

witnesses will contribute to making the Holocaust a historical event: perhaps one of the best-documented historical events in history, but a historical event nonetheless. This will not in the least diminish the relevance or the gravity of the admonition "Nevě forget!" If there are two lessons the Holocaust taught, they are remembrance and vigilance. People do disagree, nonetheless, on which form of remembrance is most appropriate and which form of vigilance is necessary or legitimate, and they most likely will continue to disagree long into the future.

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## Spheres of Influence II

### East and West, or "Yalta Europe"

"Yalta Europe" has two relatively distinct sets of meaning. Among many East Central European intellectuals and dissidents, it is a pejorative reference to a summit meeting of the "Big Three"—Winston Churchill, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin—held at Yalta, a resort in the Crimea on the Black Sea, on February 4 to 11, 1945. During one week of negotiations, as this version of the story goes, the two most important leaders of the Western democratic world abandoned more than 100 million people to an expanded Soviet version of the east, or the "Soviet empire." Ever since then, the word "Yalta" has evoked feelings of contempt for the sheer stupidity of the West in its dealings with Stalin as well as sentiments ranging from moral indignation to betrayal.

In a more dispassionate vein, "Yalta Europe" refers to the complicated process of multilateral negotiations among the Allies during and after World War II, on the one hand, and the gradual division of Europe into two ideologically opposed military and economic blocs, on the other. In this respect, Yalta Europe began at the first major summit of the Big Three in Teheran in 1943, was more or less complete with the division of Germany in 1949, and assumed its final shape in May 1955 when the finishing touches were put on the East and West blocs. The Federal Republic of Germany joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); the Warsaw Pact was established; and the signature of the Austrian State Treaty ended the Allied occupation of Austria, which then declared its permanent neutrality after occupational troops evacuated the country in October.

The defeat of Nazi Germany led to the division of Europe, and any number of events can be used to mark the turning point of the war. From the

merican point of view, the landing of the western Allies in Normandy in June 1944 signaled the beginning of the end of the war in Europe. The encirclement and destruction of the German Sixth Army at the Battle of Stalingrad during the winter of 1942/1943 is generally recognized as the psychological turning point of the war. From a military point of view, Operation Sledziewo, the failure of the German offensive on the central section of the eastern front in the late spring and summer of 1943 appears decisive, because the Germans exhausted their offensive capacity in a gigantic battle that involved more than 2,000 tanks and 2 million men. Even this date is relatively late, however, because by the end of 1941, members of the German High Command recognized that the war against the Soviet Union on the eastern front could not be won.

The objective of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, was to "annihilate" the Soviet Union with a blitzkrieg of unprecedented dimensions. Despite massive territorial gains, the German offensive stalled at the gates of Moscow and Leningrad. Some military historians maintain that Hitler pursued a simple "space for time" strategy. Territory lost was time gained, which allowed the Soviet Union to marshal its forces for defense and launch counteroffensives. But others maintain that Stalin was responsible for enormous losses on the eastern front, which almost led to the defeat of the Soviet Union, because he did not withdraw Soviet troops fast enough or did not maturely order them to hold positions. In any event, the sheer size of the Soviet Union led to an overextension of the German army. Winter is usually called one of Russia's most important allies, and the German troops undoubtedly were ill equipped for it. Rain in the fall and the spring were equally trying for the Germans, as the instruments of blitzkrieg, tanks and other heavy motorized vehicles, literally bogged down in the soft ground and could only maintain Russian roads.

In late 1941, the Soviet East and the British and American West forged an alliance. The German invasion of the Soviet Union eventually provided Britain with a needed ally, and vice versa, and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, brought the United States into the Anglo-Soviet alliance. The Soviet Union switched allies in 1941 without changing some of the policy objectives articulated in the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939, such as the consolidation of control over the Baltic states and eastern Poland. Although the United States' vast reservoirs of human and material resources played an indisputably important role in winning the war in Europe, it ultimately expedited its outcome, the most important European theater of military conflict was the eastern front, where Nazi Germany lost its war. German losses of men and matériel on the eastern front between 1941 and the Normandy invasion in June 1944 were enormous. An estimated 13 million Soviet citizens in the armed forces died during World War II, in addition to 7 million civilians. Soviet combat dead outnumbered those of the United States in the Atlantic theater of war approximately 75 to 1 or, including civilians, around 115 to 1.<sup>1</sup> Given the enormity of Soviet losses, it is not surprising to understand why western allies and a western European front were so important to Stalin. The fact that his Anglo-American allies promised to

open a western European front in 1942 but did not deliver on a grand scale until 1944 made him both impatient and suspicious.

