

## Chapter 31: Revolution, Reunification, and Rebuilding, 1985 to the Present

Grace Mok

<http://www.raleighcharterhs.org/faculty/bnewmark/EUROQuizzes.html>

1. Decline of communism in eastern Europe
  - a. The Soviet Union had shifted back and forth between a desire to reform itself and aggressive dictatorship--then **Gorbachev** opened a new era of reform.
  - b. The Soviet Union to 1985
    - i. The Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 was the most important event in the Brezhnev era.
    - ii. Re-Stalinization followed, but with a collective not a personal dictatorship.
      1. Living standards improved until the 1970s, when economic decline set in; the gap between the elite and the ordinary person grew.
      2. Nationalism held the country together in a common belief; the dominant **Great Russians** feared that minorities within Russia might desire autonomy.
        - a. Party leaders identified themselves with Russian patriotism, stressing their role in saving the country during WWII and saving the country from foreign foes now.
      3. The Great Russians feared that liberalism and democracy would cause minorities to revolt.
      4. Nonconformity and protest were severely punished; Jews were persecuted, and some dissidents (such as **Solzhenitsyn** and **Pasternak**) were expelled.
        - a. Also shown in the re-Stalinization of culture and art.
        - b. Dissidents were blacklisted and thus rendered unable to find decent jobs since the government was the only employer.
    - iii. Nevertheless, a social revolution was in the making.
      1. The urban population grew to two-thirds of the total and became more sophisticated, more educated, and had better job skills,.
      2. A class of educated and self-confident experts grew and became connected to the West.
        - a. These experts sought the intellectual freedom necessary to do significant work, and they often obtained it because their research had practical (and military) value.
      3. The public became more educated and political, seeing themselves as worthy of having a voice in society's decisions.
  - c. Solidarity in Poland
    - i. The Polish communists dropped efforts to impose Soviet-style collectivization on the peasants and to break the Catholic church.
    - ii. The Polish economy suffered greatly because of poor leadership and the world depression of the 1970s.
    - iii. The "Polish miracle" occurred when the economic crisis became a spiritual crisis as well.
      1. **Pope John Paul II**, former archbishop of Cracow, called attention to the rights of all people.
      2. Strikes in August 1980 led to revolutionary demands, including the right to form free trade unions, freedom of speech, release of political prisoners and economic reforms, which were accepted by the government in the **Gdansk Agreement**.

3. **Lech Walesa** led the new democratic trade union movement called **Solidarity**. Its demands were for industrial, political, and economic rights.
    - a. Solidarity had massive support and a sophisticated organization.
    - b. It stopped short of directly challenging the communist monopoly of power, in fear of the Red Army and a terrible bloodbath if Polish Communists lost control.
  - iv. When Solidarity lost its cohesiveness, the Polish communist leadership under **Jaruzelski** smashed the movement (1981) and imposed martial law, blaming Solidarity for the economic crisis.
    1. After 1981, Solidarity went underground and fought on with great popular support.
    2. Polish cultural and intellectual life remained vigorous despite the repression.
  - d. Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union
    - i. A new era of fundamental change began under Gorbachev in 1985.
      1. By 1982, economic decline was worsened by mass apathy and lack of personal initiative.
      2. **Andropov** tried to reinvigorate the old system but with no success.
      3. **Gorbachev** set forth a series of reforms to reinvigorate the country, because he wanted to improve quality of life for his people.
        - a. He restructured the economy (**perestroika**), centering on a freer market economy, but the economy stalled midway between central planning and free-market mechanisms.
        - b. He instituted **glasnost**, or openness in society and politics, leading to much more freedom of speech.
      4. Democratization of the Soviet state was begun; free elections were held in 1989 for the first time since 1917; meetings of Congress were televised, allowing Soviets to take practical lessons in open discussion, critical thinking, and representative government.
    - ii. Democratization encouraged demands for autonomy by non-Russian minorities. However, unlike China at Tiananmen Square, Gorbachev drew back from pressure.
    - iii. Gorbachev withdrew troops from Afghanistan and encouraged reform in eastern Europe, repudiating the **Brezhnev Doctrine**.
    - iv. In order to reduce He also ended the arms race with the United States.
2. The revolutions of 1989
    - a. Gorbachev's plan to reform communism snowballed out of control
      - i. A series of anti-Communist revolts spread across eastern Europe.
      - ii. Gorbachev's reform plans in the Soviet Union backfired as anti-Communist revolts took hold.
    - b. The collapse of communism in eastern Europe
      - i. In Poland, Solidarity was again legalized and won overwhelmingly in free elections.
        1. Gorbachev refused to send Soviet troops to keep Polish communists in power.
        2. Many radical political and economic reforms were instituted.
          - a. The secret police, the Communist ministers in the government and finally Jaruzelski were eliminated, one by one to avoid confrontation with the Soviet Union.
          - b. **Shock therapy**, or the sudden release of state control over prices, was applied to Poland's economy on January 1, 1990.
      - ii. In Hungary, popular resistance and communist liberation ended one-party rule and

brought free elections in 1990.

