

Europe since 1985

In the late 80s and early 90s the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc underwent a revolutionary upheaval that dramatically changed Europe.

The Gorbachev Era

- In March 1985, Party leaders elected Gorbachev as the general secretary of the Party, and he became the new leader of the Soviet Union.
- Growing up during the years of reform of Khrushchev, he also wanted to approach his rule with reform
- “we cannot go on living like this”
- By the 80s, the Soviets were facing grave economic problems. They also had fallen behind the west in technology, especially development and production of computers for private and public use
 - Also, very noticeable decline in the standard of living
- **Perestroika** – “restructuring”
 - Reordering of the economic policy
 - Gorbachev called for the beginning of a market economy and limited free enterprise with some private property
 - Realized that the economic sphere was tied with the social and political so needed to make reforms there as well
- **Glasnost**- “openness”
 - Soviet citizens and officials were encouraged to discuss openly the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet Union
 - *Pravda*, the official Communist Party newspaper, began to include reports on official corruption and protest against government policy
 - Previously banned works were now published, and music based on Western styles, such as jazz and rock was performed openly
- In 1988, Gorbachev called for the creation of a new Soviet parliament, the Congress of People’s Deputies—members chosen in competitive elections
 - It met in 1989, the first meeting of its kind since 1918
- Early in 1990, Gorbachev legalized the formation of other political parties and removed Article 6—which guaranteed the Communist Party a leading role
- Separation of state from the Communist Party- new presidential role
- In March 1990, Gorbachev became the first president of the Soviet Union
- As Gorbachev released the iron grip of Moscow, ethnic tensions resurfaced
- Ethnic groups took advantage of the new “openness” to protest ethnically motivated slights – sometimes led to violence
- 1988-1990 was also a time of nationalist movements in the republics that made up the Soviet Union – many were calling for sovereignty and independence from Russian-based rule in Moscow
 - Georgia, Latvia, Estonia, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Lithuania
 - On March 11, 1990- Lithuania proclaimed itself an independent state

The End of the Soviet Union

- Gorbachev struggled to deal with Lithuania
- On one hand, he tried to appease conservatives who complained about the growing disorder within the Soviet Union. On the other hand, he tried to accommodate liberal forces, especially in the Soviet republics, who favored a more decentralized Soviet federation
- By 1991, conservative leaders of the traditional Soviet institutions—army, government, KGB, and military industries—grew worried about impending dissolution of the Soviet Union and its impact on their own future
- August 19, 1991- a group of these rightists arrested Gorbachev and attempted to seize power
 - Gorbachev's unwillingness to work with the conspirators and Boris Yeltsin (elected President of Russian Rep in 91) putting up resistance led to the coup's failure
 - This served to accelerate the disintegration of the Soviet Union
- Gorbachev pleaded, but the Soviet republics soon moved for complete independence
 - Ukraine → Dec. 1, 1991
 - Week later the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus declared that the Soviet Union ceased to exist
- Gorbachev resigned on December 25, 1991 – turned over responsibilities as commander in chief to **Boris Yeltsin**, President of Russia

Why did it collapse?

- Some argue that the US's ambitious defense policies adopted by the Reagan administration forced the Soviets into an arms race that it could not afford and that ultimately led to the collapse of the Soviet economy
- Most believe it was a consequence of conditions inherent in the Soviet system
- Soviet leaders had denied or ignored massive inefficiencies in the Soviet economy and by the time the 1980s hit it was too late
- One of the weakest factors of the Soviet Union was the multi-ethnic character

The New Russia

- Yeltsin was committed to introducing a free market economy as quickly as possible—not an easy transition
- Political competition between hardline nationalists and Communists
- Economic hardships and social disarray made worse by dramatic rise in the activities of organized crime mobs, led increasing number of Russians to support both former Communists and hardline nationalists who tried to place limits on Yeltsin's powers
- During the mid-1990s- Yeltsin put through reforms that he believed would set Russia on a course toward a pluralistic political system and market economy – but remained very fragile
- War in the Caucasus- Muslim people of Chechnya sought national independence from Russia—drained the government's budget and exposed the weak Red Army
- Yeltsin still won reelection in 1996, failing health concerns