The evolution of Allied policy in Europe was a long and complicated process of bi- and multilateral negotiations on many levels. The common objective of defeating Nazi Germany was the basis of the "anti-Hitler coalition," and the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany became one of the cornerstones of Allied policy in early 1943. Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt also recognized that the defeat of Nazi Germany would necessarily mean reorganizing Europe so as to prevent the possibility of German aggression in the future.

Allied plans also were complicated by the fact that the alliance's common denominator of anti-Nazism was not great enough to overcome the principal ideological differences between the Anglo-American democratic West and the Soviet East. However, ideological antagonisms were played down because they could weaken the alliance and the war effort, and there were fears among the Western democracies that the Soviet Union might negotiate a separate peace with Nazi Germany, and vice versa. Therefore, the priority of maintaining East-West collaboration demanded that concessions be made on issues that the Western powers considered secondary. Negotiations among the Allies also were guided by the realistic assumption that regional "spheres of influence" would exist in Europe after the defeat of Nazi Germany.

As a matter of principle, the Western democracies agreed not to recognize territorial acquisitions made by force; this was one of the principles of the Atlantic Charter formulated by Churchill and Roosevelt in August 1941. But as a matter of fact, they did. The Western Allies disapproved of the territorial gains the Soviet Union had made under the auspices of the initial "spheres of influence" agreement between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, Hitler's and Stalin's nonaggression pact of 1939. Stalin had every intention of reestablishing Soviet control over the Baltic republics and territories that the Soviet Union had annexed in Finland, eastern Poland, and Romania between 1939 and 1941, areas that had been lost for the time being because of the invasion of the Soviet Union by Nazi Germany and its allies, and he made this clear to his Western allies early on in the alliance. Stalin also was intent on expanding the Soviet sphere of influence beyond these frontiers to ensure Soviet national security in the future.

If Yalta is thus understood as the democratic West's subordination of political principle to the imperial interests of the Soviet Union in East Central Europe (or, in a less moralistic vein, the compromises necessary to maintain East-West cooperation), then the evolution of Allied policy toward Poland provides the best example of how the idea of Yalta Europe developed before the Yalta conference.

#### *The Polish Problem, 1939-1945*

A brief survey of the diplomatic situation in Central Europe during World War II is necessary to appreciate the exceptional role Poland played in inter-Allied negotiations. Austria had been incorporated into the Third Reich

March 1938; Finland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria were allies of Nazi Germany; and Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia had established governments in exile in London. The status of the states that collaborated with Nazi Germany obviously was different from the status of those that had governments in exile. The former had to be defeated along with Nazi Germany, and the latter had to be liberated from Nazi Germany.<sup>2</sup> The importance of the Yugoslav government in exile in London decreased as the significance of Tito and his Communist partisan movement increased in Yugoslavia and Yugoslavia assumed an increasingly "eastern," or Communist, course during the war.

Eduard Beneš, the president of the Czechoslovak Republic, who had fled after the Munich agreement in 1938, initially was an embarrassing political exile for the Western democracies, because he reminded them that they had left Czechoslovakia in the lurch with their "policy of appeasement." Beneš's experience with Western democracies eroded his confidence in the West and led to his recognition that it also would be necessary for Czechoslovakia to reach some kind of accommodation with the Soviet Union. He therefore developed a close working relationship with Stalin, and, as many historians in times of duress had done in the past, saw Russia as a patron of the smaller Slavic nations.

Poland, the only country of this trio that depended completely on the support of the Western democracies, was in the least advantageous position of all. Its national interests conflicted directly with those of the Soviet Union, and this bilateral confrontation threatened the harmony of the British-American-Soviet alliance.

Britain and France had entered the war in 1939 to maintain the European status quo, which required, among other things, fighting for the establishment of Polish independence. The Soviet Union's participation in the invasion and occupation of Poland in 1939 made it an enemy of the Polish government in exile, but the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 made the Soviet Union an ally of the United Kingdom, Poland's most important ally and advocate. The United Kingdom, in turn, pressured Poland to develop an accommodating relationship with the Soviet Union, and for obvious reasons Polish-Soviet relations were characterized by mutual suspicion instead of reciprocal trust. The Soviet Union had invaded and occupied that part of Poland it wanted to keep, and it justified this acquisition by pointing out that the region was inhabited predominantly by Belarussians and Ukrainians.

