

# Summary: The Soviet Union

## East Against West

After World War II, a division occurred in Europe. An invisible wall known as the Iron Curtain separated Western Europe from the Soviet-controlled countries of Eastern Europe.

People could not pass freely from the West to the East.

The Soviet Union set up Communist governments in Eastern Europe after the war. Both force and politics were used to keep things running smoothly. The Soviet Union also kept control by using puppet governments. These governments did whatever the Soviet leaders said.

Most Eastern Europeans could vote, but they had no choices. The only party to choose from was the Communist Party. All other parties were outlawed. Citizens were not allowed to complain about this one-party system.

## Joseph Stalin

Joseph Stalin ruled the Soviet Union during World War II. He created sets of economic goals. For example, Stalin believed that farming could make the Soviet Union stronger. In the 1930s, he forced peasants to move to collective farms. These farms were owned and controlled by the government.

Stalin had Russians who spoke out against the government arrested by the police. The police also arrested those whom Stalin did not trust. Millions of these prisoners were sent to slave labor camps in Siberia.

## The Cold War

For many years after World War II, the members of NATO refused to trade with members of the Warsaw Pact, an Eastern European alliance. This period is called the Cold War. The war stayed “cold” because neither side wanted to start an actual war. Such a war might have involved nuclear weapons. Instead, it was a period of non-cooperation between the West and the East.

The United States and Western Europe were afraid of the influence the Soviets might have in other countries. The Soviet Union was also worried. It wanted to protect itself against invasion. Tension remained on both sides of the Iron Curtain for almost 40 years.

### Before You Read

Circle each vocabulary word.

**Iron Curtain** *noun*, a political barrier that kept people in Eastern Europe from traveling outside the area

**puppet government** *noun*, a government controlled by an outside force

**one-party system** *noun*, a system that has only one political party and one person to choose from for each government position

**collective farm** *noun*, a farm owned by the government that hires large numbers of workers

**Cold War** *noun*, a period of time after World War II when members of NATO and the Warsaw Pact refused to trade or cooperate

### After You Read

**REVIEW** How do you think the Soviet Union enforced a one-party system in Eastern Europe? Highlight ways the Soviet Union enforced a one-party system.

**REVIEW** How did Joseph Stalin maintain control of the huge Soviet Union? Underline how Stalin kept control.

**REVIEW** Compare the Soviet Union's fears in the Cold War with those of the United States and Western Europe. Draw a box around these countries' fears.