THE ASCEND AND DESCEND OF COMMUNISM IN EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE: AN HISTORICAL-OPINIONATED ANALYSIS

Dr. Abdul Zahoor Khan, PhD
In-Charge, Department of History & Pakistan Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty Block#I, First Floor, New Campus, Sector#H-10, International Islamic University, Islamabad-Pakistan

Abstract

The year of 1989 marked a turning point in world history. During the last six months of that year, the world witnessed the collapse of communism in East-Central Europe. Two years later, communism was abolished in the Soviet Union, and that country began to fall apart. These changes were stunning and unprecedented in terms of their breadth, depth, and speed. In 1989, Hungary and Poland led the way, though cautiously. In February of that year, the Hungarian communist party leadership officially sanctioned the emergence of opposition parties the beginning of the end of the party's monopoly of power. In Poland a few months later, after a long series of roundtable negotiations between the communist party leadership and the opposition, the regime agreed to partially contested elections to the country's national legislature. Within the countries of East-Central Europe, the social, economic, and political changes were as fundamental as were those in France and Russia after their revolutions. In every country in the region the transition to Western style parliamentary democracy meant a fundamental restructuring of the political system, a proliferation of new interest groups and parties, and upheaval within the bureaucracy and administration. At the same time, all of these new regimes attempted an economic transition from centrally planned economies to market-oriented ones with increasing degrees of private ownership of property. Trying to accomplish both of these transitions simultaneously, from authoritarianism to pluralism and from plant to market, was a huge task, and the two occasionally pulled against each other.

Keywords: East-Central-Europe, Franklin-Roosevelt, Winston-Churchill, Joseph-Stalin, USA, Soviet-Union, Opinionated, Communism, Poland-Hungary-Yugoslavia-Czechoslovakia-Bulgaria-Romania, Rejoinder, Communist-Orthodoxy, Prague-Whorl

Introduction

In February 1945, Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin got together at the Soviet resort borough/metropolis of Yalta to plan the concluding stages of Second World War and to negotiate and settle the postwar categorization in Europe. The Anglo-Americans were not in a very strong bargaining position for the reason that they had liberated only France, whereas the Soviet army had pushed the Germans out of most of Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Romania and were only about 100 miles from Berlin (which they would take three months later). Among the provisions of the Yalta Agreements, as they came to be known, were the movement of Poland's borders some 100 miles westward (leaving parts of eastern Poland to the Soviet Union), the division of Germany into occupation zones (with the Soviets occupying the eastern part), and the agreement that the nations of Eastern Europe were to be democratic and "friendly" to the Soviet Union. In an earlier meeting between Churchill and Stalin in Moscow, the two had agreed that "Russia" would have predominant influence in Romania and Bulgaria and equal influence with the West in Yugoslavia and Hungary**.**

In later years Yalta became a symbol of betrayal for many of the people in Eastern Europe who felt that the Allies had left Stalin with a free hand in the region. Indeed, in the three years following the Yalta Conference, the Soviets systematically established Soviet-style communist regimes throughout the area. Given the circumstances of 1945, however, it was almost inevitable that the Soviet Union would come to dominate Eastern Europe. As a result of the postwar military operations the area was by then largely under Soviet military occupation, and, by the time of the Nazi surrender in May of 1945, it was almost completely so. (Although the Russians did not occupy parts of Yugoslavia and Albania, parts of Finland and Austria were.) During the war, Poland, Yugoslavia, and the Czech lands had been occupied by the Germans; and, in 1940 and 1941, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria had actually sided with the Germans by signing the Tripartite Pact (the wartime alliance of; Germany, Italy, and Japan). So just as the American, British, and French forces swept the Germans out of the western part of Europe and initiated Western-style democratic governments in those countries, the Soviets occupied Eastern Europe and established "peoples' democracies" that were "friendly" to the Soviet Union. Of course, from the Soviet point of view, and especially from Stalin's, *friendly* meant *socialist*-a capitalist state would by nature be hostile to the communism of the Soviet Union. For the Soviet Union, furthermore, the lands of Eastern Europe were much more important strategically than they were for the West: Most of these lands bordered on the Soviet Union; and the region had constituted the principal

route of invasion into Russia and the Soviet Union by countless armies, including those of Napoleon in 1812 and of the Germans in both world wars. Control over the area was of critical importance for the Soviet Union but was of marginal interest to the West. The major exception to this pattern was in Yugoslavia, where Joseph Broz Tito and the Yugoslav resistance managed to liberate the country from the Germans without substantial Soviet assistance. **[1]**

Historical Background

In the West at the time, and particularly in the United States, there was little inclination to challenge the Soviets on Eastern European Front. The United States had just finished a war, after all and the Soviet Union had been a collaborator in trounce of Nazi Germany. The United States was rapidly demobilizing its troops and bringing them home from Europe. Additionally, the Big Three's "Declaration on Liberated Europe" had provided that these states would have freely elected governments "responsive to the will of the people." In the United States, citizens and leaders alike felt that they had done their duty. The last wartime summit, at Potsdam in July 1945, provided that the Allies would take reparations only from their own zones of occupation. This hardened the division between East and West and facilitated the application of the Soviet economic agenda in Eastern Europe.

Politically, the Soviets were already in the process of extending their control into the region, using a procedure that the Hungarian communist party chief referred to as "salami tactics" one slice at a time. In the earliest stage, in 1945 and 1946, Soviet occupation authorities in each of the countries sponsored the formation of coalition governments that included both communist and noncommunist parties. In most cases, the first parliamentary elections were competitive and fair. In the 1945 elections in Hungary, for example, the prewar Smallholder's party won 57 percent of the votes and their leader became prime minister. In the same election, the Communist party won only 17 percent of the votes, though they did assume some key ministerial posts, such as Interior, which controlled the police and security apparatus. These early coalition governments pursued reformist policies that were generally welcomed by both the local populations and the Western governments: the purging of fascists and others who had collaborated with the Nazis; the implementation of social reforms, especially agricultural reforms that distributed the land more widely; the provision of political freedoms and freedom of expression (except criticism of the Soviet Union); and a foreign policy that was sympathetic to the Soviet Union and to the West.

During 1946 and 1947, however, these policies were modified and the coalition governments were restructured in favor of the communists. ; Newspapers and media outlets increasingly came under the control of the 'communists and censorship was imposed. Noncommunist political leaders were intimidated, blackmailed, or even assaulted. Party meetings that were critical of these actions or of the communists were broken up by the communist-dominated Interior Ministry police controlled. Ultimately, new parliamentary elections, characterized by intimidation of voters and candidates as well as outright fraud, led to new government configurations. In the Hungarian elections of 1947, the Smallholder's party this time won only 14 percent of the vote, compared to 22 percent for the Communist party. The leader of the Smallholders' party, French Nagy, fled the country. The next year, the small Communist party was merged with the Social Democratic party into the Hungarian Workers' party, which dominated the political system for the next thirty years. The pattern was similar throughout the region, with the "hodgepodge" of-left-wing parties into a renamed Communist party (e.g., the Workers' Party) occurring almost everywhere in 1948.

Although intimidation and force were used to consolidate communist power in Eastern Europe, it is important to recognize that there were also indigenous sources of support for the communists in most of these countries. There were many reasons for this. In Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria, for example, there had been strong communist parties even before the war. In some cases, the communists had played an important role in the wartime resistance movement to the Nazis and in the liberation of the country from German control. This contributed to popular support for the communists in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania. (The communists' role in the resistance also contributed to widespread support for the Communist party in France after the war.) Many people supported the political parties on the left because they welcomed their programs for change and social reforms that promised economic modernization and the end of the semi feudal prewar system. Memories of the economic depression in the interwar period had convinced many people that capitalism was in crisis, fostering receptiveness (especially among intellectuals) to other approaches, including the Soviet system. Finally, there were many people *who favored* an alliance with the Soviet Union, seeing this; the only realistic protection for small countries with a history of outside domination.