The renegotiation of the Polish-Soviet frontier is a long, complicated, and sad story. At the end of 1941, Churchill had branded the Soviet acquisition in East Central Europe as a "shameless aggression," but in 1942 he conceded to the Soviets that he was willing to make concessions on this issue. Roosevelt secretly followed suit at the Teheran conference at the end of 1943, but he wanted to avoid making any public statements on the issue until after the U.S. presidential elections in the fall of 1944, for fear of losing the Polish American vote. Plans for compensating Poland for the territory it was to lose in the east with German territory in the west were dis-

cussed and agreed on in principle at a summit meeting in Teheran in 1943. Churchill demonstrated the idea by putting three matches on the conference table. The ones on the left and the right represented the German-Polish and Polish-Soviet frontiers in 1939, and the one in the middle, the border the Soviets demanded. Then he took the match on the right and moved it to the far left to show how Poland would be compensated for its losses in the east by gains at the expense of Germany in the west. At Teheran, Churchill and Roosevelt also gave the Soviet Union a more or less free hand to administer the territories it was "liberating" on the eastern front.

The Allies also had bigger issues on their agenda in Teheran, such as the articulation of a grand strategy for the war, which included opening up new fronts in western and southern Europe and a Soviet commitment to enter the war against Japan; the establishment of policies for the treatment of Nazi Germany's allies; and the discussion of the framework for a permanent international peacekeeping organization. Churchill was a great proponent of a Western Allied invasion on the Balkan Peninsula, which would pierce the soft underbelly of Hitler's Europe and have the concomitant benefit of bringing Western troops into the heart of the continent, but this proposal was tabled by the Americans and eventually dismissed in favor of the Allied invasion in Normandy.

The fact that Stalin had broken off diplomatic relations with the Polish government in exile in mid-1943 also damaged Poland's prospects. The immediate cause of this rupture in relations was the Polish reaction to the German discovery of a mass grave of more than 4,000 Polish officers in the Katyn Forest (near Smolensk in Belarus) in March 1943. In the process of invading and occupying eastern Poland in 1939, the Soviet Union had taken into custody 15,000 Polish officers, professional soldiers, and reservists. These Polish officers, representatives of a national élite, then disappeared without a trace until the Germans discovered the mass grave in Katyn. The Germans accused the Soviets of having massacred them, but the Soviets reversed the allegation. However, given the evidence and an international investigation, it became clear to the Poles that the Soviets had murdered the Polish prisoners in Katyn, which also indicated that the 11,000 others most likely met similar fates elsewhere. Polish indignation and concern played directly into the hands of Nazi propaganda. The Soviet Union then accused the Polish government in exile of "pro-Hitler" agitation and broke off diplomatic relations.

Soviet authorities adamantly denied responsibility for the Katyn massacre until 1989 when they finally admitted that it was one of the many atrocities committed by the NKVD, the Soviet secret police. The Hitler-Stalin nonaggression pact, the Soviet denial of its secret protocol, and the Soviets' refusal to reveal what had happened to the Polish officers who had been taken into Soviet custody in 1939 strained Polish-Soviet relations not only throughout World War II but also during the entire postwar period of Communist "fraternal cooperation" between the two countries. Katyn, which became a symbol for the crimes the Soviet Union committed against the Polish nation, was subsequently one of the most gaping "blanks" or distortions

in the official Soviet and Polish Communist histories. Although the 4,000 officers murdered at Katyn were but a fraction of Poland's total losses of 6 million during World War II, they assumed a prominent place in the Polish historical memory.

The Katyn massacre also is a good example of the type of policy the Soviet Union pursued toward non-Communist political and military organizations throughout east Central Europe. The liberation of countries from Nazi Germany went hand in hand with the persecution of anti-Nazi resisters who also were anti-Communists. They were accused of being "bourgeois," "nationalist," or "reactionary." Poland provides once again a prime example for the manner in which this policy was executed.

