

Revolution, Rebuilding, and New Challenges: 1985 to the Present



I. The Decline of Communism in Eastern Europe

A. The Soviet Union to 1985

1. The 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia showed Soviet leaders were ready to use force to maintain the Soviet Empire.
2. At the same time, rising living standards and relatively low levels of outright terror kept the Soviet domestic situation stable.
3. Russian nationalism was also a key stabilizing factor in Brezhnev's U.S.S.R.
4. Revolutionary social changes were underway in Russia, however.
 1. Urbanization continued.
 2. The number of highly trained scientists, managers, and specialists increased four times between 1960 and 1985.
 3. Education and freedom for experts to explore their specializations led to the growth of "public opinion" in Russia.

B. Solidarity in Poland

1. In 1956 the Soviets had to back off from collectivization in Poland after riots.
2. In 1970 worker unrest led Polish communist leaders to borrow massively from the West.
3. The "oil shock" of 1973 created a severe recession in Poland.
4. In 1978 the Pole Karol Wojtyla was elected Pope.
5. In 1980 massive strikes by Polish workers forced Polish authorities to legalize noncommunist trade unions.
6. The new trade union, "Solidarity," became a nation-wide organization.
7. In December 1981, communist leader Wojciech Jaruzelski imposed martial law and arrested Solidarity leaders.

8. Solidarity survived underground and the regime never imposed full-scale terror.
- C. Gorbachev's Reforms in the Soviet Union
 1. When he became head of the Soviet Communist party in 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev realized the U.S.S.R. was falling behind Western capitalism and technology. He aimed to revitalize Soviet communism.
 2. Gorbachev began his tenure with attacks on alcoholism and bureaucratic corruption.
 3. He moved on to economic decentralization (lifting some price controls, legalizing cooperatives), encouragement of limited criticism of government, and eventually free elections.
 4. Democratization produced demands for independence by non-Russian minorities.
 5. In foreign affairs, Gorbachev withdrew troops from Afghanistan and aimed to end the arms race with the United States.
- II. The Revolutions of 1989
 - A. The Collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe
 1. In 1989 Solidarity forced Polish leaders to run free elections to a plurality of the seats in the parliament.
 2. In the subsequent election the Communists lost control of the parliament. Solidarity leader Lech Walesa became president of Poland.
 3. The new government applied "shock therapy" to the economy, ending state planning and price controls.
 4. Hungary, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia followed Poland out of the Communist orbit in late 1989.
 5. In Romania, dictator Nicolae Ceausescu resisted revolution and was captured and executed.
 - B. The Disintegration of the Soviet Union
 1. In February 1990 the Communist party lost local elections all over the U.S.S.R.
 2. In August 1991 hardline communist leaders opposed to change attempted a coup against Gorbachev. Russian Federation president Boris Yeltsin rallied the Moscow populace and some of the armed forces successfully against the coup.
 3. An anti-communist revolution swept the Soviet Union as the constituent republics, including Russia, declared independence. The Soviet Union ceased to exist on December 25, 1991.
 - C. German Unification and the End of the Cold War
 1. In the summer of 1990, German reunification was negotiated.
 2. Arms cuts in Europe, the U.S., and the Soviet Union followed.
 3. In 1991 Soviet loss of confidence and superpower status enabled the U.S. to fight and defeat Iraq following Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait.
- III. Building a New Europe in the 1990s
 - A. Common Patterns and Problems

1. Most European leaders in the 1990s accepted the neoliberal vision of capitalist development.
 2. In doing so, Europeans followed the lead of the “victorious” United States (victorious in the Cold War) and the new rules of the global economy.
 3. The computer and electronics revolution helped motivate the move to a global economy.
 4. Defenders of the achievements of Western welfare states resisted these changes, especially in France and Germany, where socialist parties and labor unions remained strong.
 5. Nearly all European countries undertook truly competitive elections and guaranteed basic civil liberties.
 6. American scholar Francis Fukuyama claimed that “the end of history” had arrived. Liberal democracy had bested Nazism and then communism.
 7. Nationalist resurgence led to tragedy and bloodshed, as in Yugoslavia.
- B. Recasting Russia
1. In January 1992, the Yeltsin government followed Poland in undertaking “shock therapy” for the economy, ending price controls and rapidly privatizing industry.
 2. Prices increased rapidly and production fell, possibly by 50 percent.
 3. The existence of de facto monopolies, popular perceptions of business as crime, and the “mafia” culture of the managerial elite undermined the reforms.
 4. Much of the old communist elite perpetuated its power as new business owners and organized crime thrived.
 5. Ordinary people lost their savings and life expectancy declined as living standards fell.
 6. The new constitution approved in 1993 gave the president (Yeltsin) a great deal of power, but free elections took place in 1996 and 2000.
 7. Russian military spending declined and Russia maintained good relations with foreign countries.
 8. In 1994 Yeltsin tried to crush an independence movement in the autonomous republic of Chechnya, and failed. The war continues as of this writing.
- C. Progress and Tragedy in Eastern Europe
1. In Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary economic and democratic reforms were relatively successful.
 2. In 1993, Czechoslovakia split peacefully into the Czech Republic and Slovakia.
 3. Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic joined NATO in 1997.
 4. Tragedy struck in Yugoslavia.
 - a. After Tito’s death in 1980, power devolved to the constituent republics of Yugoslavia.
 - b. Economic decline and revived memory of World War II massacres inspired by ethnic hatred caused more ethnic division.
 - c. In 1991, Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence and defended it from Serbia, led by President Slobodan Milosevic.