In the early postwar years, as we have seen, Western relations with the Soviet Union were reasonably friendly. Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin regardless of their different approaches in temperament and principles, were able to reach a broad consensus on the postwar order in Europe and worldwide with the founding of the United Nations. Within five years after

the end of the war, though, U.S.-Soviet relations were contemptuous, both sides were remilitarizing, and the world was in the throes of the Cold War. Many of the causes for this lay in Eastern Europe.

The Western Rejoinder and the Inception of the Cold War

The origin of the Cold War is one of the most studied and debated issues in U.S. history, and there is an enormous literature on U.S.-Soviet relations in the early postwar years.**[2]** Among Western historians, there are two major schools of thought on the origins of the Cold War. The *traditional* interpretation places the blame largely on Moscow, asserting that the Soviet Union was intent on expanding its influence and its ideology and that the United States had no alternative and surrogate but to resist and contain this expansionist tendency and predisposition. The *revisionist* school does not accept the contention that the Soviet Union alone caused the Cold War. Some revisionists argue that the United States overreacted to a minimal or dubious intimidation and terrorization from the Soviet Union. The more radical revisionists place the blame squarely on the United States, arguing that an expansionist Unit States was attempting to extend its influence worldwide, including into the Soviet sphere of influence. Some of the more recent literature combines elements of these two schools, producing *post revisionist* elucidation and illumination.

To some extent, the revitalization of U.S.-Soviet animosity and acrimony after the Second World War was inevitable and foreseeable. The two countries were ideological enemies from the time of the 1917 revolution that brought the communists to power in Russia. Mutual distrust and suspicion were reinforced by allied intervention in Russia in the early years of Bolshevik (communist) power, the U.S. refusal I to extend diplomatic recognition to the new regime (until 1933), and Soviet efforts to undermine worldwide capitalism through the Comintern (an international organization of communist parries founded by Moscow in 1919). Even apart from these differences, one would have expected tension between these two major powers as they were sucked into the power vacuum in Europe created by the Second World War.

Both powers were had intention on trying to avoid a reverberation of the war they had just fought, but they had dissimilar conceptions about the causes of World War II and the ways to prevent another. From the Soviet point of view, this had not been a world war at all, but the Great Patriotic War: a fight for survival against German aggression in which the Soviet Union lost twenty million lives. For the Soviet Union, the main task was to avoid future aggression from the Germans or from other "Western imperialists." This meant obtaining control over the Eastern European corridor through which the

Germans had passed twice in the last generation. Such control entailed the existence of friendly states in Eastern Europe, which to Stalin meant socialist. From the U.S. point of view and particularly from that of President Harry S. Truman, the conflict in Europe had come about because of pacification of Hitler's aggression, symbolized by the 1938 Munich Agreement, in which the Western Allies acceded to Hitler's demands for the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia. To avoid another war meant to avoid appeasement of aggression. When the Eastern European states began one by one to fall under the sway of the communists, Truman and the United States saw this as a form of Soviet aggression, not unlike that of Hitler in the 1930s.

As the lines between the two powers began to harden, both became more doctrinaire and less flexible. Visiting Fulton, Missouri, in March 1946, former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said that "an iron curtain has descended across the continent" of Europe. In 1947 an important article by George Kennan, a State Department official and Soviet specialist, argued that the Soviet Union was expansionist by both tradition and ideology, and that U.S. policy should therefore be a firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies. **[3]** President Truman adopted a similar point of view in his March 1947 appeal to Congress for money to support Greece and Turkey: "It must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure." This speech became known as the Truman Doctrine which, along with the "containment of communism," became the guiding doctrine of postwar U.S. foreign policy.**[4]** The doctrine was implemented with a series of policies and treaties that were meant to establish a bulwark against the further expansion of communism in Europe and elsewhere: the Marshall Plan, a commitment of $17 billion to promote European economic recovery from the war; the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which extended the U.S. military and nuclear umbrella over Western Europe; and the U.S. participation in the Korean War (1950-1953) to block the expansion of communism in Asia.

The U.S. view of expansionist communism, as expressed by Kennan and Truman, was matched by a similarly hostile view of the United States by Stalin, and his advisers and associates. At the founding meeting of the Cominform (an international organization to coordinate policies among the communist states) in 1947, Soviet politburo member Andrei *Zhdanov* argued that U.S. leaders mask their expansionist policy by factious *[sic]* considerations of defense against communism. America's aspirations to world supremacy, however, encountered an obstacle in the USSR and in the new democracies [i.e., Eastern Europe] which have escaped from the control of British and American imperialism. Zhdanov criticized both the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan as being parts of U.S. expansionist policy.**[5]** These policies, therefore, were matched by Soviet-sponsored

international organizations meant to protect their allies against Western expansionism: the Cominform; the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon, or CMEA); and later the Warsaw Pact the Soviet counterpart to NATO. The lines had hardened on both sides of the iron curtain

The Institutions of Communism

Over the next five years, from 1948 to 1953, the communist governments of the region proceeded to establish in their own countries the institutions and policies of Soviet-style communism. This was a time of very rapid change. The Eastern European states accomplished in five years what had taken perhaps twenty years to accomplish in the Soviet Union under Vladimir Lenin (1917-1923) and then Joseph Stalin (1920s through 1953). In part, this was possible because the Eastern Europeans had a ready-made model based on the Soviet experience, and they simply imitated the Soviet pattern in the economic, social, and political spheres.

The social policies of the new regimes had elements that were both benevolent and oppressive. Like most modernizing governments, and all socialist ones, the new governments (even in the coalition phase) seized most of the large landed estates and redistributed the property to ordinary peasants and farmers. In some areas, for example in the "Western Territories" of Poland, newly acquired from Germany, this involved *h*uge amount of land. The government's distribution of this property, of ten to refugees from farther east, understandably fostered considerable goodwill toward the regime. On the one hand, the new communist dominated governments also pursued socialist social policies that were often well received by the population: subsidized housing, health care education, and guaranteed employment. On the other hand, the restrictive apparatus of the Soviet state accompanied these generous policies as well: an increasingly powerful secret police; restrictions on independent organizations and media; and bowdlerization.

Economically, each of the Eastern European states pursued the twin policies of rapid industrialization and collectivization of agriculture (the linchpins of Stalin's first Five-Year Plan begun in 1928). As in the Soviet Union, emphasis was placed on heavy industry (metallurgy, machine tools, engineering, and petrochemicals) at the expense of light industry and consumer goods. The economy could be steered in this direction because of increasing state ownership of industry and because of state-controlled central economic planning. A state planning agency (modeled on the Soviet Gosplan) worked with the Council of Ministers and the various governmental ministries (e.g., Ministry of Heavy Industry, Ministry of Metallurgy) to set annual targets for growth of national income and gross output of industry, transportation,

construction, and agriculture as well as specific output goals for important producer and consumer goods. **[6]** Prices and wages were also fixed by government agencies. A central state bank controlled and distributed financial and investment resources. The state also regulated foreign trade through a Ministry of Foreign Trade.

Collectivization of agriculture also followed the Soviet pattern from the late 1920s and early 1930s, though the process was not nearly as brutal as in the Soviet Union. Two types of socialized farms were established: Collective farms were those in which the farmers pooled their land, livestock, and equipment and shared in both the work and the proceeds of the farm; state farms, however, were owned and operated by the government (through the Ministry of Agriculture), and the farmers were simply employees. Employees of state farms had more job and income security but were not usually allowed the small private plots for truck farming, as were the collective farmers.

