of the late 1930s, which enveloped tens of thousands of prominent communists, including virtually all of Lenin’s top associates, and millions of more ordinary people. (See Zooming In: Anna Dubova, page 948, for an individual experience of the Terror.) Based on suspicious associations in the past, denunciations by colleagues,

Guided Reading Question

■ EXPLANATION

Why did communist regimes generate terror and violence on such a massive scale?

connections to foreign countries, or simply bad luck, such people were arrested, usually in the dead of night, and then tried and sentenced either to death or to long years in harsh and remote labor camps known as the gulag. A series of show trials publicized the menace that these “enemies of the people” allegedly posed to the country and its revolution. Close to 1 million people were executed between 1936 and 1941. An additional 4 or 5 million were sent to the gulag, where they were forced to work in horrendous conditions and died in appalling numbers. Victimizers too were numerous: the Terror consumed the energies of a huge corps of officials, investigators, interrogators, informers, guards, and executioners, many of whom were themselves arrested, exiled, or executed in the course of the purges.

In the Soviet Union, the search for enemies occurred under the clear control of the state. In China, however, it became a much more public process, escaping the control of the leadership, particularly during the most violent years of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1969). Mao had become convinced that many within the Communist Party had been seduced by capitalist values of self-seeking and materialism and were no longer animated by the idealistic revolutionary vision of earlier times. Therefore, he called for rebellion, against the Communist Party itself. Millions of young people responded, and, organized as Red Guards, they set out to rid China of those who were “taking the capitalist road.” Following gigantic and ecstatic rallies in Beijing, they fanned out across the country and attacked local party and government officials, teachers, intellectuals, factory managers, and others they defined as enemies. (See Working with Evidence, Sources 21.1 and 21.4, pages 968 and 972.) Rival revolutionary groups soon began fighting with one another, violence erupted throughout the country, and civil war threatened China. Mao was forced to call in the military to restore order and Communist Party control. Both the Soviet Terror and the Chinese Cultural Revolution badly discredited the very idea of socialism and contributed to the ultimate collapse of the communist experiment at the end of the century.

PRACTICING AP® HISTORICAL THINKING

How did the Soviet Union and China differ in terms of the revolutions that brought communists to power and in the construction of socialist societies? What commonalities are also apparent?

East versus West: A Global Divide and a Cold War

Not only did communist regimes bring revolutionary changes to the societies they governed, but their very existence launched a global conflict that restructured international relations and touched the lives of almost everyone, particularly in the twentieth century’s second half. That rift began soon after the Russian Revolution when the new communist government became the source of fear and loathing to many in the Western capitalist world. The common threat of Nazi Germany temporarily made unlikely allies of the Soviet Union, Britain, and the United States, but a few years after World War II ended, that division erupted again in what became known as the cold war. Underlying that conflict were the geopolitical and ideological realities of the postwar world. The Soviet Union and the United States

Anna Dubova, a Russian Peasant Girl and Urban Woman

Born into a large peasant family near Smolensk in western Russia in 1916, Anna Dubova lived through the entire communist experience of her country.⁸ Hers was a life that illustrates the complexities that ordinary individuals faced as they sought to navigate the communist system.

Anna was one of fourteen children, of whom seven survived. Her family was dominated by a strict, hardworking, and highly religious father, who was choirmaster of the local church. Anna's father was suspicious of the communists when they came to power the year after Anna's birth, but her grandmother was more forthright. "We have a new tsar," she declared. "The forces of the Antichrist have triumphed." Nonetheless, her father accepted an appointment in 1922 as chairman of the village soviet, the new communist organ of local government. During the 1920s, the village and Anna's family flourished under Lenin's New Economic Policy, which briefly permitted a considerable measure of private enterprise and profit making. Her father even opened a small shop in the village where he sold goods purchased in the city.



A 1941 image of a woman factory worker in Moscow.

By 1928, however, everything changed as the Soviet regime, now under Joseph Stalin's leadership, abruptly moved to collectivize agriculture and root out *kulaks*, supposedly wealthy peasants who were thought to bear the germ of a hated capitalism. Because of her father's shop, the family was labeled as kulak and their property was confiscated. "I remember so well how Mama sat and cried when they took away the cow," Anna recalled years later. The family forestalled their expected deportation to the far north of the Soviet Union only by promising Anna, then just thirteen, in marriage to the local Communist Party secretary. The marriage never took place, however, and the family was forced to leave. Later, Anna was permitted to join her older sister in Moscow,

but approval for that much-coveted move came at a very high price. Anna recalled, "I had to write out an official statement that I renounced my parents, that I no longer had any ties with them."

photo: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USW33-024241-C

were now the world's major political/military powers, replacing the shattered and diminished states of Western Europe, but they represented sharply opposed views of history, society, politics, and international relations. Conflict, in retrospect, seemed almost inevitable.

Military Conflict and the Cold War

The initial arena of the cold war was Eastern Europe, where Soviet insistence on security and control clashed with American and British desires for open and democratic societies with ties to the capitalist world economy. What resulted were rival

Thus Anna, a rural teenager, joined millions of other peasants who flocked to the city to pursue new opportunities that became available as the Soviet Union launched its industrialization drive. In Moscow, she gained a basic education, a vocation in cake decorating, which she enjoyed, and a brief stint as a mechanic and chauffeur, which she detested. All the while the shadow of her kulak label followed her. Had it been discovered, she could have lost her job and her permission to live in Moscow. And so she married a party activist from a poor peasant family, she explained years later, “just so I could cover up my background.” Her husband drank heavily, leaving her with a daughter when he went off to war in 1941.

In the Soviet Union, the late 1930s witnessed the Terror when millions of alleged “enemies of the people” were arrested and hauled off to execution or labor camps. Anna recalled what it was like: “You’d come home and they’d say, Yesterday they took away Uncle Lesha. . . . You’d go to see a girlfriend, they’d say, We have an empty room now; they’ve exiled Andreitsev.” Like most people not directly involved, Anna believed in the guilt of these people. And she feared that she herself might be mistakenly accused, for those with a kulak label were particular targets of the search for enemies. “I was only afraid,” she remembered, “that I would be raped in prison.”

Beyond her kulak background, Anna also felt compelled to hide a deep religious sensibility derived from

her childhood. She remembered the disappearance of the village priest, the looting of the churches, and the destruction of icons. And so she never entered a church or prayed in front of others. But she wore a cross under her clothing. “I never stopped [believing],” she recalled. “But I concealed it. Deep down . . . I believed.” Nor did she ever seek to join the Communist Party, though it may well have advanced her career prospects and standard of living. Perhaps she feared that the investigations accompanying party membership would have disclosed her compromising social and religious background.

In the decades following World War II and especially after Stalin’s death in 1953, Anna’s life seemed to stabilize. She entered into a thirty-year relationship with a man and found satisfying work in a construction design office, though the lack of higher education and party connections prevented her from moving into higher-paid jobs. Looking back on her life, she regretted the communist intrusion, particularly in its Stalinist phase, into what she remembered as a happy childhood. She had come to value, perhaps nostalgically, the life of a peasant over that of an urban worker. She reflected, “[As a peasant,] I would have lived on the fruits of my labor. . . . [Instead,] I’ve lived someone else’s life.”