There was a considerable military underground organization in Poland, the Home Army, which worked closely with the Polish government in exile in London. In order to establish a political presence in Poland when it was liberated by the Soviet Union, Home Army commanders were instructed to stage local uprisings immediately before the arrival of the Soviet units. They also were advised to offer their assistance to the Red Army while simultaneously declaring their allegiance to the Polish government in exile, a practice that led in some cases to their immediate arrest or execution.<sup>3</sup>

The situation of the Home Army in Poland was complicated by the fact that once the Red Army reached ethnic Polish territory, Polish Communists from the Soviet Union established the "Committee for National Liberation" in the Lublin, the first major city liberated in "ethnic Poland," and the so-called Lublin Committee declared that it was the provisional legal authority for all of liberated Poland. As a result, Poland had two rival governments: one officially recognized by the Western Allies in London and another recognized only by, but fully supported by, the Soviet Union in Poland. The Lublin Committee was the first Communist puppet government in East Central Europe, and its establishment also demonstrated how the Soviet Union intended to deal with anti-Communist governments in the region in the future: They were to be discredited if possible and undermined if not.

The way in which the Soviet Red Army failed to aid an uprising of the Polish Home Army in Warsaw in August and September 1944 is yet another example of the means that the Soviets were prepared to use to eliminate anti-Communist, national opposition. In the summer of 1944, the Red Army advanced rapidly toward Warsaw. The Polish government in London called for an uprising by Polish Home Army in Warsaw, with the intention of establishing a territorial base of operations for the Polish government. The government also assumed that the Red Army would come to the aid of the Polish forces and "co-liberate" the Polish capital. But then the Red Army halted on the outskirts of Warsaw, and the stalling of the Soviet advance gave the Nazis ample opportunity to put down ruthlessly the Warsaw uprising. The elite of the Polish Home Army and 200,000 civilians died in Warsaw during sixty-three days of fighting.

In military terms, the Warsaw uprising was directed against Nazi Germany. Politically, however, it was explicitly anti-Soviet, and the Soviets let the German forces do their military and political dirty work for them. The Nazis

eliminated the Polish nationalists, democrats, and anti-Communists of the Home Army, and they destroyed most of Warsaw in the process. (After the Warsaw uprising, Hitler ordered that the remains of Warsaw be razed. When it finally was "liberated" by the Red Army, the city was a depopulated pile of rubble.) Soviet histories maintained that the Red Army had overextended itself and was in no position to advance, although Poles never accepted this version of the story. Before 1989, Poles used to illustrate Poland's geopolitical predicament and their bitter feelings about Germans and Russians with a caustic joke. Question: "If Poland were to be invaded again by Germany and the Soviet Union, in which direction should one shoot first?" Answer: "To the west: first business, then pleasure."

#### *Yalta: Bungling or Betrayal?*

The Yalta conference was prefaced by an Anglo-Soviet understanding in regard to southeastern Europe. In October 1944, Churchill and Stalin met in Moscow to discuss British and Soviet interests in the region, and Churchill relayed only partial results of these meetings to Roosevelt. At that time, Churchill and Stalin came up with a "percentage agreement" that was basically a Soviet recognition of British interests in the Mediterranean (Greece, in particular) and the British acknowledgment of a Soviet sphere of influence in Romania and Bulgaria. Influence in Yugoslavia and Hungary was to be shared equally.<sup>4</sup> This entire agreement was made rather nonchalantly at the dinner table. Churchill jotted down the following East-West percentages on a half sheet of paper: Romania 90:10; Bulgaria 75:25; Hungary and Yugoslavia, 50:50; Greece 10:90. He passed it to Stalin, who looked at it and put a large check on it with a blue pencil and then passed it back to Churchill. (There was a bit of additional dickering on the next day between the Soviet and British foreign ministers, V. M. Molotov and Anthony Eden, and the percentages for Bulgaria and Hungary were revised to 80:20 and 75:25. However, the modalities of measurement never were discussed.)

Stalin also emphasized that he wanted Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary to be "anti-Nazi, pro-Russian" states, and Churchill inconclusively broached one of his favorite ideas with Stalin: the reestablishment of a federation of states along the Danube, with Vienna as its capital. Churchill thought in the terms of the classic European balance of power in this respect, and he was concerned about the expansion of Soviet influence in Central Europe. A Danube confederation could fill the vacuum that the destruction of Austria-Hungary had created in 1918, and various schemes for a multinational cooperation in the region were popular among British planners. Representatives of the Polish and Czechoslovak governments in exile also discussed confederative plans during the war as a means of cooperatively offsetting Russian and German influence. But none of these confederative schemes materialized, and the Soviets viewed them with suspicion because they merely represented Western attempts to erect a new *cordon sanitaire*.

