Soviet Culture
During the 1950s and 1960s, most of the people of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries they controlled were very poor. The Soviet government wanted to make sure that certain groups did not try to break away. To have a strong national identity, the government created and gave out propaganda. This propaganda said great things about the Soviet Union. It praised Soviet leaders and Communism.

To create a strong national identity, the government forbid members of some ethnic groups to speak their native languages or celebrate holidays. Most Soviets knew little about what was happening around the world.

The Soviet Economy
The Soviets ran the economies of the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. They promised citizens that Communism would improve industry and that people’s needs would be met. This promise was broken.

The Communist Soviet Union did not support private property rights. The government ran all major businesses, factories, and railroads. It decided what and how goods would be made. Eastern European citizens often did not have enough bread, meat, or clothing.

Attempts at Change
Eastern Europeans finally began making demands. They wanted more goods of better quality. They also wanted a change in their government. In 1956, Hungary and Poland tried to gain independence. The Communist army stopped their attempts.

Nikita Khrushchev ruled the Soviet Union from 1958 until 1964. The Soviet economy continued to grow weaker and Khrushchev was deposed.

In the 1970s, a period of détente began. The leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States began to have more contact. Still, the Soviet economy grew worse. Many citizens began to reject Communism. The Soviet leaders still refused to give up their power or control.