Question: In what ways did communism shape Anna’s life, and in what respects was she able to construct her own life within that system?

military alliances (NATO and the Warsaw Pact), a largely voluntary American sphere of influence in Western Europe, and an imposed Soviet sphere in Eastern Europe. The heavily fortified border between Eastern and Western Europe came to be known as the Iron Curtain. Thus Europe was bitterly divided. But although tensions flared across this dividing line, particularly in Berlin, no shooting war occurred between the two sides (see Map 21.3).

By contrast, the extension of communism into Asia—China, Korea, and Vietnam—globalized the cold war and occasioned its most destructive and prolonged “hot wars.” A North Korean invasion of South Korea in 1950 led to both Chinese and American involvement in a bitter three-year war (1950–1953), which ended in

Guided Reading Question

CONNECTION

In what different ways was the cold war expressed?

Map 21.3 The Global Cold War

The cold war witnessed a sharp division between the communist world and the Western democratic world. It also divided the continent of Europe; the countries of China, Korea, Vietnam, and Germany; and the city of Berlin. In many places, it also sparked crises that brought the nuclear-armed superpowers of the United States and the USSR to the brink of war, although in every case they managed to avoid direct military conflict between themselves. Many countries in Africa and Asia claimed membership in a Non-Aligned Movement, which sought to avoid entanglements in cold war conflicts.



an essential standoff that left the Korean peninsula still divided in the early twenty-first century. Likewise in Vietnam, military efforts by South Vietnamese communists and the already-communist North Vietnamese government to unify their country prompted massive American intervention in the 1960s. To American authorities, a communist victory opened the door to further communist expansion in Asia and beyond. Armed and supported by the Soviets and Chinese and willing to endure enormous losses, the Vietnamese communists bested the Americans, who were



hobbled by growing protest at home. The Vietnamese united their country under communist control by 1975.

A third major military conflict of the cold war era occurred in Afghanistan, where a Marxist party had taken power in 1978. Soviet leaders were delighted at this extension of communism on their southern border, but radical land reforms and efforts to liberate Afghan women soon alienated much of this conservative Muslim country and led to a mounting opposition movement. Fearing the overthrow

of a new communist state and its replacement by Islamic radicals, Soviet forces intervened militarily and were soon bogged down in a war they could not win. For a full decade (1979–1989), that war was a “bleeding wound,” sustained in part by U.S. aid to Afghan guerrillas. Under widespread international pressure, Soviet forces finally withdrew in 1989, and the Afghan communist regime soon collapsed. In Vietnam and Afghanistan, both superpowers painfully experienced the limits of their power.

The most haunting battle of the cold war era was one that never happened. The setting was Cuba, where a communist regime under the leadership of Fidel Castro had emerged by the early 1960s. (See *Zooming In: The Cuban Revolution*, page 954.) Intense American hostility to this nearby outpost of communism prompted the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev (KROOSH-chef), who had risen to power after Stalin’s death in 1953, to secretly deploy nuclear-tipped Soviet missiles to Cuba, believing that this would deter further U.S. action against Castro. When the missiles were discovered in October 1962, the world held its breath for thirteen days as American forces blockaded the island and prepared for an invasion. A nuclear exchange between the superpowers seemed imminent, but that catastrophe was averted by a compromise between Khrushchev and U.S. president John F. Kennedy. Under its terms, the Soviets removed their missiles from Cuba in return for an American promise not to invade the island. That promise was kept and a communist regime still persists in Cuba, though much changed, well into the twenty-first century.

Nuclear Standoff and Third-World Rivalry

The Cuban missile crisis gave concrete expression to the most novel and dangerous dimension of the cold war—the arms race in nuclear weapons. An initial American monopoly on those weapons prompted the Soviet Union to redouble its efforts to acquire them, and in 1949 it succeeded. Over the next forty years, the world moved from a mere handful of nuclear weapons to a global arsenal of close to 60,000 warheads. Delivery systems included bomber aircraft and missiles that could rapidly propel numerous warheads across whole continents and oceans with accuracies measured in hundreds of feet. During those decades, the entire world lived in the shadow of weapons whose destructive power is scarcely within the bounds of human imagination.

Awareness of this power is surely the primary reason that no shooting war of any kind occurred between the two superpowers. In the two world wars, the participants had been greatly surprised by the destructiveness of modern weapons. During the cold war, however, the leaders of the two superpowers knew beyond any doubt that a nuclear war would produce only losers and utter catastrophe. Already in 1949, Stalin had observed that “atomic weapons can hardly be used without spelling the end of the world.”⁹ Particularly after the frightening Cuban missile crisis of 1962, both sides carefully avoided further nuclear provocation, even while con-

AP® EXAM TIP

Cold war tensions around the globe are an important subject in the AP® course.



The Hydrogen Bomb

During the 1950s and early 1960s, tests in the atmosphere of ever larger and more sophisticated hydrogen bombs made images of enormous fireballs and mushroom-shaped clouds the universal symbol of these weapons, which were immensely more powerful than the atomic bombs dropped on Japan. The American test pictured here took place in 1957. (Photo courtesy of National Nuclear Security Administration/Nevada Site Office)

tinuing the buildup of their respective arsenals. Moreover, because they feared that a conventional war would escalate to the nuclear level, they implicitly agreed to sidestep any direct military confrontation at all.

Still, opportunities for conflict abounded as the U.S.-Soviet rivalry spanned the globe. Using military and economic aid, educational opportunities, political pressure, and covert action, both sides courted countries emerging from colonial rule. Cold war fears of communist penetration prompted U.S. intervention, sometimes openly and often secretly, in Iran, the Philippines, Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile, the Congo, and elsewhere. In the process, the United States frequently supported anticommunist but corrupt and authoritarian regimes. However, neither superpower was able to completely dominate its supposed allies, many of whom resisted the role of pawns in superpower rivalries. Some countries, such as India, took a posture of nonalignment in the cold war, while others tried to play off the superpowers against each other. Indonesia received large amounts of Soviet and Eastern European aid, but that did not prevent it from destroying the Indonesian Communist Party in 1965, killing half a million suspected communists in the process. When the Americans refused to assist Egypt in building the Aswan Dam in the mid-1950s, that country developed a close relationship with the Soviet Union. Later, in 1972, Egypt expelled 21,000 Soviet advisers and again aligned more clearly with the United States.

The Cuban Revolution

“You Americans must realize what Cuba means to us old Bolsheviks,” declared a high-ranking Soviet official, Anastas Mikoyan, in 1960. “We have been waiting all our lives for a country to go communist without the Red Army. It has happened in Cuba, and it makes us feel like boys again.”¹⁹ The triumph of the Cuban revolutionaries must have been exhilarating for communists everywhere because it occurred in such an unlikely place. Located just 90 miles from Florida, Cuba had been a virtual protectorate of the United States in the decades following its independence from Spain in 1902. Moreover, U.S. companies had long exerted considerable influence over the weak and corrupt Cuban government and dominated key sectors of the economy, including sugar, the island’s most important export. Nonetheless, Fidel Castro, son of a wealthy sugar plantation owner, led a successful popular insurrection that transformed Cuba into a Marxist socialist state just off the southern coast of the United States.