By the time the Big Three met in Yalta at the beginning of 1945, the end



The Big Three met at Yalta in early 1945 to negotiate a new postwar order: British prime minister Winston Churchill, ailing U.S. president Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin. (U.S. Army Signal Corps, National Archives, Washington, D.C.)

of the war in Europe was in sight. The Red Army had occupied almost all of Poland and had overrun Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria. (Romania and Bulgaria switched their allegiances and became belated members of the anti-Hitler coalition.) The Soviets had taken Budapest after three months of siege, and the Western Allies had reached German soil. The big issues on the Yalta agenda were the defeat and treatment of Nazi Germany, the future status of Poland, a hastening of the end of the war with Japan, and the development of a world security organization.

It is important to recall that British-American-Soviet cooperation reached a peak at the beginning of 1945, and there were hopes that the spirit of cooperation established during the war would carry over into the postwar period. However, critics have accused Roosevelt of trusting Stalin and of having misconceptions about Soviet Communism. Roosevelt did not have as good an understanding of Communism and Central European affairs as Churchill did, who was becoming increasingly concerned about the Soviet Union's growing influence. Churchill viewed Soviet policy in East Central Europe as a European problem with global implications for the Western democracies, whereas Roosevelt subordinated East Central European or re-

gional issues to global considerations. He banked on the idea of the United Nations and believed that Stalin and the Soviet Union were prepared to assume the role of one of the guarantors of the free world. Therefore, concessions to the Soviet Union in East Central Europe were a means of ensuring peace on a global scale. But this situation was complicated by the fact that Roosevelt was in some respects more concerned about the gains of the British Empire during the war than those of the Soviet Union and thus was more suspicious of Churchill than of Stalin.

At Yalta, the Allies discussed principles for the treatment of Germany, such as unconditional surrender, dismemberment, denazification, demilitarization, and reparations for the Soviet Union, and they agreed on including France in the occupation and administration of Germany and Berlin, which were to be divided up into four different zones. (This model of quadripartite administration also was applied to Austria and Vienna.) However, there was no agreement on what to do with Germany after the war, no common plan or joint vision.

An important shift in the Western perception of Poland antedated the decisions regarding the borders and the future of Poland that were made at Yalta. Both Churchill and Roosevelt had come to accept the idea that Poland had to be considered in the context of the Soviet Union's national security interests. From this perspective, the purpose of Poland would be to help protect the Soviet Union from future aggression. At Yalta, the Allies agreed to revise the eastern frontier of Poland, and they discussed new northern and western frontiers that would involve the incorporation of substantial German territories into Poland—most of East Prussia in the north and areas reaching as far west as the Oder and Western Neisse Rivers (the so-called Oder-Neisse Line). These acquisitions, in turn, would necessitate the expulsion of millions of Germans. Although the Oder-Neisse frontier was not sanctioned until the last great summit meeting that the Allies held, in Potsdam in midsummer 1945, the dye was cast in Yalta. The so-called eastern territories—East Prussia, Pomerania, and Silesia—were placed under the administration of Poland, which referred to them as "recovered territories," and then were unilaterally annexed after 1947. (The Soviet Union also occupied and then annexed a portion of northern East Prussia around Königsberg.)

At Potsdam, the Allies also formally endorsed the policy of transferring not only Germans from the German territories administered by Poland but also ethnic German minorities, or *Volksdeutsche*, from Czechoslovakia and Hungary, "in a humane and orderly manner." Finally, the Allies agreed on a "reorganization" of the Communist-dominated Lublin government in Poland, which already had been recognized by Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, to include some representatives of the Polish government in exile, and "the holding of free and unfettered elections as soon as possible." Long before Yalta, the Western Allies had abandoned Poland's 1939 frontiers; then at Yalta, they effectively abandoned the Polish government in exile. (Although it had lost its diplomatic status, the Polish government in exile maintained an office in London until 1989.)

It is important to distinguish here between the two different planes of Soviet and Anglo-American, or East-West, relations. Democracy and Communism were incompatible on moral, political, and ideological levels, and in this respect, the Cold War started before the hot war. Nonetheless, military cooperation was indispensable, and the overriding importance of an East-West anti-Nazi alliance made Western anti-Communism a secondary issue. At Yalta, Poland was not important enough for the Western Allies to risk a rupture with the Soviet Union, and after World War II, Western anti-Communism was subordinated in many respects to the objective of maintaining peace in Europe. If one is prepared to downplay or ignore the necessity of cooperating for the pragmatic purposes of winning the war against Nazi Germany before 1945 or keeping the peace in Europe between East and West thereafter, it is easy to use moral criteria to criticize the hypocrisy or duplicity of the Western democracies' policies, and many East Central Europeans have perceived "Yalta" or "the West" in exactly these terms.

