

Stalin died in 1953. He had ruled brutally and unopposed for decades.

After a power struggle, a new leader of the USSR was chosen in 1956: Nikita Khrushchev. He was very different to Stalin and was determined to change the USSR

1) DEATH OF STALIN

Khrushchev started off with his **SECRET SPEECH**

This was a secret speech behind closed doors to the Communist Congress. In it he described the horrors of Stalin's rule - which had been hidden from them

He ordered a **DESTALINISATION** process.

He released thousands of political prisoners and closed down the Gulags (Soviet concentration camps)



He introduced **ECONOMIC** and **POLITICAL REFORMS** to the USSR

WHAT DID KHRUSHCHEV CHANGE?

He called for **PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE** with the West which was widely welcomed

He also made better relations with other communist countries such as Yugoslavia



WHAT WAS THE REACTION TO THESE CHANGES?

The West were very encouraged by Khrushchev's reforms.

Leaders from East and West met for the first time in over 10 years in 1955



People in Eastern Europe were particularly encouraged. They hoped the repressive aspects of USSR rule would now be relaxed and they could have more freedoms.



In Eastern European countries like HUNGARY and POLAND people began to challenge the regimes for reform



POLAND 1956

KHRUSHCHEV'S REACTION: Tensions subsided when a programme of **REFORM** and **LIBERALISATION** was promised under the Polish Communist leader: **GOMULKA**

PROTESTS erupted against the strict USSR control

There were demands for economic and political reform

This reaction encouraged other countries in Eastern Europe!



HUNGARY 1956

KHRUSHCHEV announced reforms for Hungary (like Poland) HOWEVER;

- 1) Demonstrations spread to the countryside
- 2) Russian troops were moved to the border with Hungary
- 3) Nagy announced free **ELECTIONS** in November
- 4) He said Hungary would **LEAVE THE WARSAW PACT** and be neutral
- 5) **RADIO FREE EUROPE** promised Western support for rebels

RAKOSI REPLACED BY NAGY

Imre NAGY was the much more popular Communist leader who replaced RAKOSI

NAGY felt that KHRUSHCHEV would be a lot less strict than under Stalin



BACKGROUND TO HUNGARY

Hungary had been ruled by a brutal Communist, Stalinist dictator called RAKOSI since 1948

By 1956 popular unrest in Hungary demanded and got the removal of RAKOSI, giving Hungarians hope of more freedom from the USSR.



KHRUSHCHEV RESPONSE

KHRUSHCHEV WAS DETERMINED TO STOP ANY MOVES FOR FREEDOM AND ENDING THE WARSAW PACT.

- 1) He wouldn't allow it to leave the Warsaw Pact
- 2) A large Soviet army with 6,000 tanks was moved into Hungary
- 3) Fierce fighting broke out in **BUDAPEST**. Up to 30,000 died and 200,000 left.
- 4) The rebels were easily defeated
- 5) NAGY was executed and replaced by a strong Communist called **KADAR**
- 6) The West had not helped. It was preoccupied by a U.S. PRESIDENT...