The armed revolt began disastrously. In 1953, the Cuban army defeated Castro and 123 of his supporters



Fidel Castro fighting in the mountains of Cuba in 1957.

when they attacked two army barracks in what was their first major military operation. Castro himself was captured, sentenced to jail, and then released into exile. However, fortunes shifted in 1956, when Castro slipped back into Cuba and succeeded in bringing together many opponents of the current regime in an armed nationalist insurgency dedicated to radical economic and social reform. Upon seizing power in 1959, Castro and his government acted decisively to implement their revolutionary agenda. Within a year, they had effectively redistributed 15 percent of the nation’s wealth by granting land to the poor, increasing wages,

and lowering rents. In the following year, the new government nationalized the property of both wealthy Cubans and U.S. corporations. Many Cubans, particularly among the elite, fled into exile. “The revolution,” declared Castro, “is the dictatorship of the exploited against the exploiters.”²¹

photo: Private Collection/Peter Newark American Pictures/Bridgeman Images

The Cold War and the Superpowers

World War II and the cold war provided the context for the emergence of the United States as a global superpower, playing a role that has often been compared to that of Great Britain in the nineteenth century. Much of that effort was driven by the perceived demands of the cold war, during which the United States spearheaded the Western effort to contain a worldwide communist movement that seemed to be advancing. By 1970, one writer observed, “the United States had more than 1,000,000 soldiers in 30 countries, was a member of four regional defense alliances and an active participant in a fifth, had mutual defense treaties with 42 nations, was

Economic and political pressure from the United States followed, culminating in the Bay of Pigs, a failed invasion of the island in 1961 by Cuban exiles with covert support from the U.S. government. American hostility pushed the revolutionary nationalist Castro closer to the Soviet Union, and gradually he began to think of himself and his revolution as Marxist. In response to Cuban pleas for support against American aggression, the Soviet premier Khrushchev deployed nuclear missiles on the island, sparking the Cuban missile crisis. While the compromise reached between the two superpowers resulted in the withdrawal of the missiles, it did include assurances from the United States that it would not attack Cuba.

In the decades that followed, Cuba sought to export its brand of revolution beyond its borders, especially in Latin America and Africa. Che Guevara, an Argentine who had fought in the Cuban Revolution, declared, “Our revolution is endangering all American possessions in Latin America. We are telling these countries to make their own revolution.”¹² Cuba supported revolutionary movements in many regions; however, none succeeded in creating a lasting Cuban-style regime.

The legacy of the Cuban Revolution has been mixed. The new government devoted considerable resources to improving health and education on the island. By the mid-1980s, Cuba possessed both the highest literacy rate and the lowest infant mortality rate in Latin America.

Over the same period, life expectancy increased from fifty-eight to seventy-three years, putting Cuba on a par with the United States. Living standards for most improved as well. Indeed, Cuba became a model for development in other Latin American countries.

However, earlier promises to establish a truly democratic system never materialized. Castro declared in 1959 that elections were unneeded because “this democracy . . . has found its expression, directly, in the intimate union and identification of the government with the people.”¹³ The state placed limits on free expression and arrested opponents or forced them into exile. Cuba has also failed to achieve the economic development originally envisioned at the time of the revolution. Sugar remains its chief export crop, and by the 1980s Cuba had become almost as economically dependent on the Soviet Union as it had been upon the United States. Desperate consequences followed when the Cuban economy shrank by a third following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Like communist experiments in the Soviet Union and China, Cuba experienced real improvements in living standards, especially for the poor, but these gains were accompanied by sharp restraints on personal freedoms and mixed results in the economy. Such have been the ambivalent outcomes of many revolutionary upheavals.

Question: Compare the Cuban Revolution to those in Russia and China. What are the similarities and differences?

a member of 53 international organizations, and was furnishing military or economic aid to nearly 100 nations across the face of the globe.”¹⁴

The need for quick and often secret decision making gave rise in the United States to a strong or “imperial” presidency and a “national security state,” in which defense and intelligence agencies acquired great power within the government and were often unaccountable to Congress. This served to strengthen the influence of what U.S. president Dwight Eisenhower (r. 1953–1961) called the “military-industrial complex,” a coalition of the armed services, military research laboratories, and private defense industries that both stimulated and benefited from increased military spending and cold war tensions.

Guided Reading Question

CONNECTION

In what ways did the United States play a global role after World War II?

AP® EXAM TIP

Pay attention to the rise of multinational corporations (MNCs) after World War II here and in Chapters 22 and 23.

Sustaining this immense military effort was a flourishing U.S. economy and an increasingly middle-class society. The United States was the only major industrial country to escape the physical devastation of war on its own soil. As World War II ended with Europe, the Soviet Union, and Japan in ruins, the United States was clearly the world's most productive economy. "The whole world is hungry for American goods," wrote one American economist in 1945.¹⁵ Beyond their goods, Americans sent their capital abroad in growing amounts—from \$19 billion in 1950 to \$81 billion in 1965. Huge American firms such as General Motors, Ford, Mobil, Sears, General Electric, and Westinghouse established factories, offices, and subsidiaries in many countries and sold their goods locally. The U.S. dollar replaced the British pound as the most trusted international currency.

Accompanying the United States' political and economic penetration of the world was its popular culture. In musical terms, first jazz, then rock and roll, and most recently rap have found receptive audiences abroad, particularly among the young. By the 1990s, American movies took about 70 percent of the market in Europe, and in 2012 some 33,000 McDonald's restaurants in 119 countries served 68 million customers every day. Various American brand names—Marlboro, Coca-Cola, Jeep, Spam, Nike, Kodak—became common points of reference around the world. English became a global language, while American slang terms—"groovy," "crazy," "cool"—were integrated into many of the world's languages.

On the communist side, the cold war was accompanied by considerable turmoil both within and among the various communist states. Joseph Stalin, Soviet dictator and acknowledged leader of the communist world in general, died in 1953 as that global conflict was mounting. His successor, Nikita Khrushchev, stunned his country and communists everywhere with a lengthy speech delivered to a party congress in 1956 in which he presented a devastating account of Stalin's crimes, particularly those against party members. These revelations shocked many of the party faithful, for Stalin had been viewed as the "genius of all time." Now he was presented as a criminal.

In the Soviet Union, the superpower of the communist world, the cold war justified a continuing emphasis on military and defense industries after World War II and gave rise to a Soviet version of the military-industrial complex. Soviet citizens, even more than Americans, were subject to incessant government propaganda that glorified their system and vilified that of their American opponents.

As the communist world expanded, so too did divisions and conflicts among its various countries. Many in the West had initially viewed world communism as a monolithic force whose disciplined members meekly followed Soviet dictates in cold war solidarity against the West. And Marxists everywhere contended that revolutionary socialism would erode national loyalties as the "workers of the world" united in common opposition to global capitalism. Nonetheless, the communist world experienced far more bitter and divisive conflict than did the Western alliance, which was composed of supposedly warlike, greedy, and highly competitive nations.

Guided Reading Question**DESCRIPTION**

What were the strengths and weaknesses of the communist world by the 1970s?



In Eastern Europe, Yugoslav leaders early on had rejected Soviet domination of their internal affairs and charted their own independent road to socialism. Fearing that reform might lead to contagious defections from the communist bloc, Soviet forces actually invaded their supposed allies in Hungary (1956–1957) and Czechoslovakia (1968) to crush such movements. In the early 1980s, Poland was seriously threatened with a similar action. The brutal suppression of these reform movements gave credibility to Western perceptions of the cold war as a struggle between tyranny and freedom and badly tarnished the image of Soviet communism as a reasonable alternative to capitalism.