During the 1950s, most farmland was brought into one of these two institutions. As in the Soviet Union a generation earlier, there was much resistance from private farmers, many of whom had only recently been given land as part of the early postwar reforms. The pressure to join the socialized farms was both physical and financial. In some countries more than in others, this pressure on farmers was more intense, and resistance often led to arrest or deportation. In other cases the pressure was subtler. Individual farmers suffered higher taxes and had more difficulty acquiring seed and equipment. Furthermore, employees of state farms were eligible for government-sponsored health care, vacations, and pensions. At any rate, by the early 1960s, most farmland was in the socialist sector. The only exceptions were in Poland (where the socialized sector never encompassed more than a quarter of the farmland) and Yugoslavia in both countries the private sector in agriculture became an important economic and political force in later years.

The political systems of Eastern Europe were also modeled closely or the Stalinist political structure; the institutions even adopted the Soviet) names in most cases. As in the Soviet Union, the Eastern Europeans adopted a parallel political structure of party and government. Therefore, mal-structures of government were constitutionally defined and, in theory at least, democratically elected by the population. In practice, in elections to state bodies there was only one candidate per seat, and voters simply voted for or against the single candidate? Moreover, candidates had to be cleared by party authorities at the appropriate level. At the national level, there was a national parliament elected by direct popular vote every four or five years. The parliament chose from among its members a Council of Ministers whose members also acted as the heads of the numerous government ministries (many of them economic). The chairman of the Council of Ministers, equivalent to a prime minister, acted as head of the

government. This pattern of organization was replicated at lower levels, down to the city or village, where city councils had chairpersons who had powers equivalent to a mayor.

This whole structure was paralleled by the communist party organization (though, as we have seen, it was often called a "Workers' party," as in the Polish United Workers' party). In each country, only about 10 percent of the adult population belonged to the party, which was considered the leading and guiding force in society. At the national level, party members elected a party congress every four or five years. Its power was largely symbolic in that it met for only a few days, but it did elect from its members a Central Committee (usually several hundred members), a Political Bureau (or politburo, ten to fifteen members), Secretariat, and a first secretary, who was the national party leader. After the early 1950s, at least, the first secretary in most countries was not really a dictator; he was the first among equals in a politburo that was the key decision-making institution in the political system.

The relationship between the party and the state was very close, extending even to common membership. The politburo, for example, included in its members the top figures in both the party and the state, typically including several party secretaries and the most important members of the (government's) Council of Ministers (e.g., the minister of Defer and the chairman of the State Planning Commission). Furthermore, noted above, party executive bodies at each level exercised some control! Over the appointment of key persons in the government. A list of those positions requiring such clearance was referred to as the nomenklatura, a term, which came to describe the political elite itself. Theoretically, though, the functions of party and state were to be separate: the party was to provide leadership and guidance (and make general policy decisions); the government was responsible for policy implementation, administration, and day-to-day decision-making.

The adoption in Eastern Europe of the institutions and policies of the Soviet Union created the Soviet bloc, as it was called in the West. Soviet hegemony (influence) over the region was reinforced by a common foreign policy of "socialist internationalism" and a series of international organizations that tied the region together and insured conformity. The first of these institutions was the Communist Information Bureau, or Cominform. At the founding session of the Cominform, in September 1947, the concept of separate national paths to socialism was condemned and the leaders of the people's democracies (as the Eastern European communist states were called) were told that their policies and political systems should conform to that of the Soviet Union. **[7]** Beginning in 1948, these principles became the basis for a series of purges of Eastern

"European communist leaders who were considered too nationalistic in their approach. In 1949, Moscow sponsored the creation of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, or Comecon, which was meant to coordinate trade among the European communist states and to tie them more closely together economically. And in 1955, as a response to the West German entrance into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (which had been founded in 1949), the Soviet Union and the people's democracies created their own military alliance, the Warsaw Treaty Organization (or the Warsaw Pact). With the establishment of these three organizations, Cominform, Comecon, and the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet Union and the Eastern European states became closely integrated politically, economically, and militarily, and they became increasingly cut off from the rest of Europe. Winston Churchill's statement about the "iron curtain" was even truer in 1955 than it was in 1946.

Socio-economic Changes in the Early Years of Communism

From the end of World War II through the 1960s, all of the Eastern European states experienced high degrees of economic growth and rapid social changes. Perhaps the biggest social change was a result of the rapid urbanization and industrialization of these countries and the consequent decline in the percentage of people living and working in the countryside. From 1950 to 1970, all except Albania were transformed from primarily rural, agricultural societies to industrial, urban ones. Urbanization continued during the 1970s and 1980s. This was also a period of very rapid and sustained economic growth throughout the region. The average annual rates of growth of the gross national product (GNP), the total value of goods and services produced in a country, was above 3 percent for most of the countries for most of the years up through the mid-1970s. Very few countries historically have experienced such rapid and long-term growth; it is even more unusual for a whole region. Even the per capita growth in the economy was remarkably high, particularly during the 1950s.

There has been much controversy in the West about the meaning of this' economic growth in Eastern Europe and about the reliability of the data used to calculate GNP growth rates. Many Western economists have pointed out that the economies of Western Europe have been much more successful and reached much higher levels of development than those in Eastern Europe. They also point to the relatively low standard of living of Eastern Europeans compared to Western Europeans and to the periodic shortages of consumer goods in the East. Such observations are largely correct, but they should be balanced with other considerations. *First,* by and large, the Eastern European countries were less developed in the first place than those in Western Europe; some might more accurately have been

grouped with Third World countries in terms of economic development. So these countries had farther to go. *Second*, the lower standard of living in Eastern Europe, in terms of income and consumption is balanced in part by higher indicators in other respects: lower (if truth be told, negligible) rates of unemployment; broader accessibility (and lesser cost) of health care (as measured by physicians and hospital beds per capita); a more egalitarian social and economic structure.

But even apart from these considerations, the Eastern European states held their own in economic development in comparison with other states. This was particularly the case during the 1950s and 1960s. A way of comparing Eastern European countries, by pairing them with countries at similar levels of economic development. As the actualities indicate, in the early postwar years (up to 1960), most of the Eastern European countries in point of fact gained on the market economies of the West. Seeing that the same is also evident from the universal truth already known to everybody, the pattern began to change in the 1960s and the Eastern European began to fall farther and farther in the rear. This was a key factor that led to the reforms in the 1980s and the revolutions in 1989.

Defy and Resist to Communist Orthodoxy

By 1948, as we have seen, people's democracies based on the Soviet model were established all over Eastern Europe. But even from the beginning, the communist bloc was not as monolithic as most Westerners perceived it. The first challenge to Soviet domination came from Yugoslavia. Along with Albania, Yugoslavia was exceptional in that the Soviet army had played only a minor role in liberating it from the Nazis at the end of World War II and had occupied only the northern part of the country. The main role in dislodging the Germans was played by the Partisans under the direction of the communist leader Joseph Broz Tito. Nevertheless, in the early postwar years Tito seemed to be the most slavishly Stalinist leader in Eastern Europe and Stalin's most reliable ally. Tito, more quickly than any other Eastern European leader, ensconced his communist party, purged the country of opposition leaders and parties, and embarked on the collectivization of agriculture and on rapid industrialization. Partly in recognition of Yugoslavia's model of progress, the Cominform's head-quarters was established in Belgrade in the fall of 1947.

Before 1947 there were already hints of friction between the strong willed leaders of the two countries. Stalin had not been pleased with, Yugoslav complaints about the behavior of Red Army troops Yugoslavia at the end of the war. Tito had refused the Kremlin's offer to establish a joint Soviet-Yugoslav bank. Stalin was also unhappy with Yugoslavia's support for the communists in Greece's civil war and with its efforts to win control over the border city of Trieste from Italy. Stalin feared these efforts would complicate

Soviet-Eastern European relations with the British and the Americans at a time of sensitive postwar negotiations.