1. A multiparty democracy was established, in an effort to appease the opposition groups.
  2. Borders between Hungary and East Germany were opened, allowing East Germans to go into Hungary, cross into Austria and then move into West Germany.
- iii. Growing economic dislocation brought revolution in East Germany.
1. The Berlin Wall was opened.
  2. Communist leaders were swept out of power.
- iv. The people of Czechoslovakia ousted the communist bosses in 1989, also called the **Velvet Revolution**.
1. The **Velvet Revolution** grew out of popular demonstrations led by students, intellectuals, and a dissident playwright turned moral revolutionary named **Vaclav Havel**.
- v. Only in Romania was the revolution violent and bloody.
1. **Ceausescu** ordered his ruthless security forces to slaughter thousands in order to put down the mass protests.
  2. After his forces were defeated, Ceausescu was executed.
  3. Romania's political prospects remained uncertain.
- c. The disintegration of the Soviet Union
- i. In 1990, the moderate Gorbachev was in between hard-line communists and revolutionary democrats and anti-Communists.
    1. Groups (i.e., in Lithuania and the Caucasus) still within the Soviet Union were challenging Soviet (Great Russian) control.
      - a. Gorbachev placed an economic embargo on Lithuania, but refused to use the army to crush the separatist government.
    2. In February 1990, the democrats and anti-Communists won local elections; Gorbachev's new constitution abolished the Communist party's monopoly of power and expanded the power of the Congress of People's Deputies.
    3. Gorbachev was elected president of the Soviet Union.
  - ii. The radical **Boris Yeltsin** was elected leader of the Russian Federation's parliament while Gorbachev tried to keep the Soviet Union intact.
    1. Gorbachev tried to save the Soviet Union with a new treaty that would link the member republics in a looser, freely accepted confederation, but six of the fifteen Soviet republics rejected Gorbachev's pleas.
    2. In an attempted coup, hard-liners kidnapped Gorbachev; Yeltsin saved the government and brought about more reform.
  - iii. By declaring Russia independent from the Soviet Union, Yeltsin caused the dismemberment of the Soviet Empire.
    1. Gorbachev's job as leader of the Soviet Union ceased to exist on December 25, 1991.
    2. Russia now concentrated on building a strong Russia.
- d. German unification and the end of the cold war
- i. The death of communism in East Germany reopened the question of German unification.
    1. East German reform communists wanted to preserve socialism by making it genuinely democratic and responsive to the needs of the people, but feared unification and looked for a "third way."
    2. This idea failed because half the population fled and because West German



3. The European Union and the international community limited resurgent nationalism by boycotting and isolating states that embraced national hatred and ethnic warfare, most notably Serbia.
- b. Recasting Russia
- i. **Yeltsin** and Russia opted for breakneck economic liberalization in 1992.
    1. They freed prices on 90 percent of all Russian goods, with the exception of bread, vodka, oil, and public transportation.
    2. Each citizen received a voucher worth 10,000 rubles (about \$22) to buy stock in private companies, but control of the privatized companies usually remained in the hands of the old bosses.
    3. Industries were sold to the workers; but prices and inflation soared for five years, as Russia produced at least one-third less than in 1991.
    4. Economic liberalization did not work in Russia for the following reasons:
      - a. Soviet industry was based in large factories that, once privatized, became powerful private monopolies.
      - b. New firms did not emerge to replace the old state monopolies--as the old managers joined up with criminals to block the development of new competitive businesses.
    5. A new capitalist elite became rich while many fell into poverty.
    6. Huge profits were made by some in oil and other natural resources; wealth became over concentrated in Moscow.
    7. Life expectancy fell by 11 years, and only in 2000 did living conditions begin to improve.
  - ii. Yeltsin was more successful in politics.
    1. In 1993, he championed a new constitution.
    2. But Russia does not yet have a tradition of strong political parties and rule by law and an effective court system.
  - iii. Military spending declined, Russia did not protest that Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic joined NATO and generally respected the independence of Soviet successor states.
    1. Russia's intervention into Chechnya was an exception to its moderation in foreign affairs.
      - a. Chechnya was a tiny republic of 1 million Muslims that declared its independence from the Russian Federation.
    2. Popular dissatisfaction within Russia led to Yeltsin's withdrawal from Chechnya.
- c. Progress and tragedy in east central Europe (Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary)
- i. Three major trends occurred.
    1. The socialist-state planning economies were replaced with market capitalism.
    2. Western-style electoral politics took hold.
    3. Social/economic inequality increased--as the young and the ex-communists became a new elite, and gangsterism increased.
    4. Capital cities such as Warsaw, Prague, and Budapest concentrated wealth, power and opportunity.
    5. In addition, nationalism was reborn.
  - ii. The economic results were impressive: Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary all made great gains.
    1. As well, each made impressive gains in creating new civic institutions, such as legal systems and the presidency.