Even more startling, the two communist giants, the Soviet Union and China, found themselves sharply opposed, owing to territorial disputes, ideological differences, and rivalry for communist leadership. The Chinese bitterly criticized Khrushchev for backing down in the Cuban missile crisis, while to the Soviet leadership, Mao was insanely indifferent to the possible consequences of a nuclear war. In 1960, the Soviet Union backed away from an earlier promise to provide China with the prototype of an atomic bomb and abruptly withdrew all Soviet advisers

Czechoslovakia, 1968

In August 1968, Soviet forces invaded Czechoslovakia, where a popular reform movement proclaiming “socialism with a human face” threatened to erode established communist control. The Soviet troops that crushed this so-called Prague Spring were greeted by thousands of peaceful street demonstrators begging them to go home. (Libor Hajsky/CTK/AP Photo)

and technicians, who had been assisting Chinese development. By the late 1960s, China on its own had developed a modest nuclear capability, and the two countries were at the brink of war, with the Soviet Union hinting at a possible nuclear strike on Chinese military targets. Their enmity certainly benefited the United States, which in the 1970s was able to pursue a “triangular diplomacy,” easing tensions and simultaneously signing arms control agreements with the USSR and opening a formal relationship with China. Beyond this central conflict, a communist China in fact went to war against a communist Vietnam in 1979, while Vietnam invaded a communist Cambodia in the late 1970s. Nationalism, in short, proved more powerful than communist solidarity, even in the face of cold war hostilities with the West.

Despite its many internal conflicts, world communism remained a powerful global presence during the 1970s, achieving its greatest territorial reach. China was emerging from the chaos of the Cultural Revolution. The Soviet Union had matched U.S. military might; in response, the Americans launched a major buildup of their own military forces in the early 1980s. Despite American hostility, Cuba remained a communist outpost in the Western Hemisphere, with impressive achievements in education and health care for its people. Communism triumphed in Vietnam, dealing a major setback to the United States. A number of African countries affirmed their commitment to Marxism. Few people anywhere expected that within two decades most of the twentieth century’s experiment with communism would be over.

Paths to the End of Communism

More rapidly than its beginning, and far more peacefully, the communist era came to an end during the last twenty years of the twentieth century. It was a drama in three acts. Act One began in China during the late 1970s, following the death of its towering revolutionary leader Mao Zedong in 1976. Over the next several decades, the CCP gradually abandoned almost everything that had been associated with Maoist communism, even as the party retained its political control of the country. Act Two took place in Eastern Europe in the “miracle year” of 1989, when popular movements toppled despised communist governments one after another all across the region. The climactic Act Three in this “end of communism” drama occurred in 1991 in the Soviet Union, where the entire “play” had opened seventy-four years earlier. There the reformist leader Mikhail Gorbachev (GORE-beh-CHOF) had come to power in 1985 intending to revive and save Soviet socialism from its accumulated dysfunctions. Those efforts, however, only exacerbated the country’s many difficulties and led to the political disintegration of the Soviet Union on December 25, 1991. The curtain had fallen on the communist era and on the cold war as well.

Behind these separate stories lay two general failures of the communist experiment, measured both by their own standards and by those of the larger world. The first was economic. Despite their early successes, communist economies by the late 1970s showed no signs of catching up to the more advanced capitalist countries.

AP® EXAM TIP

Make a list of the major steps toward the fall of global communism, beginning in the late 1960s.

Guided Reading Question

CHANGE

What explains the rapid end of the communist era?

The highly regimented Soviet economy in particular was largely stagnant; its citizens were forced to stand in long lines for consumer goods and complained endlessly about their poor quality and declining availability. This was enormously embarrassing, for it had been the proud boast of communist leaders everywhere that they had found a better route to modern prosperity than their capitalist rivals had. Furthermore, these comparisons were increasingly well known, thanks to the global information revolution. This failure had security implications as well, for economic growth, even more than military capacity, was the measure of state power as the twentieth century approached its end.

The second failure was moral. The horrors of Stalin's Terror and the gulag, of Mao's Cultural Revolution, of something approaching genocide in communist Cambodia—all of this wore away at communist claims to moral superiority over capitalism. Moreover, this erosion occurred as global political culture more widely embraced democracy and human rights as the universal legacy of humankind, rather than the exclusive possession of the capitalist West. In both economic and moral terms, the communist path to the modern world was increasingly seen as a road to nowhere.

Communist leaders were not ignorant of these problems, and they moved aggressively to address them, particularly in China and the Soviet Union. But their approach to doing so varied greatly, as did the outcomes of those efforts. Thus, much as the Russian and Chinese revolutions differed and their approaches to building socialism diverged, so too did these communist giants chart distinct paths during the final years of the communist experiment.

China: Abandoning Communism and Maintaining the Party

As the dust settled from the political shakeout following Mao's death in 1976, Deng Xiaoping (dung shee-yao-ping) emerged as China's "paramount leader," committed to ending the periodic upheavals of the Maoist era while fostering political stability and economic growth. Soon previously banned plays, operas, films, and translations of Western classics reappeared, and a "literature of the wounded" exposed the sufferings of the Cultural Revolution. Some 100,000 political prisoners, many of them high-ranking communists, were released and restored to important positions. A party evaluation of Mao severely criticized his mistakes during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, while praising his role as a revolutionary leader.

Even more dramatic were Deng's economic reforms. In the rural areas, these reforms included a rapid dismantling of the country's system of collectivized farming and a return to something close to small-scale private agriculture. Impoverished Chinese peasants eagerly embraced these new opportunities and pushed them even further than the government had intended. Industrial reform proceeded more gradually. Managers of state enterprises were given greater authority and encouraged to act like private owners, making many of their own decisions and seeking profits.

AP® EXAM TIP

Take notes on factors that led to more economic freedom in communist China starting in the late twentieth century.

China opened itself to the world economy and welcomed foreign investment in special enterprise zones along the coast, where foreign capitalists received tax breaks and other inducements. Local governments and private entrepreneurs joined forces in thousands of flourishing “township and village enterprises” that produced food, clothing, building materials, and much more.

The outcome of these reforms was stunning economic growth and a new prosperity for millions. Better diets, lower mortality rates, declining poverty, massive urban construction, and surging exports—all of this accompanied China’s rejoining of the world economy and contributed to a much-improved material life for millions of its citizens. To many observers, China was the emerging economic giant of the twenty-first century. On the other hand, the country’s burgeoning economy also generated massive corruption among Chinese officials, sharp inequalities between the coast and the interior, a huge problem of urban overcrowding, terrible pollution in major cities, and periodic inflation as the state loosened its controls over the economy. Urban vices such as street crime, prostitution, gambling, drug addiction, and a criminal underworld, which had been largely eliminated after 1949, surfaced again in China’s booming cities. Nonetheless, something remarkable had occurred in China: an essentially capitalist economy had been restored, and by none other than the Communist Party itself. Mao’s worst fears had been realized, as China “took the capitalist road.”