- d. In 1992, civil war spread to Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the Serbs (30 percent of the population) refused to live under Bosnian Muslim rule.
- e. The ensuing civil war involved rape, murder of civilians, and widespread use of concentration camps.
- f. In 1995, intervention by NATO air forces against the Bosnian Serbs led to a negotiated settlement dividing Bosnia between Serbs and Bosnians.
- g. Ethnic conflict broke out in Kosovo as Albanians strove for independence and Serbs began a campaign of intimidation and ethnic cleansing.
- h. In March 1999, NATO began bombing Yugoslavia, forcing the Serbs to withdraw from Kosovo (after expelling 750,000 Albanians).
- i. In July 2001, Serbs voted Milosevic out of office and the new Serb government turned him over to the War Crimes Tribunal in the Netherlands.

D. Unity and Identity in Western Europe

- 1. In 1993, members of the European Community created a single market, to be known as the European Union.
- 2. In 1991, negotiators at Maastricht, in Holland, agreed on a plan for monetary unification of Europe by 1999.
- 3. Western European elites tended to support Maastricht because monetary unification would enable Europeans to solve difficult economic problems, and potential political unification would enable them to deal with the U.S. on equal terms.
- 4. Ordinary people often opposed monetary union, because it undermined popular sovereignty through national politics and required cuts in social benefits. Popular votes on joining the union were often close.

IV. New Challenges in the Twenty-first Century

A. The Prospect of Population Decline

- 1. European birthrates continue to drop.
- 2. If the decline continues, it could undermine the social welfare system and the economy.
- 3. Explanations for population decline vary, but changing gender roles are an important factor.

B. The Growth of Immigration

- 1. The influx of refugees and illegal immigrants into Europe raise new questions about European identity.
- 2. Until 1973, western Europe drew heavily on North Africa and Turkey for manual laborers. Rising unemployment motivated governments to stop the inflow at that time.
- 3. In the 1990s, European governments accepted hundreds of thousands of refugees from Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Rwanda, and so on.
- 4. Illegal immigration also increased to perhaps 500,000 annually.

5. Russian organized crime smuggled many people into western Europe.
 6. Immigration became a source of political conflict.
- C. Promoting Human Rights
1. In the 1990s European intellectuals began to see promotion of human rights and peace in poorer lands as a new historic mission.
 2. This would require more curbs on the sovereign rights of states.
 3. This new mission meant interventions to stop civil wars and prevent tyrannical governments from slaughtering their own people.
 4. Europeans condemned the death penalty in the U.S., Saudi Arabia, China, and other countries.
 5. European socialist parties won elections throughout the European Union in 2001.
- D. The Al-Qaeda Attack of September 11, 2001
1. In the aftermath of September 11, the United States led a military campaign to destroy the al-Qaeda network and the Taliban.
 2. Civil war and terrorism have been linked throughout the twentieth century.
 3. Beginning in the 1920s, many nationalist movements used terrorism.
 4. In the Vietnam War era, far-left tried to use “revolutionary terror” to cripple the Western heartland.
 5. The September 11 attacks were part of a third wave of terrorism, one linked to underlying political conflicts and civil war.
- E. The West Divided and War in Iraq
1. Western unity dissolved in the face of U.S. efforts to build support for a war against Iraq.
 2. President Bush and his advisers began considering the question of overthrowing Saddam Hussein as soon as they took office.
 3. Many throughout the United States and Europe had grave doubts about the wisdom of attacking Iraq.
 4. American fears of renewed terrorism fueled support for war.
 5. Weapons inspectors found no evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and much of the world argued for continued inspections as an alternative to war.
 6. The U.S. invaded Iraq in March 2003 and quickly overwhelmed the Iraqi army.
 7. The confident assumption of a peaceful pro-American Iraq shared by administration officials was impaired by serious errors of American judgment.
 8. In late June 2004, the United States and Britain proclaimed a “fully sovereign” Iraqi government, headed by an Iraqi exile with close ties to the CIA and the Pentagon.
 9. The war split the West because the occupation had gone poorly and the legitimacy of the new government was in doubt.