- iii. The three nations were accepted into NATO and the EEC.
- iv. Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria had a more difficult time in economic and political transition from communism to Western tradition.
- v. The tragic post-communist experience was in the old Yugoslavia.
  - 1. Yugoslavia was broken up at the fall of communism in 1989--three separatist republics began to fight it out.
  - 2. **Milosevic** led the Serbian Republic to grab territory, which caused Slovenia and Croatia to declare independence.
  - 3. Serbia retaliated with a war of aggression on Slovenia and Croatia, and then on Bosnia, which had been a part of Serbia.
- vi. Bosnia declared its independence, which led to a dirty war between Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians.
  - 1. Many became victims of murder, rape, destruction, and were herded into concentration camps.
  - 2. United States President Clinton used U.S. troops to impose peace, and an agreement was reached that divided Bosnia between Bosnian Serbs and Croats in 1995.
  - 3. In 1998 the Albanian Muslims of Kosovo fought for independence from Serbian repression, creating the **Kosovo Liberation Army**.
  - 4. Milosevic's Serbian army drove 780,000 Kosovars into exile.
  - 5. United States and NATO bombing raids led to the defeat of Milosevic and the Serbian government turned him over to the War Crimes Tribunal.
- d. Unity and identity in western Europe
  - i. The **Single European Act of 1986** gave a powerful second wind to western European unity.
    - 1. It set the ground rules for a single market, which was established in 1993--as the **European Union (EU)**.
    - 2. The **Maastricht Treaty of 1990** established the rules for a single currency.
    - 3. Single currency (monetary union) is seen as a step toward political unity to come.
    - 4. Some Europeans, opposed this monetary union--partly because of fears of a centralized bureaucracy and fears of cuts in social benefits, while unemployment remained high.
    - 5. Unpopular views of Maastricht in France led to defeat of the Socialist party--and struggles over cuts in social expenditures, like transportation service.
      - a. The unions and railroad workers protested and held a national strike that was supported by the public.
      - b. In response, the Socialists passed a new law to limit the workweek to 35 hours, in an attempt to reduce France's unemployment rate.
  - ii. The possible inclusion of eastern European states into the EU led some to question how effective a huge European state could be.
    - 1. German unification problems (particularly for women) led to increased unemployment and the defeat of **Kohl** in 1998.
      - a. Despite the West pumping money into East Germany, unemployment rates in the East stayed high.
      - b. Further, East German women felt pressured to stay at home, facing expensive child care, when before they had flexible hours and cheap child care.
    - 2. Although new members (Sweden, Finland, Austria) were brought into the EU,

a host of complex issues needed to be resolved before its expansion into eastern Europe.

4. New challenges in the twenty-first century

a. The prospect of population decline

- i. Europeans fear that decline in population is a "ticking time bomb" that will hurt the social welfare system and the economy.
  1. The fact of careers for women and the drive for gender equality is the decisive reason for the decline of the birth rate.
  2. It is not clear if Europeans will fail to reproduce themselves--as many women stop with a single child, or no children at all, after seeing the difficulties of raising children.

b. The growth of immigration

- i. In the 1990s a surge of migrants from Africa, Asia, and eastern Europe has led to a debate over the value of large-scale immigration.
- ii. Many of these new immigrants are political refugees escaping from conflicts in Afghanistan, Rwanda, and other problem areas.
- iii. Illegal immigrants are in search of jobs--some are young women who are forced into prostitution.
  1. Some Europeans, particularly rightist politicians, oppose immigrants, who are accused of taking jobs and undermining national unity.
  2. Others believe that Europe needs newcomers to limit population decline and provide technical skills.

c. Europe's role in the global era

- i. European intellectuals and opinion makers began to envision a new historic mission for Europe: the promotion of peace and human rights in the world.
  1. This rests on more global agreements and institutions to set moral standards and the regulation of society to conform to standards of "human rights."
  2. Some European states like the Netherlands have pushed for greater rights in the area of sexuality, smoking of pot, and euthanasia.
  3. Examples: A Belgian court sentenced four Rwandan Hutus to long prison terms for their roles in the genocidal massacres in Rwanda. Europe helped African governments secure drastic price cuts from the drug companies in order to combat AIDS.
  4. The United States, after George W. Bush was elected, reacted coolly to this idea.
  5. Some have criticized unrestrained capitalist globalization and seek greater social and economic equality
- ii. Terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, led to further Western struggle against oppression in the non-Western world.
  1. The September 11 terrorists used four hijacked American planes to attack the United States--killing thousands of people from many different countries.
  2. The U.S. and its allies launched a military campaign in Afghanistan against the Taliban, Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida terrorist network.
  3. Swift punishment of the terrorists brought about a new government and the liberation of Afghanistan.