Although the party was willing to largely abandon communist economic policies, it was adamantly unwilling to relinquish its political monopoly or to promote democracy at the national level. “Talk about democracy in the abstract,” Deng Xiaoping declared, “will inevitably lead to the unchecked spread of ultra-democracy and anarchism, to the complete disruption of political stability, and to the total failure of our modernization program. . . . China will once again be plunged into chaos, division, retrogression, and darkness.”¹⁶ Such attitudes associated democracy with the chaos and uncontrolled mass action of the Cultural Revolution. Thus, when a democracy movement spearheaded by university and secondary school students surfaced in the late 1980s, Deng ordered the brutal crushing of its brazen demonstration in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square before the television cameras of the world.



After Communism in China

Although the Communist Party still governed China in the early twenty-first century, communist values of selflessness, community, and simplicity had been substantially replaced for many by Western-style consumerism. This New Year’s Good Luck poster from 1993 illustrates the new interest in material wealth in the form of American dollars and the return of older Chinese cultural patterns represented by the traditional gods of wealth, happiness, and longevity. The caption reads: “The gods of wealth enter the home from everywhere.” (Zhejiang People’s Art Publishing House/Stefan R. Landsberger Collections/International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam/www.chineseposters.net)

China entered the new millennium as a rapidly growing economic power with an essentially capitalist economy presided over by an intact and powerful Communist Party. Culturally, some combination of nationalism, consumerism, and a renewed respect for ancient traditions had replaced the collectivist and socialist values of the Maoist era. It was a strange and troubled hybrid.

The Soviet Union: The Collapse of Communism and Country

By the mid-1980s, the reformist wing of the Soviet Communist Party, long squelched by an aging conservative establishment, had won the top position in the party as Mikhail Gorbachev assumed the role of general secretary. Like Deng Xiaoping in China, Gorbachev was committed to aggressively tackling the country's many problems—economic stagnation, a flourishing black market, public apathy, and cynicism about the party. His economic program, launched in 1987 and known as *perestroika* (per-uh-STROI-kuh) (restructuring), paralleled aspects of the Chinese approach by freeing state enterprises from the heavy hand of government regulation, permitting small-scale private businesses called cooperatives, offering opportunities for private farming, and cautiously welcoming foreign investment in joint enterprises.

But in cultural and political affairs, Gorbachev moved far beyond Chinese reforms. His policy of *glasnost* (GLAHS-nohst) (openness) now permitted an unprecedented range of cultural and intellectual freedoms. In the late 1980s, *glasnost* hit the Soviet Union like a bomb. Newspapers and TV exposed social pathologies—crime, prostitution, child abuse, suicide, corruption, and homelessness—that previously had been presented solely as the product of capitalism. Films broke the ban on nudity and explicit sex. TV reporters climbed the wall of a secluded villa to film the luxurious homes of the party elite. Soviet history was also reexamined as revelations of Stalin's crimes poured out of the media. The Bible and the Quran became more widely available, atheistic propaganda largely ceased, and thousands of churches and mosques were returned to believers and opened for worship. Plays, poems, films, and novels that had long been buried “in the drawer” were now released to a public that virtually devoured them. “Like an excited boy reads a note from his girl,” wrote one poet, “that’s how we read the papers today.”¹⁷ And beyond *glasnost* lay democratization and a new parliament with real powers, chosen in competitive elections. When those elections occurred in 1989, dozens of leading communists were rejected at the polls. In foreign affairs, Gorbachev moved to end the cold war by making unilateral cuts in Soviet military forces, engaging in arms control negotiations with the United States, and refusing to intervene as communist governments in Eastern Europe were overthrown.

But almost nothing worked out as Gorbachev had anticipated. Far from strengthening socialism and reviving a stagnant Soviet Union, the reforms led to its further weakening and collapse. In a dramatic contrast with China's booming economy,

AP® EXAM TIP

You need to know examples of resistance to authoritarian governments in the twentieth century.

Guided Reading Question

COMPARISON

How did the end of communism in the Soviet Union differ from communism's demise in China?

the Soviet Union's planned economy spun into a sharp decline as it was dismantled before a functioning market-based system could emerge. Inflation mounted; consumer goods were in short supply, and ration coupons reappeared; many feared the loss of their jobs. Unlike Chinese peasants, few Soviet farmers were willing to risk the jump into private farming, and few foreign investors found the Soviet Union a tempting place to do business.

Furthermore, the new freedoms provoked demands that went far beyond what Gorbachev had intended. A democracy movement of unofficial groups and parties now sprang to life, many of them seeking a full multiparty democracy and a market-based economy. They were joined by independent labor unions, which actually went on strike, something unheard of in the “workers’ state.” Most corrosively, a multitude of nationalist movements used the new freedoms to insist on greater autonomy, or even independence, from the Soviet Union. Environmental issues were prominent in many of these movements. Their leaders argued that centralized decision making in Moscow treated the non-Russian areas as colonies to be exploited and was responsible for numerous environmental outrages. Activists in the Baltic region, for example, protested phosphorite mining in Estonia, a proposed nuclear reactor in Lithuania, and the construction of a massive hydroelectric station in Latvia. The Chernobyl explosion and the government’s initial reluctance to fully disclose what happened only added fuel to these growing anti-Soviet movements. In the face of these mounting demands, Gorbachev resolutely refused to use force to crush the protesters, another sharp contrast with the Chinese experience.

Events in Eastern Europe now intersected with those in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev’s reforms had lit a fuse in these Soviet satellites, where communism had been imposed and maintained from outside. If the USSR could practice *glasnost* and hold competitive elections, why couldn’t Eastern Europe do so as well? This was the background for the “miracle year” of 1989. Massive demonstrations, last-minute efforts at reforms, the breaching of the Berlin Wall, the surfacing of new political groups—all of this and more quickly overwhelmed the highly unpopular communist regimes of Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Romania, which were quickly swept away. This success then emboldened nationalists and democrats in the Soviet Union. If communism had been overthrown in Eastern Europe, perhaps it could be overthrown in the USSR as well. Soviet conservatives and patriots, however, were outraged. To them, Gorbachev had stood idly by while the political gains of World War II, for which the Soviet Union had paid in rivers of blood, vanished before their eyes. It was nothing less than treason.

A brief and unsuccessful attempt to restore the old order through a military coup in August 1991 triggered the end of the Soviet Union and its communist regime. From the wreckage emerged fifteen new and independent states, following the internal political divisions of the USSR (see Map 21.4). Arguably, the collapse of the Soviet Union was due less to its multiple problems and more to the unexpected consequences of Gorbachev’s efforts to address them.

The Soviet collapse represented a unique phenomenon in the world of the late twentieth century. Simultaneously, the world’s largest state and its last territorial

AP® EXAM TIP

Compare the internal and external forces that led to the fall of the USSR with those that led to the fall of earlier empires.



Map 21.4 The Collapse of the Soviet Empire

Soviet control over its Eastern European dependencies vanished as those countries threw off their communist governments in 1989. Then, in 1991, the Soviet Union itself disintegrated into fifteen separate states, none of them governed by communist parties.

empire vanished; the world's first Communist Party disintegrated; a powerful command economy broke down; an official socialist ideology was repudiated; and a forty-five-year global struggle between the East and the West ended. In Europe, Germany was reunited, and a number of former communist states joined NATO and the European Union, ending the division of the continent. At least for the moment, capitalism and democracy seemed to triumph over socialism and authoritarian governments. In many places, the end of communism allowed simmering ethnic tensions to explode into open conflict. Beyond the disintegration of the Soviet Union, both Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia fragmented, the former amid terrible violence and the latter peacefully. Chechens in Russia, Abkhazians in Georgia, Russians in the Baltic states and Ukraine, Tibetans and Uighurs in China—all of these minorities found themselves in opposition to the states in which they lived.