After defeating Nazi Germany with the Soviet Union, the West was neither willing nor prepared to fight a new war with the Soviet Union in order to liberate East Central Europe. The Cold War was implicit in the dynamics of the British-American-Soviet alliance. The overriding objective of defeating Nazi Germany held the alliance together, and once it had been achieved, conflicting ideological and national interests were free to emerge. Poland was the first victim of World War II in 1939: the Hitler-Stalin pact and Nazi and Soviet aggression. It also was in the ill-fated position of being the first victim of peace in 1945: the collaboration of Western democracies with the Soviet Union that led to the defeat of Nazi Germany.

Although Europe was not divided at Yalta, the process of dividing it began there. Allied policy for the treatment of postwar Germany was fragmentary. The decisions made regarding Poland were both unfortunate and far reaching, but Czechoslovakia and Hungary were barely discussed. Among the concluding documents of the Yalta conference was an Allied "Declaration on Liberated Europe" affirming the "right of all peoples to choose the form of governments under which they will live," "the restoration of sovereign rights and self-government," and "free elections." The Western allies did not envision the Soviet sphere of influence as a closed bloc, and they hoped that the Soviet Union would respect the rules of democratic fair play in East Central Europe after the war. It did not.

#### *The Making of Eastern Europe, 1945-1948*

Churchill popularized the term "Iron Curtain" shortly after the war. This vivid metaphor tends to divert attention away from the fact that the Iron Curtain did not fall into place at one theatrical moment. Although the presence of the Red Army from the Baltic to the Balkans gave the Soviet Union massive political leverage in the region, the Communists did not take power all at once. Instead, the establishment of Communist regimes in the region was a successive process that started in 1945 but was not completed until 1948. The amounts of political sympathy and antipathy for the revolutionary pro-

gram the Soviet Union propagated in the countries it liberated varied from *statě to statě*, as did the tactics the Communists employed to gain power.

The political revolutions in East Central Europe went hand-in-hand with massive ethnic and demographic dislocations. Poland is the best example of the type of chaos that World War II produced in the form of armed hostilities, deportation, genocide, settlement and resettlement campaigns, liberation, repatriation, and population exchanges. After 1939, the Soviets deported Poles from eastern Poland. The Nazis expelled Poles from the parts of Poland that had been annexed by the Third Reich into the General Gouvernement, and they "exported" Poles to Germany as forced laborers. Ethnic Germans from throughout East Central Europe were brought in to "resettle" those parts of Poland that Nazi Germany had incorporated. The Holocaust virtually annihilated the Polish Jews. After the war, Poles were repatriated from the Soviet Union and Germany, and the Germans were expelled from those parts of Germany administered by Poland, which in turn had to be "resettled" by Poles.

The expulsion of the Germans from East Central Europe took a number of forms. Many Germans—as well as the members of many other national and ethnic groups that had collaborated with Nazi Germany or merely feared the Red Army—fled to avoid ending up behind the Soviet front. (In the process of honoring repatriation agreements, the Western Allies returned more than 2 million people to the Soviet Union after the war: collaborators, who as anti-Communists and nationalists had fought with the Nazis against the Soviets; prisoners of war; and laborers the Nazis had conscripted by force from occupied territories. Upon their return to the Soviet Union, these people were frequently accused of treason (either real or imagined) prosecuted, and severely punished.) On the one hand, Nazi anti-Soviet propaganda was apocalyptic and atrocious, and it encouraged evacuation or flight. On the other hand, plundering, looting, murder, and the mass rape of German women were characteristic of the conduct of the victorious Red Army. Vengeance and greed played no small role in the initial treatment of German minorities throughout East Central Europe. The first expulsions of Germans and the appropriation of their property were spontaneous and arbitrary, but these measures evolved into national policies which the Allies sanctioned after the war.

Between 1944 and 1950, more than 11 million Germans fled or were expelled from their homes, and the number who perished in the process is unknown. Estimates range from hundreds of thousands to 2 million. Theft, rape, murder, and death caused by hunger, exposure, and exhaustion were part of the "humane and orderly" transfer of the Germans. They left homes they had inhabited for hundreds of years, and they often fled on foot in large "caravans."