The major issue at this point was Yugoslav autonomy and sovereignty in foreign affairs because domestically Yugoslavia was the most orthodox of Eastern European regimes in 1945-1947. Tito and the Yugoslav communists were; willing to follow the Soviet lead, but on their own terms. Stalin wanted unconditional subordination. This issue came to a head over Tito's efforts in 1947 and 1948 to establish a Balkan federation that would include Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, and Yugoslavia. Stalin rejected Tito's plan and instead proposed an alternative, which Tito then rejected. The issue was not so much over the federation itself, which both leaders favored in some form, but over Tito's right to pursue such regional initiatives without Soviet approval. This was the Kremlin's first confrontation with its dilemma of control versus diversity, and Stalin opted for the former Stalin was determined to teach Tito a lesson and to make of him an example for the rest of the bloc. In the first half of 1948, Soviet advisers were withdrawn from Yugoslavia, Tito was accused of heresy, and, finally, in June the Cominform expelled Yugoslavia from its ranks and removed its headquarters from Belgrade. With the implementation of a Soviet economic blockade on Yugoslavia, Stalin apparently felt that Tito was doomed: "All I need to do is shake my little finger and there will be no more Tito," he is quoted as saying. **[8]** Stalin was wrong. Tito had the support of a unified party and much of the population, which viewed him as a war hero. The economic blockade was blunted by aid from Western countries, which were happy to drive a wedge into the communist bloc. Even worse from the Soviet point of view, Tito and the Yugoslav communists proceeded to establish their own “separate road to socialism" in the domestic realm, based on extensive dell centralization, worker self-management of enterprises, and a mixed market economy. The early success of this experiment was a standing rebuke to the more authoritarian and centralized Soviet model, and it set a pattern of diversity that was to plague the Soviet leadership for the next forty, years.

Unable to humble Tito, Stalin turned his frustration on the countries that were under Soviet control with a series of anti-Titoism purges. Most of these were directed against "home" communists communist leaders who had remained in their own countries during World War II and who were therefore considered susceptible to "nationalist" predispositions and therefore to Titoism. Purge trials of prominent communist leaders took place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Albania. The most.-prominent of these trials were in Czechoslovakia; they culminated in 1952 with a spectacular trial of former party leader Rudolf Slansky and thirteen others who were charged with being "Trotskyite-Zionist-Titoist-bourgeois-nationalist traitors, spies, and saboteurs, enemies of the Czechoslovak nation, of its People's Democratic

order, and of Socialism."**[9]** All fourteen were found guilty and eleven were hanged.

The Polish Challenge and the Hungarian Revolution

Tension between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia eased somewhat after the death of Stalin in March 1953, and even more so after the new Soviet party leader, Nikita Khrushchev, began the process of "desalinization" of the Soviet Union. At the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist party in February 1956, Khrushchev criticized Stalin and acknowledged that the paths to socialism may differ. But even earlier, in May 1955, Khrushchev had visited Yugoslavia and signed a communiqué with Tito recognizing the right of "national roads to socialism." In April 1956, the Cominform was dissolved. Two months later, Tito visited Moscow and signed a joint declaration reemphasizing the separate roads principle and reestablishing formal state and party relations between Moscow and Belgrade. Khrushchev was experimenting with diversity in the bloc, but the consequences were unexpectedly troublesome. The death of Stalin and Khrushchev's desalinization unleashed wellsprings of frustration and tension throughout Eastern Europe. In every country except Yugoslavia, the party leaders in 1956 were the same people that had come to power in the wake of the anti-Titoism campaigns. All these "little Stalin's" therefore were sensitive to the criticisms that Khrushchev leveled against Stalin and Stalinism. They were also made vulnerable by the Soviet reconciliation with Tito, who also continued to criticize Stalinist methods. The apparent liberalization in the Soviet Union had resonance in the populations of Eastern Europe as well, as people saw an opportunity to voice grievances long suppressed and repressed.

The first manifestation of unrest broke out in the western Polish city of Poznan in June 1956, just one week after Tito's visit to Moscow. The Poznan demonstrations against food shortages and poor economic conditions became a riot that was brutally put down by Internal Security forces. The demonstrations spread to other cities, however, and led to demands for political reforms as well. The Stalinist party leader, Boleshiw Beirut, had died while attending the Twentieth Party Congress in Moscow, and his successor, Edward Ochab, expressed sympathy for some of the demonstrations and political demands. I finally agreed to step aside in favor of Wladyslaw Gomulka, the "home" communist party leader who had been purged for his Titoist tendencies in 1948. Khrushchev and other members of the Soviet politburo flew to Warsaw in October and were assured by Gomulka that Poland would remain communist and within the Soviet alliance. Gomulka assumed the party leadership, promising Poles the creation of a more "Polish" form of communism; he eased pressure on the

Roman Catholic Church, abandoned the collectivization of agriculture, and dismissed the Soviet general who was Poland's defense minister.

Hungary had also undergone some liberalization since 1953, and in July 1956 the Stalinist party leader Matyas Rakosi was replaced as party leader. Until the fall, the changes and reform efforts were largely confined to the political elite in Hungary. With the October events in Poland, however, the impetus shifted to the population, and particularly to students who saw the Polish events as the abdication of Soviet domination of the region. Demonstrations at the end of October demanded the return to power of the "Hungarian Gomulka," the moderate communist and former premier Immure Nagy. Young people also toppled the huge statue of Stalin in the center of Budapest, the Hungarian capital. As with Poland, members of the Soviet politburo flew to the Hungarian capital to supervise the transfer of power to Nagy, as prime minister, and Janos khaddar, as party leader. Unlike Gomulka, however, Nagy was unable or unwilling to restrain the Hungarian revolution, which continues to spread. Some of the old noncommunist political parties reemerged, and their leaders were brought into Nagy's cabinet. Nagy began to negotiate for Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and, on November 1, proclaimed Hungary's neutrality. These events were beyond the limits of the permissible for the Kremlin, which ordered a military intervention to crush the rebellion. Janos Khaddar was put in charge of restoring the communist order; Nagy, who had sought temporary shelter in the Yugoslav embassy, was finally arrested, tried, and executed in 1958.

The crushing of the Hungarian revolution demonstrated that the Kremlin would not accept the Yugoslav model elsewhere in the bloc and marked a return to the pattern of conformity and control. It also set, implicitly at least, the limits to reform in Eastern Europe: maintenance of the leading role of the communist party; continued membership in the Warsaw Pact; and the maintenance of a dichotomous image of the world through the mirror of socialist internationalism. For the rest of the world, the Hungarian tragedy also confirmed that Eastern Europe was a Soviet sphere of influence. This had been challenged by the United States when Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had pledged earlier to roll back communism from Eastern Europe. **[10]** In the context of the 1950s, this was an idealistic approach in foreign policy, but in the end realism dominated. There was little the United States could do to help the Hungarian freedom fighters on the Soviet doorstep in 1956, and the U.S. pledge was revealed as a hollow one. The United Nations was also powerless in this case, both because of the absorption of the UN Security Council with the Suez Crises (Israel was attacking Egypt at the same time Soviet troops were invading Hungary) and because of the Soviet ability to

veto any action by the Security Council. Nevertheless the revolt in Hungary also demonstrated how deep the disaffection with communism among many Eastern Europeans was and illustrated the limited success of the Soviets in grafting the Soviet system onto Eastern Europe.