As the twenty-first century dawned, the communist world had shrunk considerably from its high point just three decades earlier. In the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, communism had disappeared entirely as the governing authority and dominant ideology. In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet collapse, Russia quickly and haphazardly privatized many of its state-owned firms, vastly enriching their new and

well-connected owners, who came to be called the “oligarchs.” The result was catastrophic as the country experienced a sharply contracting economy, widespread poverty and inequality, and declining life expectancy. Not until 2006 did its economy recover to the level of 1991. Even then, much of Russia’s subsequent economic growth depended substantially on the export of oil and gas, rather than on competitive manufacturing. Russia’s military intervention in Ukraine in 2014 prompted Western economic sanctions, which, together with the sharply declining price of oil on the world market, resulted in a major downturn in Russian economic life, at least temporarily. Some twenty-five years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the continuing weakness and vulnerability of the Russian economy were evident.

Elsewhere, China had largely abandoned its communist economic policies as a market economy took shape, spurring remarkable economic growth. Like China, Vietnam and Laos remained officially communist, even while they pursued Chinese-style reforms, though more cautiously. Even Cuba, which was beset by economic crisis in the 1990s following the end of massive Soviet subsidies, began after 2008 to allow small businesses, private food markets, the buying and selling of cars, the sale of computers and cell phones, and luxury hotels for tourists, while still harshly suppressing opposition political groups. A growing cultural openness allowed films highly critical of Cuban society to be produced and shown publicly, including one, *Juan of the Dead*, that portrayed Cuba in 2010 as a country of dazed zombies. And in late 2014, after more than five decades of efforts to isolate a communist-ruled Cuba from the larger international arena, the United States finally began to reopen diplomatic relations with this Caribbean nation.

An impoverished North Korea remained the most unreformed and repressive of the remaining communist countries and the only major flashpoint of cold war-era conflicts. Its small nuclear arsenal controlled by an unpredictable leadership made it a cause of great concern in the region and beyond. And its alleged ability to hack into Sony Pictures computers in late 2014 to protest an unflattering film portrayal of the North Korean leader illustrated the intersection of popular culture, a world linked by the Internet, and global political conflicts.

But as a primary source of international tensions or as a compelling path to modernity and social justice, communism was effectively dead. The brief communist era in world history had ended. However, the rivalries of the Great Powers had certainly not ended, as Russia and China alike continued to challenge American global dominance. Russian president Vladimir Putin deeply resented the loss of his country’s international stature after the breakup of the Soviet Union and what he regarded as U.S. efforts to intrude upon Russia’s legitimate interests. By 2014 issues involving the eastward expansion of NATO and the Russian intervention in Ukraine had brought the relationship between Russia and the West to something resembling cold war-era hostility. And the rising economic and military power of China generated many tensions in its relationship with the United States in East Asia and the Pacific world. The demise of communism, in short, did not bring about a golden age of international harmony, as the geopolitical and economic competition of major nation-states persisted.

REFLECTIONS

To Judge or Not to Judge

Should historians or students of history make moral judgments about the people and events they study? On the one hand, some would argue, scholars do well to act as detached and objective observers of the human experience. The task is to describe what happened and to explain why things turned out as they did. Whether we approve or condemn the outcomes of the historical process is, in this view, beside the point. On the other hand, all of us, scholars and students alike, stand somewhere. We are members of particular cultures; we have values and outlooks on the world that inevitably affect the way we think about the past. Perhaps it is better to recognize and acknowledge these realities than to pretend to some unattainable objectivity that places us above it all. Furthermore, making judgments is a way of caring about the past, of affirming our continuing relationship with those who have gone before us.

The question of making judgments arises strongly in any examination of the communist phenomenon. In a United States lacking a major socialist tradition, sometimes saying anything positive about communism or even noting its appeal to millions of people has brought charges of whitewashing its crimes. Within the communist world, even modest criticism was usually regarded as counterrevolutionary and was largely forbidden and harshly punished. Certainly, few observers were neutral in their assessment of the communist experiment.

Were the Russian and Chinese revolutions a blow for human freedom and a cry for justice on the part of oppressed people, or did they simply replace one tyranny with another? Was Stalinism a successful effort to industrialize a backward country or a ferocious assault on its moral and social fabric? Did Chinese reforms of the late twentieth century represent a return to sensible policies of modernization, a continued denial of basic democratic rights, or an opening to capitalist inequalities, corruption, and acquisitiveness? Passionate debate continues on all of these questions.

Communism, like many human projects, has been an ambiguous enterprise. On the one hand, communism brought hope to millions by addressing the manifest injustices of the past; by providing new opportunities for women, workers, and peasants; by promoting rapid industrial development; and by ending Western domination. On the other hand, communism was responsible for mountains of crimes—millions killed and wrongly imprisoned; massive famines partly caused by radical policies; human rights violated on an enormous scale; lives uprooted and distorted by efforts to achieve the impossible.

Studying communism challenges our inclination to want definitive answers and clear moral judgments. Can we hold contradictory elements in some kind of tension? Can we affirm our own values while acknowledging the ambiguities of life, both past and present? Doing so is arguably among the essential tasks of growing up and achieving a measure of intellectual maturity. In that undertaking, history can be helpful.

Chapter Review

What's the Significance?

Russian Revolution (1917), 933–36	Cultural Revolution, 945–46
Bolsheviks/Lenin, 935	Great Purges/Terror, 946–47
Guomindang, 937–38	Anna Dubova, 948–49
Mao Zedong, 937–38	Cuban Revolution / missile crisis, 952
Chinese Revolution, 938	Nikita Khrushchev, 952–56
Stalin, 938; 941–44	Deng Xiaoping, 959–60
building socialism, 938–40	<i>perestroika/glasnost</i> , 961
Zhenotdel, 941	Mikhail Gorbachev, 961–62
collectivization, 942–43	

Big Picture Questions

1. Why did the communist experiment, which was committed to equality, abundance, and a humane socialism, generate failed economies and oppressive, brutal, and totalitarian regimes?
2. In what ways did communism have a global impact beyond those countries that were governed by communist parties?
3. What was the global significance of the cold war?
4. "The end of communism was as revolutionary as its beginning." Do you agree with this statement?
5. **Looking Back:** What was distinctive about twentieth-century communist industrialization and modernization compared to the same processes in the West a century earlier?

Next Steps: For Further Study

- Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (2009). A global overview of the communist phenomenon in the twentieth century by a respected scholar.
- Jung Chang, *Wild Swans* (2004). A compelling view of twentieth-century Chinese history through the eyes of three generations of women in a single family.
- Timothy Check, *Mao Zedong and China's Revolutions* (2002). A collection of documents about the Chinese Revolution and a fine introduction to the life of Mao.
- John L. Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (2005). An overview by one of the most highly regarded historians of the cold war.
- Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End* (1999). A thoughtful overview of the entire Soviet experience.
- Robert Strayer, *The Communist Experiment* (2007). A comparative study of Soviet and Chinese communism.
- "Mao Zedong Internet Archive," <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao>. A Web site offering the translated writings of Mao, including poetry and some images.
- "Soviet Archives Exhibit," <http://www.ibiblio.org/expo/soviet.exhibit/entrance.html>. A rich Web site from the Library of Congress, focusing on the operation of the Soviet system and relations with the United States.