Putin

- At the end of 1999, Yeltsin resigned as was replaced by **Vladimir Putin**, former member of the KGB
- Wanted to strengthen the role of the central government in managing the affairs of the state
- Centralize power in Moscow
- Vowed to return the breakaway state of Chechnya to Russian authority and be more assertive in international affairs
 - Fighting in Chechnya continued into 2000
- Attempted to silence critics—Russian media
- Wanted to restore discipline to Russian society
- In 2008, Dimitry Medvedev became president of Russia when Putin could not run for reelection under the Russian Constitution. Instead, Putin became prime minister, and the two men shared power.
- In 2012, despite public protests, Putin was again elected president for a six-year term

Eastern Europe: Revolutions of 1989 and the Collapse of Communism

- In 1988, new demonstrations led the Polish regime to agree to free parliamentary elections—first free elections in Eastern Europe in 40 years
- Polish military regime allowed the newly elected Solidarity coalition to form a new government, ending 45 years of Communist rule
- Soviet Union, under Gorbachev's new policy, took no action to reverse the verdict in Poland
 - December 1990, Lech Walesa, head of Solidarity, chosen as the new Polish president
- In Hungary the economy had been suffering and in 1989, the Communist regime began to undertake reforms
 - Political parties called for Hungary to become a democratic republic
 - Elections in 1990, a new coalition was formed that committed Hungary to democratic government
- Czechoslovakia
 - Government attempts to suppress mass demonstrations in Prague and other cities in 1988 and 1989 led to larger demonstrations
 - December 1989, as demonstrations continued, the Communist government, lacked real support and collapsed
 - President resigned and Havel, long time dissident became president
- Romania-
 - Opposition grew as dictator Ceausescu rejected the reforms of Eastern Europe promoted by Gorbachev
 - Economic difficulties in Romania- sharp drop in living standards, angered Romanians
 - Ruthless crushing of a demonstration in Timisoara in Dec. 1989 led to other mass demonstrations
 - Dictator booed at a mass rally on Dec. 21, 1989, and the army refused to support any more repression- him and his wife were tried and executed.

- In 1989 and 1990, new governments throughout Eastern Europe worked hard to scrap the remnants of the old system and introduce democratic procedures and market systems they believed would revitalize their scarred lands
 - Many E European countries had little or no experience with democratic systems
 - Also, plagued with ethnic divisions
- On January 1, 1993, Czechoslovakia split into the Czech Republic (Capital-Prague) and Slovakia (Capital- Bratislava)
- The revival of the post-Cold War Eastern European states is shown in their desire to join NATO and the EU
 - In 2004, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and Hungary joined the EU- Romania and Bulgaria in 2007, Croatia in 2013
- Conflict in W. Europe→ concerned of a possible influx of low-wage workers from the new member nations – global financial crisis that began in 2008 also added to the problem of E European countries

Reunification of Germany

- More than half a million people flooded the streets of East Berlin flooded the streets on Nov. 4, 1989
 - Tired of the oppressiveness of the regime of Erich Honecker
 - Chanting “The Wall must go!”
- The German Communist government fell and gave in to popular pressure and on Nov.9 opened its entire border with the West
- Berlin Wall, a symbol of oppression, fell and was a site of massive celebrations
- In East Germany’s first free elections ever, the Christian Democrats won almost 50% of the vote
 - Supported rapid monetary unification and on July 1, 1990 the West and East German states’ economies were united
 - Deutsche mark
- Political unification achieved on October 3, 1990