The great majority of those Germans who were expelled, more than 7 million, came from the territories administered by Poland east of the Oder-Neisse Line and Poland and the Soviet Union in east Prussia. Well before the end of the war, Beneš received Stalin's consent to expel Czechoslovakia's German minority of more than 3 million, the *Sudetendeutsche*. They

were collectively branded as traitors and banished after the war. Almost 90 percent of the 500,000 "ethnic Germans," or *Volksdeutsche*, from Yugoslavia emigrated during the war, fled, or were killed or deported after the war. The estimated 240,000 Germans who were evacuated, deported, or expelled from Hungary reduced the country's German minority by half. Tens of thousands of the "Transylvania Saxons" also fled their 600-year-old homes in Romania.<sup>5</sup>

Some people explain the treatment of the Germans in terms of biblical justice: an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. The fact that the East Central European victims of Nazi German aggression committed crimes against Germans has been consistently and conveniently ignored. After World War II no one was prepared to let the Germans be the victims of anything, and German-Polish and German-Czech relations were burdened for decades by the fact that millions of Germans in the Federal Republic of Germany who had been expelled from Poland or Czechoslovakia wanted the Poles and the Czechs as well as the Communists to admit to the violence and injustice of these expulsions. An admission of this nature was not nationally feasible for Poles or Czechs, nor was it ideologically possible for Communists. It took a revolution to address this issue. After 1989, for example, Václav Havel raised the question of Czech guilt for the expulsion of the *Sudetendeutsche*, much to the consternation of many Czechs.

If a German and Jewish as well as a German-Jewish presence was one of the distinctive characteristics of Central European culture, and multicultural symbiosis was the source of its dynamism, this culture ceased to exist during and after World War II. If Central European culture was inspired or made by Jews, it either emigrated with them before the Holocaust or died with them during it. The flight or expulsion of the Germans also dramatically diminished their presence in the region.

East Central Europe, historically part of a German "linguistic and cultural space," was de-Germanized, although the Germans' absence is seldom lamented. The combined results of Nazi and Allied policies—genocide for the Jews and population transfers for the Germans—were an "ethnic cleansing" of states that historically had been multi-ethnic, culturally diverse, and religiously heterodox.<sup>6</sup> For the first time in its history, Poland was almost exclusively ethnic Polish and Roman Catholic. The population of Bohemia and Moravia became almost exclusively Czech. In comparison, Hungary still had a considerable number of Jews and Germans, but it became much more homogeneous than it had been in the past.

If the relative absence of Jews and Germans dramatically changed the complexion of Central European culture, then the massive presence of the Russians in the region represented an unprecedented political reorientation. The eastern half of Central Europe, which had historically been oriented toward the West—Catholic Rome, the Paris of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, or London and Washington, D.C. as the capitals of the democratic world—fell under the long shadow of Moscow. "The Second World War, or rather its outcome," Piotr Wandycz remarked, "reversed the course of history of East Central Europe. Traditionally a borderland or a

## EUROPE DIVIDED, 1945-1949



The Iron Curtain in 1945

▨ Territories occupied and annexed by the Soviet Union, 1939-1941 and 1945-1947

▨ | The "eastern territories" of Germany incorporated into Poland

▨ | and the Soviet Union, 1945-1947

▨ | Soviet zones of occupation in Germany and Austria

★ Year Communists came into power

semi-periphery of the West, the region became a westward extension of the Soviet East."<sup>7</sup>

Generalizations about how the Communists came to power in East Central Europe are difficult to make. Yugoslavia was an exception because it was liberated by Tito's National Liberation Army, not the Red Army, and it installed a Communist government without Soviet assistance, or interference, in 1945. The Communists' rise to power in other countries in the region followed more or less the same pattern. During the war, Communist parties in these states were divided into "domestic" and "Muscovite" wings. The "domestics" worked in the underground at home, whereas the "Muscovites" were in Soviet exile. (The geographical segregation of the party factions also had ideological implications.) The Muscovites returned home in the wake of the Red Army to assume leading party and governmental positions, which inevitably led to dissatisfaction among those Communists who had done the dangerous work at home.