WORKING WITH EVIDENCE

Poster Art in Mao's China

“I wanted to be the girl in the poster when I was growing up. Every day I dressed up like that girl in a white cotton shirt with a red scarf around my neck, and I braided my hair in the same way. I liked the fact that she was surrounded by revolutionary martyrs whom I was taught to worship since kindergarten.”¹⁸ As things turned out, this young girl, Anchee Min, did become the subject of one of the many thousands of propaganda posters with which the Chinese communist government flooded the country during the thirty years or so following the Chinese Revolution of 1949.

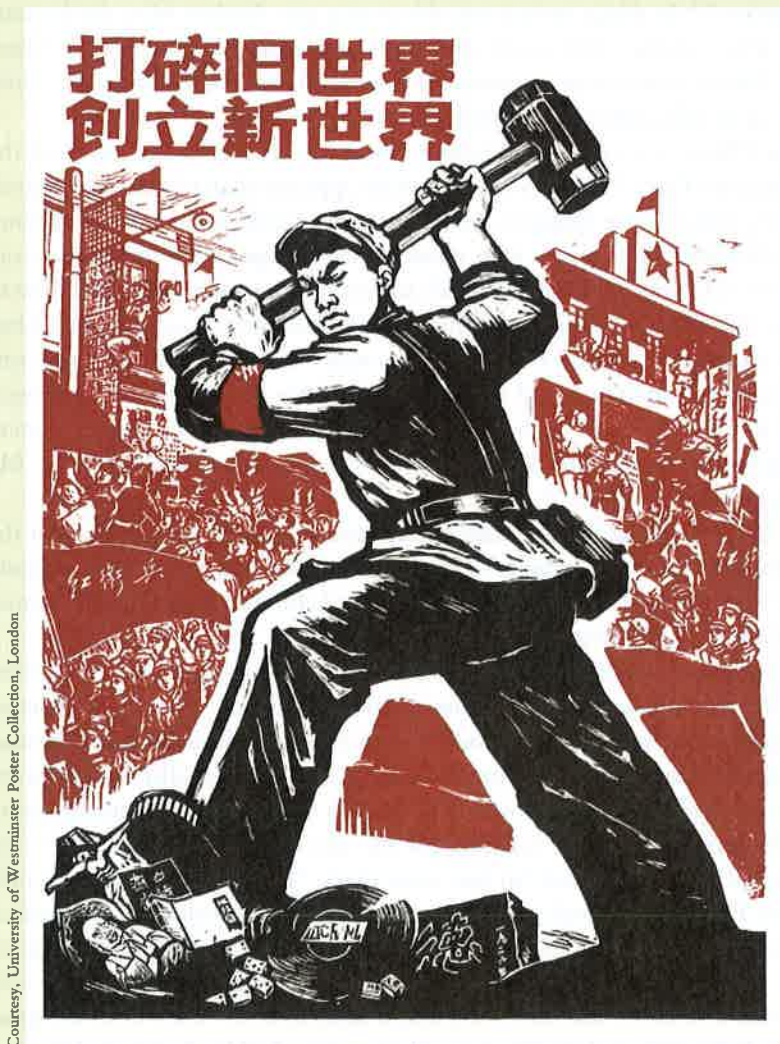
In China, as in other communist countries, art served the state and the Communist Party. Nowhere was this more apparent than in these propaganda posters, which were found in homes, schools, workplaces, railway stations, and elsewhere. The artists who created these images were under the strict control of Communist Party officials and were expected to use their skills to depict the party's leaders and achievements favorably, even grandly. They were among the “engineers of the human soul” who were reshaping the consciousness of individuals and remaking their entire society. One young man, born in 1951, testified to the effectiveness of these posters: “They . . . were my signposts through life. They made sure we did not make mistakes. . . . My life is reflected in them.”¹⁹

The posters that follow illustrate the kind of society and people that the communist leadership sought to create during the years that Mao Zedong ruled the country (1949–1976). The realities behind these images, of course, were often far different.

Coming to power in 1949, Chinese Communist Party leaders recognized that their enemies were by no means totally defeated. A persistent theme throughout the years of Mao's rule was an effort to eliminate those enemies or convert them to the communist cause. Spies, imperialist sympathizers, those infected with “bourgeois values” such as materialism and individualism, landowners or capitalists yearning for the old life—all of these had to be identified and confronted. So too were many “enemies” within the Communist Party itself, people who were suspected of opposition to the radical policies of Mao. Some of these alleged enemies were killed, others imprisoned, and still others—millions of them—were subjected to endless self-criticism sessions or sent down to remote rural areas to “learn from the peasants.” This need to demolish the old society and old values is reflected in Source 21.1, a poster from 1967, the height of the Cultural Revolution (see

pages 945–47). Its caption reads: “Destroy the Old World; Establish the New World.”

- Notice the various items beneath this young revolutionary’s feet. What do they represent to the ardent revolutionaries seeking to “destroy the old world”? What groups of people were most likely to be affected by such efforts?
- What elements of a new order are being constructed in this image?
- How does the artist distinguish visually between the old and the new? Note the use of colors and the size of various figures and objects in the poster.



Courtesy, University of Westminster Poster Collection, London

Source 21.1 Smashing the Old Society

The centerpiece of Mao's plans for the vast Chinese countryside lay in the "people's communes." Established during the Great Leap Forward in the late 1950s, these were huge political and economic units intended to work the land more efficiently and collectively, to undertake large-scale projects such as building dams and irrigation systems, to create small-scale industries in rural areas, and to promote local self-reliance. The leaders who created the communes also sought to move China more rapidly toward genuine communism by eliminating virtually every form of private property and emphasizing social equality and shared living. Commune members ate together in large dining halls, and children were cared for during the day in collective nurseries rather than by their own families. Source 21.2, a poster created in 1958 under the title "The People's Communes Are Good," shows a highly idealized image of one such commune. See also the celebratory poster on page 945.

