Chapter 13

Eastern Europe & Western Russia:

Recovering from war, communism, genocide, and “unfortunate geography”

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Lesson 1:
Physical Geography of Eastern Europe & Western Russia

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This region is covered mostly by fertile plains or steppe (flat, drier land), surrounded by uplands (high elevation) and seas.

- Very few natural borders in the north to prevent movement.

- The main seas are the Baltic, Adriatic, Ionian, Black, and Caspian.
Poland: “*If you cannot prevent your enemies from swallowing you, at least prevent them from digesting you.*”

- Being located in Eastern Europe presents benefits and challenges:
  - Good:
  - Bad:
Climates

- Lies in the middle latitudes & north into the Arctic Circle
  - North – Subarctic
    - Long, cold winters and short, cool summers.
  - Central- Humid continental climate
    - Warm, rainy summers & cold, snowy winters
  - South (Albania & Macedonia)
    - Mediterranean climate
      - Hot, dry summers and mild, rainy winters

Many ports on the Baltic Sea & Pacific Ocean are frozen during part of the year
- Coldest temperature in Russia: -94°F
Natural Resources

• Although Russia is the largest country in the world, only one-sixth of its land is suitable for agriculture.

• More than one-fifth of the world's forests are in Russia, but the country's climate causes trees to grow slowly.

• Russia, Poland, and Romania have vast natural resources.
Lesson 2: History of Eastern Europe and Western Russia

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Early History

- **Time Period:** AD 400-1600
- **Government:**
  - early civilizations founded by **Slavs**
  - the most common ethnic group in the region today
    - Largest group - Kievan Rus, based in Kiev (in present-day Ukraine)
- **Economy:**
  - agriculture
- **Daily Life:**
  - invaded by the Mongols in 1200s
  - Christianity (Eastern Orthodox) was brought to the region
Czarist Russia

- **Time Period:** 1533-1917
- **Government:**
  - powerful Russian **czars** (kings) that took over much of Eastern Europe
    - Ivan the Terrible - 1st czar of Russia in 1533
    - Peter the Great – modernized in the late 1600s
    - Catherine the Great – expanded & modernized in the 1700s
- **Economy:**
  - poor **serfs** (farm laborers who were tied to land like slaves) worked on land owned by the rich
- **Daily Life:**
  - 1812 invasion by France and **Napoleon Bonaparte**
  - great wealth for czars & nobles, crushing poverty for most others
  - World War I led to increased misery for poor Russians, so they overthrew the czar
The Communist Soviet Union

• **Time Period:** 1917-1991

• **Government:**
  
  – the Soviet Union - 15 republics under the control of a Communist party led by dictators
    
    • Vladimir Lenin – founder of the Soviet Union
    
    • [Joseph Stalin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Stalin) – cruel dictator that industrialized & modernized the country
    
    • Mikhail Gorbachev – allowed social & economic reforms that led to the fall of the Union

• **Economy:**
  
  – **communist** – government owns everything, so **collectivized** agriculture & developed heavy industry, but spent most money on weapons
The Communist Soviet Union

• Daily Life:
  – no religion or free speech allowed
  – participation in WWII resulted in 20 million deaths
  – Cold War tension and nuclear arms race with the USA
  – resistance to Soviet control by Eastern European countries
Post-Communist Eastern Europe & Russia

• **Time Period**: 1991-present

• **Government**:
  – democratic constitutions were adopted in all of the 15 republics & presidents have been elected
    • Russia: Boris Yeltsin (1\textsuperscript{st}) & Vladimir Putin (current)

• **Economy**:
  – capitalist, but struggling to convert to light industry (consumer goods)

• **Daily Life**:
  – shortages of supplies, utilities & jobs
  – a distrust of Russia from Eastern Europe
  – conflict, bloodshed, and the division of Yugoslavia in the Balkan Peninsula