In the early 1960s, there were other signs of fragmentation of the Soviet block. Khrushchev's criticisms of Stalin and his rapprochement with Yugoslavia disturbed the more dogmatic communist leaders in the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Albania. Ideological, territorial, and political disputes between the Soviet Union and Mao Zedong's China became increasingly bitter and open until relations ruptured altogether and the Soviets withdrew their economic and military advisers from China. At about the same time, Khrushchev severed state relations with Albania, which then became the ally and client of the PRC. Meanwhile the Romanian party leadership broke with Moscow over a Soviet plan to more closely integrate the economies of Comecon. Although Romania remained orthodox in terms of its domestic political structure, its foreign policy during the 1960s became increasingly independent of Moscow Romania reduced its commitment to the Warsaw Pact, refused to allow Warsaw Pact maneuvers on its territory, and adopted a neutral stance the Sino-Soviet conflict (the conflict between communist China and Soviet Union). Writing in 1965, a prominent academic specialist Eastern Europe referred to all of this as "the breakup of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe."**[11]**

The Prague Whorl

The next most important and major challenge to communist rule and Soviet hegemony came from Czechoslovakia. This country, which had been the most economically advanced in Eastern Europe before World War II, had suffered more than any other from the wrenching economic reorientation under the communists. A steady and sturdy economic decline after 1963 made the party leadership more receptive to economists' demands for reforms, and a decentralizing market-oriented economic reform program was implemented in January 1967. The changes in the economic sphere, however only stimulated demands for political liberalization and for freedom of expression and debate. The accelerating demands for change led the party to replace the conservative party leader, Antonio Novotny with the more liberal Slovak Alexander Dubcek. This leadership change, much like the accession of Nagy in Hungary in 1956, sparked popular expectations for even more substantial changes. Dubcek spoke about the creation of" socialisms with a human face," and during the spring of 1968, Czechoslovakia was awash with change, inside and outside the party. The party's April Action Program attacked the concentration of party power and proposed freedom of press, assembly, and travel. In June,

advanced censorship of the media was abolished. The party relaxed its control over writers and over trade unions, and other organizations.

As the Prague Spring progressed, the leadership in the Kremlin and also in Czechoslovakia's northern neighbors, Poland and the Germany Democratic Republic (GDR, or East Germany) became increasingly alarmed with the pace of change and with the possibility of transnational infection. A July meeting of the Warsaw Pact members warned that Czechoslovakia's affairs were not purely internal, and the members demanded that Czechoslovakia reimpose censorship and curb the changes Later that month, virtually the entire Soviet politburo came to Czechoslovakia to counsel and warn. When the Czechoslovak leadership rejected the advice, the Soviet Union led an "allied socialist" invasion of Czechoslovakia, and 750,000 troops from the Warsaw Pact crossed into the country on the night of August 20-21. Dubcek and the reformers had pushed liberalism and nationalism too far. Dubcek was retired from the party and replaced by Gustav Husak, who began a process of "normalization" of Czechoslovakia. The Prague Spring was over.

Poland's Comradeship and Shared Aims

A month after the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Communist party daily *Pravda* elliptically justified the invasion by invoking a principle dubbed in the West as the Brezhnev Doctrine, named after party leader Leonid Brezhnev. *Pravda* reaffirmed the principle of many roads to socialism but insisted that no action in any socialist country should do harm either to socialism" in the country involved "or to the fundamental interests of other socialist countries. This means that each communist party is responsible not only to its own people but also to all the socialist countries and to the entire communist movement."**[12]** In effect Kremlin was claiming the right to intervene in any country in the block to prevent counterrevolution or the deterioration of communist Party Control. Thus, the Brezhnev Doctrine is also sometimes referred to as the doctrine of limited sovereignty": The sovereignty of the East European states was limited by their obligations to others in the socialist camp. Brezhnev Set of guidelines cast a pall over there in Eastern Europe for the next decade, but it did not deter the Poles from periodic bouts of strikes and unrest. Indeed, Poland had a tradition of revolt, often against the Russians, that dated back to the eighteenth-century era of the Partitions when the Polish state was gobbled up by its three powerful neighbors, Russia, Prussia and Austria. This tradition continued even after the consolidation of communist power. In 1956, as we have seen above, demonstrations and riots affected the transfer of party leadership to Wladyslaw Gomulka. In 1968, students and professors staged huge demonstrations following the regime’s closing of a performance of a nineteenth-century play that contained the line:

"The only things Moscow sends us are jackasses, idiots and spies."**[13]** One of the slogans during the student demonstrations was the rhyming "Polska czeka na swego Dubczeka" Poland is waiting for its own Dubcek.

The 1968 demonstrations were met with harsh reprisals and purges of students and professors, especially those of Jewish origin. In 1970, the initiative returned to the workers, this time in the port cities of Gdansk and Szczecin who mounted demonstrations against a Christmastime increase in food prices. Gomulka fell from power the same way he had raised, on the basis of popular unrest, and Edward Gierek replaced him as party leader. Gierek rescinded the price increases, but when the regime tried to raise them again in 1976 they were met by another round of strikes and demonstrations. The 1976 strikes and the subsequent crackdown by the authorities, brought workers and intellectuals into an alliance for the first time with the formation by the latter of KOR(*Komitet Obrony Robotników*), the Workers' Defense Committee. In 1978, a small group of workers in the shipyards along the coast illegally formed a Committee of Free Trade Unions for the Baltic Coast. One of the founding members was a shipyard electrician named Lech Walesa. In October of the same year, Karol Wojtyla of Krakow was elected pope of the Roman Catholic Church, taking the name John Paul II. On his triumphal visit to Poland the next year, he was welcomed by millions of Poles and gave them a sense of both hope and power. As a result, the stage was set for an even more powerful challenge to the regime. The spark came in July 1980 with yet another effort by the regime to raise retail food prices (which by this time were considerably below the cost of producing the product, requiring huge government subsidies). Strikes spread throughout the country, eventually centering on the coast again. By mid-August, 16,000 workers were on strike at the huge Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk. Lech Walesa assumed the leadership of that strike committee and then of the Interfactory Strike Committee (*Międzyzakładowy Komitet Strajkowy,* MKS), which represented and coordinated the strike activity at over two hundred enterprises.

When a politburo delegation from Warsaw arrived to negotiate, the MKS (*Międzyzakładowy Komitet Strajkowy*) presented them with a list of twenty-one demands, the first of which was "acceptance of Free Trade Unions independent of both the Party and the employers." After two weeks of negotiations inside the Lenin Shipyards, the government finally agreed to virtually all of the demands. Thus the government sanctioned the creation of the first independent trade union in the communist world, which the workers named Solidarity.

Over the next sixteen months, some twelve million people (out of a total work force of sixteen million) joined Solidarity or its rural affiliate. With this practically universal support, the organization became more and more

powerful and increasingly challenged the political prerogatives of the party. At the same time, the party (the Polish United Workers' party) grew weaker and more indecisive as hundreds of thousands of members resigned, and another million joined Solidarity as well. **[14]** The weakening of the Polish party raised hackles in the Kremlin. Several times in 1980 and 1981, the Soviets staged threatening military maneuvers along the Polish borders. After the September 1981 Congress of Solidarity, the Kremlin described the session as an "anti-socialist and anti-Soviet orgy." In an ominous hint of things to come, in October General Wojciech Jaruzelski, who was already prime minister and defense minister, replaced the Polish party leader, Stanislaw Kania. Finally, under pressure from the Kremlin, on December 13 Jaruzelski declared martial law, arrested the Solidarity leadership, and banned the union.

Structure's Accomplishment and Putrefaction

Though the Brezhnev Doctrine was not explicitly invoked in the Polish case, the crushing of Solidarity was a reaffirmation of the unwillingness of the Soviet leadership to tolerate the erosion of communist authority in Eastern Europe. But in Poland the results were different from those in Hungary or Czechoslovakia. In the first place, the Soviet army had *not* intervened directly, apparently fearing massive national resistance to the use of Soviet troops. Second, the martial law abolition of Solidarity was not entirely effective. The union was reconstituted as an underground organization and continued its activities in organizing strikes and demonstrations, publishing newsletters, and promoting independent initiatives in all spheres of society. What was most important, however, was the simple legacy of; Solidarity. Adam Michnik, a founding member of KOR and Solidarity: adviser characterized it as follows:

In 1980 the totalitarian state gave in and signed an agreement, which allowed for the existence of the first legal and independent institutions of postwar Polish political life. They lasted but a short time; long enough, however, to convince everyone that after December 1981 it was not possible to speak again about "socialism with a human face." What remains is communism with its teeth knocked out. **[15]**

Western economists have found it difficult to estimate economic growth in the communist countries, complaining of unreliable data and varying degrees of exaggeration by the state agencies that collect such data. Nevertheless, by most measures, the centrally planned economies of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union delivered hefty overall growth rates through the 1950s and most of the 1960s. Eastern Europe did not fare badly in a comparison of growth rates and standards of living with other countries in Europe, especially southern Europe. However, by the late 1960s and early

1970s, Eastern European growth rates began to decline, and their economies fell further and further behind the market economies of the West. The change became particularly evident in the 1970s.