The actual outcomes of the commune movement departed radically from its idealistic goals. Economic disruption occasioned by the creation of

Source 21.2 Building the New Society: The People's Commune



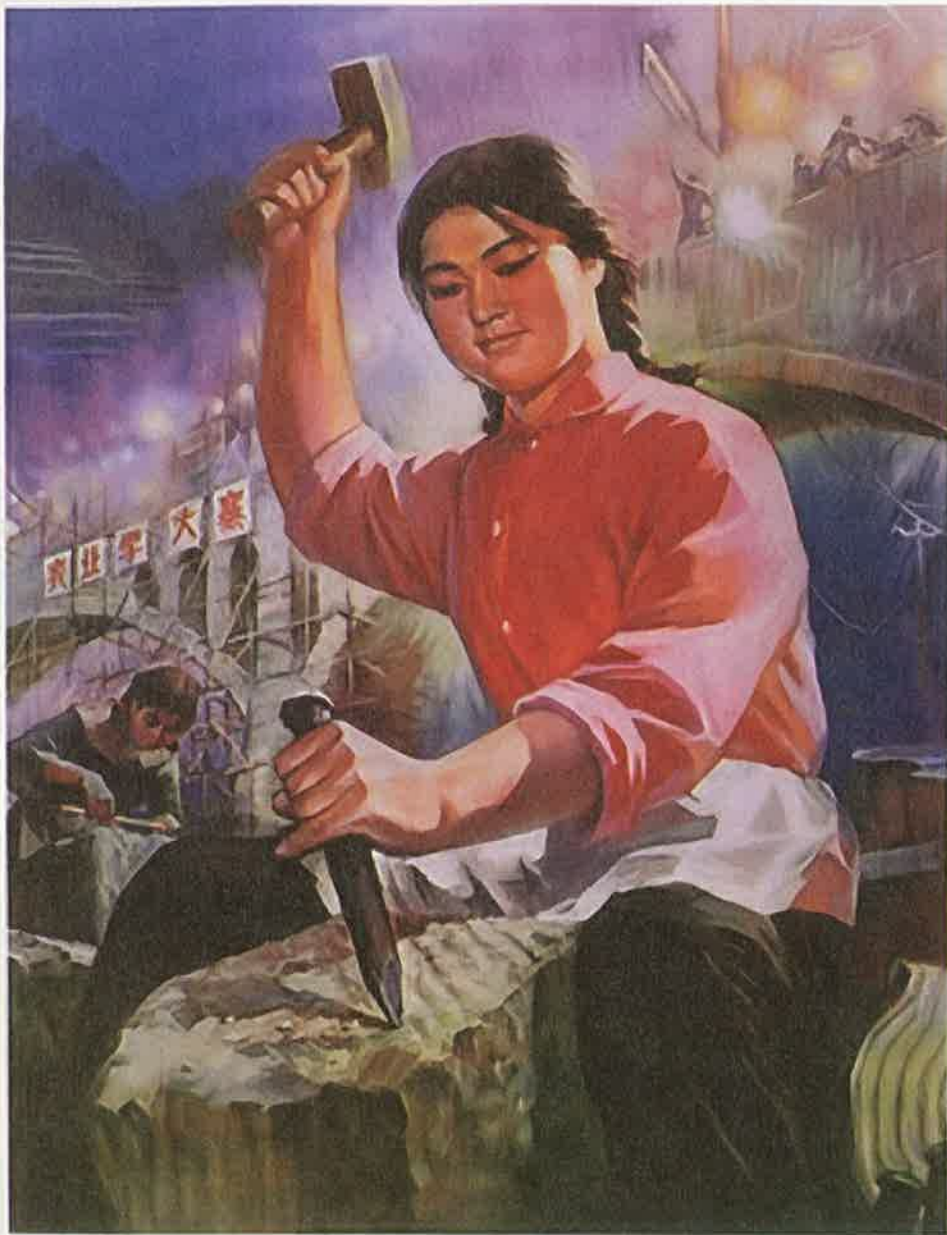
communes contributed a great deal to the enormous famines of the late 1950s and early 1960s, in which many millions perished. Furthermore, efforts to involve the peasants in iron and steel production through the creation of much-heralded “backyard furnaces,” illustrated in Source 21.2, proved a failure. Most of the metal produced in these primitive facilities was of poor quality and essentially unusable. Such efforts further impoverished the rural areas as peasants were encouraged to contribute their pots, pans, and anything made of iron to the smelting furnaces.

- What appealing features of commune life and a communist future are illustrated in this poster and the poster on page 945? Notice the communal facilities for eating and washing clothes as well as the drill practice of a “people’s militia” unit at the bottom of Source 21.2.
- One of Mao’s chief goals was to overcome the sharp division between industrial cities and the agricultural countryside. How is this effort illustrated in these posters?

Among the core values of Maoist communism were human mastery over the natural order, rapid industrialization, and the liberation of women from ancient limitations and oppressions in order to mobilize them for the task of building socialism. Source 21.3, a 1975 poster, illustrates these values. Its caption reads: “Women Can Hold Up Half the Sky; Surely the Face of Nature Can Be Transformed.”

- In what ways does this poster reflect Chinese communism’s core values?
- How is the young woman in this image portrayed? What does the expression on her face convey? Notice her clothing and the shape of her forearms, and the general absence of a feminine figure. Why do you think she is portrayed in this largely sexless fashion? What does this suggest about the communist attitude toward sexuality?
- What does this image suggest about how the party sought to realize gender equality? What is the significance of the work the young woman is doing?
- Notice the lights that illuminate a nighttime work scene. What does this suggest about attitudes toward work and production?

A central feature of Chinese communism, especially during the Cultural Revolution of 1966–1976, was the growing veneration, even adoration, of Chairman Mao. Portraits, statues, busts, and Mao badges proliferated. Everyone was expected to read repeatedly the “Red Treasured Book,” which offered a selection of quotations from Mao’s writings, believed to facilitate solutions to almost all problems, both public and private. Many families erected “tablets of loyalty” to Mao, much like those previously devoted to ancestors.



妇女能顶半边天 管教山河换新颜

Courtesy, University of Westminster Poster Collection, London

Source 21.3 Women, Nature, and Industrialization



我們心中最紅最紅的紅太陽毛主席和我們在一起

Zhejiang People's Art Publishing House/Stefan R. Landsberger Collections/International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam/www.chineseposters.net

Source 21.4 The Cult of Mao

People made pilgrimages to “sacred shrines” associated with key events in his life. Schoolchildren began the day by chanting, “May Chairman Mao live ten thousand times ten thousand years.”

And Mao was the centerpiece of endless posters. Source 21.4, a poster created in 1968, portrays a familiar scene from the Cultural Revolution. Millions of young people, organized as Red Guards and committed to revolutionary action, flocked to Beijing, where enormous and ecstatic rallies allowed them to catch a glimpse of their beloved leader and to unite with him in the grand task of creating communism in China. The poster’s caption reads: “The reddest, reddest, red sun in our heart, Chairman Mao, and us together.”

- What relationship between Mao and his young followers does the poster suggest? Why might some scholars have seen a quasi-religious dimension to that relationship?
- How do you understand the significance of the “Red Treasured Book” of quotations from Mao, which the young people are waving?
- How might you account for the unbridled enthusiasm expressed by the Red Guards? In this case, the poster portrays the realities of these rallies with considerable accuracy. Can you think of other comparable cases of such mass enthusiasm?

DOING HISTORY

Poster Art in Mao's China

1. **Reading communist intentions:** Based on these visual sources, how would you describe the kind of society that the Chinese Communist Party sought to create in China during Mao’s lifetime?
2. **Distinguishing image and reality:** Based on the narrative of this chapter and especially on what happened after Mao’s death, assess the realities that lay behind these visual sources. To what extent do the posters accurately represent the successes of Maoist communism? What insights do they shed on its failures?
3. **Defining audience and appeal:** To whom do you think these posters were directed? What appeal might they have for the intended audience?
4. **Noticing change:** How could you use these posters to define the dramatic changes that transformed China since 1949? How might a traditional Chinese official from the nineteenth century respond to them?
5. **Assessing posters as evidence:** What are the strengths and limitations of poster art for understanding Chinese communism under Mao?