Yugoslavia

- From its beginning in 1919, Yugoslavia had been an artificial creation, combining Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes
- At the end of 1980s, Yugoslavia was caught up in the reform movements sweeping through Eastern Europe. The League of Communists collapsed, and the new parties quickly emerged
- Different separatist movements emerged
- Slovenia (Ljubljana) and Croatia (Zagreb) declared their independence in June 1991
 - Led to brutal fighting in Croatia – cease fire ultimately arranged
- Will eventually break up into: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina (Sarajevo), Macedonia (Skopje), Serbia (Belgrade), and Montenegro (Podgorica)

Bosnia

- The recognition of independent Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia, and Croatia by the US and European states did not stop the Serbs from turning their guns on Bosnia

- Mid 1993- Serbian forces had acquired 70% of Bosnian territory- Serbian policy of ethnic cleansing- killing or forcibly removing Bosnian Muslims from their lands
- Almost 8,000 men and boys were killed in the Serbian massacre at Srebrenica
- European states failed to take decisive and forceful stand against these Serbian activities
 - By 1995, some 250,000 Bosnians (mostly civilians) had been killed, 2 million left homeless
- Airstrikes by NATO bombers—advocated for by Bill Clinton- were launched in retaliation for Serb attacks on civilians
- All sides encouraged to end the war and met in Dayton, Ohio, in Nov 1995 for peace negotiations –Bosnia split in terms of a loose union of Serb republic and Muslim-Croat federation → NATO sent 60,000 troops (mostly American) to monitor the frontier between the two political entities

Kosovo

- Peace in Bosnia did not bring peace to all the remnants of Yugoslavia
- New war erupted over Kosovo in 1999 which had been made an autonomous province within Yugoslavia in 1974
- Kosovo's inhabitants were mostly ethnic Albanians who were allowed to keep their Albanian language
- But, Kosovo had a Serbian minority who considered Kosovo sacred because it contained the site where the Ottoman Turks had defeated the Serbian forces in a 14th c battle
- In 1989, Yugoslav president Milosevic, who was an ardent Serbian nationalist, stripped Kosovo of its autonomous status and outlawed the Albanian language
- In 1993, some groups of ethnic Albanians founded the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and began a campaign against Serbian rule
- Serb forces began to massacre Albanians in an effort to crush the KLA → the US and NATO sought to arrange a settlement
- Kosovo Albanians agreed to a peace plan that would give ethnic Albanians in Kosovo broad autonomy for 3 year period – Milosevic refused to sign – the US and NATO began a bombing campaign that forced Yugoslavia to comply
- Since 1991, Yugoslavia had been embroiled in destructive war, largely b/c of the policies of Slobodan Milosevic
- By 2000, the Serbian people ousted Milosevic from power and new Serbian government under Kostunica tried to cooperate with the international community
- 2001- Milosevic was put on trial for crimes against humanity for his ethnic cleansing policies – died in prison in 2006
- The fate of Bosnia and Kosovo has not really been determined
- 30,000 NATO troops remained in Bosnia for several years to maintain peace between the Serb republic and the Muslim-Croat federation
- In 2004, about 7,000 troops from the EU replaced the NATO forces
- In Kosovo, military forces brought in to maintain an uneasy peace → UN officials worked to create democratic institutions and the EU provided funds for rebuilding infrastructure
- By 2004, Yugoslavia remnants officially renamed Serbia and Montenegro

