Lesson 3 – Life in Eastern Europe and Western Russia

Pg. 410-417
Ethnicities in Eastern Europe & Western Russia

- Ethnic groups: mostly Slavic
- Languages: Slavic languages, but vary by region
  - Alphabet: Cyrillic →

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Religion in Eastern Europe & Western Russia

- Eastern Orthodox in the central & east ➔
- Catholic in the west
- Lutheran & Catholic in the Baltics
- Islam in Albania & Bosnia

← St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow, Russia
The Source of much Conflict...
A History of Ethnic Turmoil

• **Diversity**: Few natural boundaries mean this region has been invaded MANY times in history
  - Many diverse ethnic groups live here and come into conflict

• **Weak governments**: When the USSR collapsed, *devolution* (a powerful central government gives up power to local governments) led to the rise of nationalism in Eastern Europe.

• **Russian Aggression**: a threat to border states (Ukraine) and to groups in Russia (Chechnya) that want to break away
  - Chechnya’s oil reserves & good location are important to Russia’s economy, so the government puts down on protests harshly
Economies in Eastern Europe & Western Russia

• Agriculture & forestry
• Some industry, but outdated
• Mining

• Switching from communism to a free market economy has been difficult
  o People own businesses instead of the government, but oligarchs (a few powerful, rich people) tend to control the businesses
  o Not enough goods produced
  o Higher unemployment and inflation (rising prices) for food & clothing
Environmental concerns in Eastern Europe & Western Russia

- Forests & farmland have been ruined in the rush to build up industries

- Air & Water Pollution
  - Smog is causing lung disease & cancer
  - Drinking water is ruined due to chemicals, poor sewer systems, & old chemical weapons in dumps
    - Life expectancy (# of years an average person lives) in Russia is 71 years (ranked #154 in the world)
Regions of Eastern Europe & Western Russia

• Western Russia
• The Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, & Lithuania)
• Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, & Hungary
• The Balkans
• The Border States (Belarus, Ukraine, & Moldova)
Russia Today

• Population: 142.4 million, mostly Slavs
• Government: federal republic
  o Powerful President (and former KGB intelligence officer) Vladimir Putin
    →
      ▪ Has improved Russia’s economy and reasserted itself as a world power
      ▪ BUT, limits freedom of speech & the press and dealt harshly with opponents.
The Arts in Russia

• Enjoy the outdoors, sports (hockey, skating, gymnastics), movies/TV, modern music

• Famous for ballet & opera
  o [Peter Tchaikovsky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Tchaikovsky)’s *The Nutcracker*, *Sleeping Beauty*
  o [Igor Stravinsky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Igor_Stravinsky)’s *Firebird Suite*
  o Mariinsky Theater →

• [Folk Dancing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folk_dance)

• Literature:
  o *War & Peace*, Leo Tolstoy

• Faberge eggs
Russian Food

- Borscht – beet soup
- Shchi – cabbage soup
- Prioshki – meat turnovers
- Caviar
- Boiled potatoes
The Baltic States
(Estonia, Latvia, & Lithuania)

• Small populations that were treated harshly when they were taken over by the Soviet Union
  ○ Used nonviolent resistance to break away
Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, & Hungary

- Countries that lost a lot of territory during WWI & WWII
  - 3 million Polish Jews were killed during the Holocaust, causing a lack of ethnic diversity in Poland
Culture in Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, & Hungary

• Major Cities:
  o Budapest, Hungary ➔
  o Warsaw, Poland
  o Prague, Czech Republic

• Famous Poles:
  o **Frederic Chopin**, musician
  o Marie Curie, physicist
  o Nicolaus Copernicus
The Balkans: (Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia, Croatia, Slovenia)

- Controlled by the Ottoman Turks for 500 years, then the Soviet Union, 1948-1980s
- Continuing conflict in the region of former Yugoslavia as nationalist groups try to control each country
  - “Balkanization” - to split up into small countries that are in conflict with each other
  - Resulted in ethnic cleansing (genocide) removing or murdering other ethnic groups
The Border States
(Belarus, Ukraine, & Moldova)

• 1932-33 Ukrainian “Famine”
  • Soviet leader Josef Stalin starved 7 million Ukrainian farmers who refused to give up their good farmland to the communist system (genocide!)

• 1986 Chernobyl Nuclear Meltdown
  • Caused pollution, cancer, & birth defects in Ukraine & Belarus

• Since 2014, Russian troops have occupied eastern Ukraine (22% of Ukraine’s 48 million people are ethnic Russians)

• Folk music – bandura, hopak dancing