There are numerous reasons for these reversals. The international environment and economic policies pursued in the 1950s were no longer viable or possible by the 1970s. The economist Paul Marer describes the 1950s in the following way: "The authorities mobilized unemployed and underemployed labor and other resources, increased investment in human and physical capital at a rapid pace, and got the resources needed to finance these activities by imposing a high rate of forced saving on the population and by neglecting infrastructure [i.e., transportation and communications, like roads and telephone systems]."**[16]** Resources were directed toward areas like heavy industry (steel, coal, machine building, and so on) that were not highly developed before the war, so the *percentage* growth rates were very large. The regimes also spent much more on investment in such industries than in the production or import of consumer goods.

By the 1960s, this policy of "forced industrialization" became increasingly difficult. The cheap resources, both human and physical, had been largely depleted by then; it became harder, for example, to move people from the countryside into the cities once collectivization was completed and the cities were becoming overcrowded. Furthermore, the Eastern European populations became increasingly dissatisfied with the political and social restrictions associated with forced industrialization and with the scarcity and poor quality of consumer goods.

During the 1960s and 1970s, these problems were held at bay by several different circumstances. First, most of the Eastern European countries did attempt some kind of decentralizing economic reforms, following the lead of the Kremlin's experimentation with its own "Liberman". Reforms (named after the Soviet economist who first proposed them). Most of these reforms had some success in the short run. Second, the domestic economic problems of the Eastern European states were partially offset by increasing trade with the Soviet Union, which allowed them to import relatively cheap energy and raw materials from the Soviet Union and to sell to that country their own relatively low-quality manufactured goods, which were often not competitive in Western markets. Finally, during the 1970s Eastern Europe experienced a new source of growth through increased trade with the West, often financed by generous Western credit. **[17]**

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, all of these safety valves began to close up. The economic reform programs encountered resistance from bureaucrats and managers and were often ineffectual without a more thorough overhaul of the political and economic systems which, as evidenced in Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Poland in 1980,

was not possible. The favorable terms of trade with the Soviet Union began to reverse in the late 1970s. As the Soviet Union experienced its own economic problems, the Kremlin became increasingly reluctant to subsidize the Eastern European economies; Soviet energy prices rose toward world market levels, and Moscow increasingly insisted on payment in convertible (Western) currencies. **[18]** Furthermore, *world* market prices for oil jumped dramatically after the 1973 Middle East conflict, impeding economic growth in West and East alike. Finally, during the 1980s, Western credit began to dry up as it became clear that the Eastern European governments were not able to repay the large amounts they had borrowed in the 1970s.

The Erosion of Political Authenticity

Thus by the 1980s, the cost-cutting measures of the entire of the Eastern European states not excluding Soviet Union were in serious trouble. GNP growth rates had declined to near zero. External debts were so large that the governments often had to spend all of their export earnings just to finance the debts. With the collapse of foreign credits, highly valued Western consumer goods could no longer be imported. The centrally planned economies, which were well equipped to generate rapid growth in heavy industry, were not able to generate growth in more sophisticated sectors of the economy: services, consumer goods, and high technology. To complicate matters, consumers had come to *expect* high levels of growth and were ill prepared to endure the sacrifices associated with meaningful economic reforms.

All governments, democratic or authoritarian, employ some means to establish their legitimacy in the eyes of the population, and they reinforce this legitimacy through the political socialization process (civic education in schools, and so on). No regime can be based entirely on the threat or application of force. In the communist party states of Eastern Europe, political legitimacy was built on three main pillars: the communist ideology! Widespread (if largely formal) participation and socioeconomic performance. In the early postwar years, all three of these were at work, though they did not nil work with all sectors of the population. As indicated above, there was considerable support for the ideas of communism (or at least, of socialism) throughout the region, and particularly in certain] countries (like Bulgaria). The new communist governments were also able! to gain some credibility by involving people in the political process through voting (usually with a 98+ percent turnout), through service in local elected bodies, and through participation in socioeconomic organizations, such as youth groups and trade unions. All of this participation was controlled and regulated by the communist parties

but, nevertheless, gave many people a feeling that they had a stake and a voice in the system. Finally, the early socioeconomic successes of the Eastern European regimes also contributed to their political legitimacy. As we have seen, these countries experienced rapid economic growth in the 1950s and some! Improvement in the standard of living, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. The governments were able to deliver jobs, health care, and education to the entire populations of their countries. Furthermore, there were very high rates of social mobility within each country, meaning that many people were able to move up the social or economic scale. All of this created a| sense of progress and development.

One by one, however, these sources of political legitimacy began to wither away. Most people became inured to the omnipresent political slogans and increasingly disgusted with communist political systems and societies that did not live up to the ideals of Karl Marx, or even of Lenin. Critics, such as Yugoslavia's Milovan Djilas, saw in the communist party Apparatus a kind of "new class" that simply replaced the dominant classes from the pre-communist period. **[19]** The widespread participation that had been encouraged by the new regimes now came to be seen as both hollow and coerced. More and more people began to turn away from politics altogether. (In the Soviet city of Rostov-on-Don in 1978, I once asked a Soviet friend, a young mother, what she thought of Leonid Brezhnev, the party leader at the time, whose image was displayed on a huge billboard where we were walking. "I don't think anything about him," she replied.)

Increasingly the political legitimacy of the regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union came to rest on their socioeconomic accomplishments. Some scholars, both in the West and in Eastern Europe, argued that there existed a kind of "social contract" or "social compact" between the governments and the populace, in which the former delivered economic goods and growth and, in return, the population tacitly agreed to leave politics to the politicians. **[20]** But as the economies began to deteriorate and the opportunities for social advancement began to narrow, even this source of legitimacy disappeared. In capitalist democracies of the West, the government is not always held responsible for economic slowdowns, which are often seen as an inevitable consequence of the market. In state socialist societies, however, because the government controls the economy, the government gets the blame when the economy falters. Public opinion polls from the region in the 1980s show increased popular disaffection with the economies, the governments, and the ideologies. An analysis of such surveys in Poland, for example, concluded that only about a quarter of the population could be counted as "pro" regime. **[21]**

After Soviet intervention to terminate the Prague Spring in 1968 and: the crushing of Poland's Solidarity in 1981, the fragile political legitimacy of the communist regimes crumbled even further. As their governments' relationships

to Moscow was increasingly seen by the populations as a liability, some of the party leaders in Eastern Europe replaced the emphasis on "socialist internationalism" with an appeal to "socialist patriotism." It was hoped this would win some popular support by stressing national interests and national autonomy. The Polish party leader Jaruzelski, for example, used this tactic after the crushing of Solidarity. A 1976 Berlin conference of communist parties implicitly sanctioned this approach by allowing for "indigenous, creative interpretations" of Marxism-Leninism.

In the past, when the Eastern European communist parties experienced a serious loss of legitimacy, they could count on the Soviet Union for outside support, providing another, external source of legitimacy. But with the accession of Mikhail Gorbachev to the Soviet leadership in 1985, even this external legitimation began to dry up. As the Gorbachev leadership began to reform the Soviet system, it called on the Eastern European party leaders to do the same in their countries. Additionally, Gorbachev made it increasingly clear that the Soviet Union would no longer use the military to intervene in Eastern Europe (or elsewhere). With the Eastern European communist leaderships no longer able to play the Kremlin card, the communist party states were doomed.