- Kosovo declared independence in 2008
- Montenegro in 2006

Western European Unity

- Germany-
 - Challenging process of unification- dealing with E. Germany
 - Conservative coalition defeated in 1998, but the Social Democrats had little success
 - 2005- Angela Merkel, leader of the Christian Democrats, became the first female chancellor of Germany
 - Played a leading role in the affairs of the EU
 - Pursued health care reform and new energy policies
- Post –Thatcher Britain
 - In 1990 the Labour party raised more support when Thatcher’s government attempted to replace local property taxes with a flat rate tax payable by every adult to a local authority
 - People argued would benefit the rich
 - In 1990, tax riots broke out- her popularity fell to an all-time low – she resigned as PM
 - Replaced by John Major, Conservative
 - His government failed to garner support
 - New elections in 1997- Labour party won → Tony Blair
 - Moderate, youthful energy
 - Centrist policies
 - First prominent leader to form an international coalition against terrorism after the terrorist attack in the US in 2001
 - His support for the US in Iraq lost him support at home
 - In 2007, he stepped down and Gordon Brown replaced him
 - Elections in 2010 → more Conservative – David Cameron became prime minister- coalition with Liberals
- France
 - Move to the right in France with conservative mayor of Paris → Jacques Chirac – elected in 1995 and again in 2001
 - By 1995 resentment against foreign born residents became a growing issue
 - Large number of immigrants from N. Africa, rising rates of unemployment
 - Chirac pursued a plan of sending illegal immigrants back to their home countries
 - In fall 2005, young Muslims in Paris protested dismal living conditions and lack of opportunity for foreign residents
 - Tensions grew between the Muslim community and the French
 - Nicolas Sarkozy elected in 2007 and promised to address these issues
 - Europe’s financial crisis helped elect Hollande (Socialist) in 2012
- Italy
 - Corruption a big problem for Italian politics

Unification of Europe

- **The Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty)** represented an attempt to create a true economic and monetary union of all EC Members
- On January 1, 1994 the EC renamed itself the European Union
 - One of its first goals was to introduce a common currency, called the euro—adopted by 12 EU nations in early 1999.
 - June 1, 1999→ European Central Bank was created
 - By 2013, the Euro had officially replaced 17 national currencies
- Crisis emerged in 2010→ Greece's public debt threatened the bankruptcy of that country as well as financial difficulties for many European banks
- To avoid economic disaster, other EU members, led by Germany, put together a financial rescue plan for Greece
 - Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Cyprus also faced economic hardship
- Goals for the EU
 - In addition to the common currency and internal market, EU also established a common agricultural policy→ subsidies are provided to farmers to enable them to sell their goods competitively
 - EU aid to the EU's poorest regions as well as subsidies for job training, education, and modernization
 - End of national passports
 - EU has been less successful in setting common foreign policy goals, primarily because individual nations still see foreign policy as a national prerogative
- Problems
 - Many Europeans don't see themselves as European but remained committed to national identity
 - Economically→ European Central Bank does not serve all nations equally, tend to vote in favor of national interest
- New goal at the beginning of the 21st century→ incorporate into the union the states of eastern and southeastern Europe
 - Many of the states considerably poorer than the older members—raised possibility of weakening the EU by adding them
- EU established a set of qualifications that require a candidate for membership to demonstrate
 - Commitment to market capitalism and democracy
- May 2004, added Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia
- 2007- Bulgaria, Romania 2013- Croatia

Guest Workers and Immigrants

- Guest workers started arriving in Western Europe post WWII to fill the labor shortage
- With the collapse of the colonial system by the 1960s, millions of people from the former British, French, Dutch, and Portuguese colonies moved to Europe
- They found themselves unwelcomed socially and politically

- Concentration in certain areas of cities increased tensions with the local native population
- Having become settled they wanted to stay even after the decline in the 70s and high unemployment
- In the 1980s influx of refugees from Eastern Europe
- Also, in the 80s from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka
- By 2015, 13 % of Germany's population were foreigners
- A survey in 1998 found that English was not the first language of 1/3 of inner-city children in London
- Antiforeigner sentiment increased and was encouraged by new right-wing political parties
 - National Front in France- organized by Jean-Marie Le Pen and now led by his daughter Marine Le Pen
 - Republican Party in Germany- led by Franz Schonhuber – advocated restricting all new immigration and limiting the assimilation of settled immigrants
 - Increase in violence in the early 90s against African and Asian immigrants
- In 2004- the Dutch passed stricter immigration laws including a requirement for newcomers to pass a Dutch language and culture test
- Number of Muslims in France, Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany increased
 - In 2004 France enacted a law prohibiting female students from wearing a headscarf (hijab) to school

Globalization