The Inflammation of Dissent

In the 1980s, mass protests shook the regimes of Eastern Europe. The roots of protest and dissent, however, went back a decade or more in most of the region. As the economies and the regimes began to weaken in the 1970s, these dissident groups became more active, more visible, and more popular. In the Soviet Union, dissidence had been crushed under Lenin and Stalin and had reappeared only briefly and weakly under Khrushchev. The revival of political dissent in the 1970s was due in large part to the Soviet signature of the Helsinki Agreements in 1975. These credentials (sometimes referred to as the Helsinki Accords), a result of a long process of negotiations among thirty-five states in Europe, plus the United States and Canada, contained a whole section on "respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought conscience, religion or belief."**[22]** The Soviet signature of these agreements stimulated a group of dissident intellectuals in the Soviet Union to form a Helsinki Monitoring Committee to publicize (in underground publications called samizdat,) Soviet violations of the human rights they had guaranteed in Helsinki. Most of these activists (including the physicist Andrei Sakharov) were arrested or exiled, but they laid the groundwork for more substantial dissent in the 1980s.

In Eastern Europe, dissent was always stronger and more sustained than in the Soviet Union, for a number of reasons: the shorter time period

under Stalinism; the greater experience with democracy before World War II and the less draconian political regimes. **[23]** Nevertheless, political dissent was largely confined to a relatively small group of intellectuals in each country, only rarely taking the form of workers' protests or strikes. As in the Soviet Union, the dissident movement was given a boost by the 1975 Helsinki Accords, which led to the formation of various kinds of human rights monitoring groups in Eastern Europe as well. The largest dissident movement developed in Poland, especially after; the formation of KOR, the Workers' Defense Committee, established by intellectuals to provide legal and material assistance to the families of workers imprisoned after the 1976 strikes. The success of KOR led the organization to expand its mission and to change its name the next year to KOR-KSS (the Committee for Social Self-Defense). The next several years saw the formation of the Movement for the Defense of Human and Civil Rights (ROPCiO in the Polish acronym), a Polish chapter of Amnesty International, the nationalist Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN), and incipient Free Trade Union movement. All of these organizations produced their own samizdat publications, which frequently reported cases of political arrests and the regime's violations of the country's constitution or international covenants on human rights. In the mid-1980s, there were over 2,000 regular samizdat publications in Poland, some printed in tens of thousands of copies.

In Czechoslovakia, a group of intellectuals circulated a document entitled Charter 77, which called on people to speak out on behalf of human rights guaranteed by Czechoslovak laws and the Helsinki Accords. The playwright Vaclav Havel became the spokesman for the signatories of the charter, who later became the core of the Civic Forum that brought down the communist government in 1989. Elsewhere in Eastern Europe, dissident organizations were not as well organized, but there were often alternative channels for expression of dissent, either through samizdat (as in Hungary) or through the churches. In East Germany, for example, the Evangelical church served as an umbrella for the unofficial peace movement, which also harbored dissidents in the democratic and ecological movements. According to political scientist Robert Sharlet, who has written frequently about the dissident movements in Eastern Europe, political dissent served three key functions. First, dissidents who spoke out, especially through samizdat, helped break "the bonds of fear that immobilize the individual" and therefore served as role models for others. Second, the samizdat network broke the regime's monopoly on information, establishing an "alternative, unofficial communication system." Finally, political dissent in the controlled political environments of Eastern Europe led to the "gradual reprivatization of social life," carving out a growing sphere of activity independent of state control.

This is part of the notion of a "civil society," which became an important concept in challenging the state. **[24]**

The Thoughts of Municipal Society and Central Europe

One cannot overemphasize the power of ideas, particularly in Central Europe. Marx argued that ideas are simply part of the "superstructure" of society and therefore have no independent determining force; they are simply functions of the underlying economic "substructure." It is perhaps ironic, then, that in the Marxist societies of Eastern Europe, powerful ideas helped to undermine and subvert the system. Often these ideas were developed and discussed by a relatively small number of intellectuals; nevertheless, these concepts subsequently became part of the culture of change. The most important concepts concerned civil society and Central Europe, and the two are related. **[25]**

Different groups and intellectuals used the notion of a civil society in different ways, but the basic notion is that people can and should try to live as much as possible *outside* of the official structures and patterns sponsored by the communist authorities. This could take the form, for example, of producing and reading samizdat, buying or trading goods in the second economy (the black market or the private market), participating in informal self-educational groups (such as the Flying University set up in Poland in the 1970s), and supporting those few organizations, like some churches, that were not controlled by the political authorities. In pursuing these kinds of independent activities, the population would help to create an "alternative society" or a "second society" that was beyond the reach of the authorities. As this civil society grew, the power of the state would weaken. Eventually, the official structures would simply disappear and be replaced by the civil society.

The advocates of civil society generally called for people not to participate in the official political system and even to ignore it. This idea was developed by Czechoslovakia's Vaclav Havel in his important 1979 essay, "The Power of the Powerless", which was later published as a book.**[26]** Havel contends that the totalitarian political system is built on lies and that people allow the system to exist by accepting the lies and living within them. So the only appropriate response is for the individual to reject the lies: "He rejects the ritual and breaks the rules of the game. He discovers once more his suppressed identity and dignity. He gives his freedom a tangible and concrete significant worth. The chronological order tells that his revolt is an attempt to *live within the truth."**[27]*** This entails not just speaking the truth and rejecting the official lies (including the ideology), but living independently of official structures and norms and participating in parallel structures constituted independently of the official ones. The

more people who do this, the greater the erosion of state power. Along the same lines, the Polish dissident Adam Michnik called for a strategy of "social self-organization" or "social self-defense."**[28]** Michnik was one of the founders of KOR that pursued precisely this goal. The Czechoslovak Vaclav Benda used similar arguments in his 1978 essay en titled "The Parallel Polls." The Hungarian philosopher Gyorgy Konrad goes even further in his book *Antipolitics,* arguing that all power is antihuman, and therefore so is all politics. **[29]** Not all of these writers explicitly used the term *civil society*, but all of them had the same concept in mind. Discussions of these ideas were circulated widely through samizdat, both within and among countries. There was considerable cross-fertilization of ideas among the writers in the different countries. And the appeals struck a chord with the people, who were already feeling resentful, frustrated, and apathetic.

Many of the intellectuals who developed the concept of civil society linked it to the notion of "Central Europe," contending, as Gyorgy Konrad did, that "the demand for self-government is the organizing force of the new Central European ideology." **[30]** Konrad, Havel, and others began to employ the term *Central Europe* following the publication in 1983 of an important essay by the Czechoslovak writer Milan Kundera entitled "The Tragedy of Central Europe."**[31]** In this essay, Kundera argued that culturally and spiritually, the peoples in East-Central Europe more properly belonged to the West than to the East and that it was only because the region was "kidnapped, displaced and brainwashed" after World War II that it was consigned to "East Europe." Historically, he argued, Europe was always divided into two halves, one tied to Rome and the Catholic Church and the other to Byzantium and the Orthodox Church. "After 1945," he wrote, "the border between the two Europe’s shifted several hundred kilometers to the west, and several nations that had always considered themselves to be Western woke up to discover that they were now in the East."

Kundera's argument, like those for civil society, had widespread appeal in the region. It relegated politics to the sidelines and elevated the importance of culture in Central Europe's identity. As such, it suggested that the peoples of the region could find identity, affirmation, and autonomy in culture and could do so without bowing to politics. It was another means of "living the truth." Furthermore, in Kundera's argument at least, the peoples of Central Europe were not to blame for their fate; it was the fault both of Russia, a non-European state that "kidnapped" the region, and of the West for forsaking Central Europe (reverberations of Yalta) and do not taking into account its own cultural identity.

Conclusion

This research paper however investigates that the conception and perception of East-Central Europe provided both optimism and self-esteem to scores of people in the region and constituted yet another node in the network of challenges to the communist system. There was, nonetheless, a darker underside to the ideas and the history of Central Europe. The cultural legacy that, the writers and artists of prewar Central Europe, did help to shape the national and cultural identity of those states. But nationalism is two-edged: It can be a positive force for unity and common purpose; but it can also be intolerant and exclusivist. There are hints of this in Kundera's essay, which is anti-Soviet but also anti-Russian. Similarly, the cultural and political history of Central Europe may be rich and cosmopolitan, but it is also full of radical nationalism (i.e., Nazism), anti-Semitism (hostility toward Jews), and racism. So a revival of a Central European culture has the potential both to unite Eastern Europe with Western Europe and to divide Eastern Europeans from each other.

The research also sees the sights that the effects of the anticommunist revolution were felt not just in the United States. Europe was being reshaped as thoroughly as it had been after W W-2, and perhaps as dramatically as after WW-I in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Austrian, German, Russian, and Ottoman empires. The collapse of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO), the Eastern European Military Alliance (otherwise known as the Warsaw Pact), called into question the character and rationale of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Western alliance. The unification of Germany fashioned a hefty new-fangled European supremacy that could dominate Europe economically, politically, and perhaps even militarily. The new democratic states in East-Central Europe aspired to association in the European Community (EC) at the same time that the EC was moving en route for closer internal integration. New monetary and political alliances formed surrounded by the East-Central European states and stuck between them and the Western European ones. Europe became fluid.

It is also part of the culminating point of this research that how rapidly communism was established and time-honored in Eastern Europe and how quickly it began to erode and corrode. Joseph Stalin on one occasion admitted that "communism fits Poland like a saddle fits a cow and this was true in varying degrees all over Eastern Europe. It is fruitless, however, to assign blame for this state of affairs, as is done both by Western historian of the Cold War and by Eastern European intellectuals. The actuality was that the Soviet Union was in control of Eastern Europe as a result of WW-2 military operations and was bound to establish Soviet-style governments in that area. After the war, Western Europe was prostrate and unable to help Eastern Europe. The

United States was absorbed enough with the rebuilding of Western Europe and was unwilling to confront the Soviet Union in its own sphere of influence and sway, particularly if there was a risk of a major war over the issue. The only Eastern European countries those were able to distance themselves from the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Albania, had not been "liberated" by Soviet forces during the war, did not share borders with the USSR, and were outside of that country's area of central strategic concern.

Nevertheless, at any rate, Eastern European World solved the problem on its own and with almost no violent behavior bloodshed. It has no doubt been a vivid and incontrovertible truth that the Cold War that ultimately triggered the then USSR towards its disintegration began in Eastern Europe, and it ended there. An individual undoubtedly could have words that the West stood triumphant and victorious in the Cold War devoid of resorting to a hot war, simply by waiting for the inevitable. It was very unambiguous by the late 1940s, with the Tito-Stalin rupture, that the imposition of Soviet-style communism in Eastern Europe was not going to be an unproblematic. Despite the strict political controls, censorship of the media, intense political socialization, and restrictions on contacts with the West, Eastern and Central Europe on no account looked like the Soviet Union, at the same time any visitor to the two planets could attest this fact. The intermittent and sporadic turbulence in the region, often having a drastic need of Soviet intervention, demonstrated how thin the veneer of the legitimacy of the communist party regimes was.

References:

The Yalta Agreements and the Balkan percentages agreement (which was recounted in Churchill's memories) appear in Gale Stokes Ed; From Stalinism to Pluralism: A Documentary History of Eastern Europe since 1945(N.Y: Oxford University press 1991) PP.13-45.

Thomas G.Paterson, Ed; The Origins of the Cold war, 2nd ed. (Lexington, Mass, D.C.Heath, 1990).

The Sources of Soviet conduct" published under the pseudonym "X"), Foreign Affairs, 25, No-4 (July 1947): PP. 564-587.

The Truman Doctrine is reprinted in Stokes, ed; From Stalinism to pluralism, PP.35-43.

Zhdanov speech is reprinted in Stokes, ed; From Stalinism and pluralism, PP.38-46.

John Michael Montias, central planning in Poland (New haven, conn: Yale University press, 1962), page no-6.

Joseph Rothschild, Return & Diversity: A political History of East Central Europe since WW-2 (N.Y: Oxford University press, 1989), PP.93-97

From Khrushchev's speech & the 20th congress of the Communist Party of

the Soviet Union (CPSU) in Feb.1956; Cited in Rothschild, Return to Diversity, PP.132-135.
Ibid P.136-138.
The suggestion to "Roll Back" communism and "liberate" Eastern Europe was first articulated by Dulles in a 1952 article in Life Mag, entitled "A policy of Boldness;" Life, 32 (May19, 1952) PP. 146-148.
Ghita Ionescu, the Breakup of the Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1965).
Pravda, Sep26, 1968.
The Play Dziady (Forefather's eve) was written by Adam Mickiewicz, The Polish National Poet.
David S: Mason, Public Opinion and Political Change in Poland, 1980-1982 (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1985); P.148.
Adam Michnik "Does Socialism Have Any Future in Eastern Europe" Stutium papers, 13, no.4 (Oct.1989): P.184.
Paul Marer, "The Economies and Trade of Eastern Europe" in William E.Griffith, ed, Central and Eastern Europe: The Opening Curtain? (Boulder, Colo.: West View press, 1989), PP.50-53.
Paul Marer, "The Economies and Trade of Eastern Europe" PP. 51-52.
Western currencies are convertible in that they can be freely traded at Market rates. The Soviet ruble and the Eastern European currencies were not convertible in this way and were therefore unacceptable as payment by most western firms and Governments.
Milovan Djilas, the New Class (N.Y: Praeger, 1967).
Peter Hauslohner, "Gorbachev's Social Contract," Soviet Economy, 3 no-1 (1987): PP.54-89; Lena Kolarska Bobinska," Poland under crisis unreformable society or Establishment" in Roger Clarke, ed; Poland" Economy in the 1980's (white plains, N.Y: Longman, 1989), PP.131-132.
Krzysztof Jasiewicz, "Kultura Polityczna Polakow; Miedzy Jednoscia a podzialcm," Aneks, no. 48 (1988) PP.69-74
The title of part VII of the Final Act of the conference on security and cooperation in Europe, signed in Helsinki in 1975 and reprinted in part in stokes, ed; From Stalinism to pluralism, PP. 160-162.
Robert Sharlet, "Dissent and the Contra system in East Europe," PP. 335-356.
Sharlet "Dissent and the Contra system in East Europe," Current History, 84, no.505 (Nov. 1985): PP. 353-355.
Timothy Garton Ash, "Does Central Europe Exist" in T.G. Ash, the uses of Adversity " Essays on the Fate of Central Europe (N.Y: Vintage, 1990), PP. 179-213. These essays first appeared in N.Y review of books in Oct 1986.
Vaclav Hawel, the power of the powerless (London: Unwin Hyman, 1985); reprinted in part in stokes, ed; From Stalinism to Pluralism, PP.168-174.
Stokes ed; From Stalinism to pluralism, P.171; emphasis in the original.

Stokes 1976 essay on, “The New Evolutionism,” in Adam Michnik, Letters From Prison and other Essays (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California press, 1985), PP.135-148.
Gyorgy Konrad, ant politics (N.Y.” Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984); excerpted in stokes, ed: From Stalinism & pluralism, PP. 175-180.
Cited in Timothy Garton Ash, “Does Central Europe Exist” P.184.
New York review of books, April 26, 1984, (in English Embassy).