After the first postwar elections in the region, which were relatively free in Czechoslovakia and Hungary but much less so elsewhere, the Communist parties participated in coalition governments with social democratic, "bourgeois democratic," and agrarian parties. The Communists regularly controlled the Ministry of the Interior, an office that allowed them to misuse the police for political purposes and to manipulate the electoral process. Communists also promoted the idea of the "unity" of the left: an ideological and tactical alliance between Communists, on the one hand, and socialists and social democrats, on the other. This was just a tactical ploy, however. The destruction of independent socialist parties and the creation of "socialist unity" or "socialist workers'" parties exclusively under Communist control was one of the Communists' first objectives. The Communists also promoted policies, such as the nationalization of major industries and land reform, that were not only popular with broad sections of the population but also, to a certain extent, necessary. Nationalization was a means of reconstruction, and many East Central European states had a tremendous amount of land on their hands that had to be redistributed, for example, the former German territories in Poland, the properties of the *Sudetendeutsche* in Czechoslovakia, and the assets confiscated from "fascists" and *Volksdeutsche* in Hungary.

The Communists' methods of eliminating their opponents varied. Generally Communists exploited the results of an election, which they manipulated, or a governmental crisis, which they instigated, to undermine their opponents. Their rise to power in Bulgaria, Romania, and Poland in 1946 was straightforward, heavy-handed, and ruthless. Politicians from the opposition fled or were arrested on trumped up charges of "treason," tried, and executed, and their political parties were banned.

Hungarian Communists used the more sophisticated approach of "salam tactics." They took the whole sausage, but only one thin slice at a time, with a carefully orchestrated combination of defamation, blackmail, coercion, and police terror. In 1947, they eliminated their most formidable political opponent, the agrarian national Smallholders Party which held a ma-

jority of seats in the Hungarian parliament and had received an absolute majority (53 percent) of the votes in the 1945 elections, by discovering a "conspiracy" which ended in a gigantic show trial of 220 politicians. By 1948, the Communists had consolidated their control of Hungary. (Nevertheless, it would be technically inaccurate to label the East Central European Communist states as one-party regimes. In order to create the impression of political pluralism, a few agrarian and "liberal" parties were left nominally intact but strictly subordinated to the Communist Party as "bloc parties.")

In Czechoslovakia, the Communists enjoyed a considerable amount of authentic popular support, and they emerged from the first postwar elections with 38 percent of the vote. The Communists' rise to absolute power in February and March 1948 was an ambiguous event, and historians have had trouble deciding whether it was more of a coup by the Communists or more of a capitulation by the democrats. In any event, the Communists terrorized the non-Communist parties and called their supporters into the streets, and the Czechoslovak coalition government buckled under pressure. Eduard Beneš, who had presided over the demise of Czechoslovak democracy in 1938, had the misfortune of experiencing its renewed fall in 1948 and died shortly thereafter. His death also was symbolic, as it severed the link between the first and the second Czechoslovak republics. The democratic West was shocked by the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia, an event that reflected Stalin's strategy for the region. He wanted the Communist parties of the region to consolidate their power, even if this meant rupturing relations with the West.

The Communist seizure of power in the individual countries of East Central Europe was comparable in a number of respects. Whether the similarities are enough to assume that they had a master plan that they all followed or, on the contrary, whether they acted on a more pragmatic and *ad hoc* basis, is difficult to determine. However, the presence of the Red Army and the allegiance of the national Communist parties to Moscow made clear the region's future political orientation. By the end of 1947, the (Moscow) party line also was clear. Communists were not to cooperate with "bourgeois democrats."

Furthermore, the experience of fascist rule had radicalized many people and made them more receptive to socialist ideas, and after the war the shining Soviet vision of a new social order based on peace, justice, equality, and prosperity appealed to many members of the younger generation and to intellectuals, in particular. Traditional political elites had been largely eliminated by the Nazis in Poland and Czechoslovakia or discredited to a significant extent by collaboration in Hungary, and the Communists defamed national traditions and prewar institutions as "feudal, bourgeois, clerical, and fascist."<sup>8</sup>

The new Communist intelligentsia responsible for the propagation and administration of the forthcoming revolution came predominantly out of the working class and had moved up through the party rank and file or consisted of assimilated bourgeois Jewish intellectuals with upper-class backgrounds. (In East Central Europe, both Stalinization in the immediate postwar period and de-Stalinization after 1956 had peculiar national and



anti-Semitic twists. In Czechoslovakia, many of the leading party officials accused of conspiracy and executed in 1952 were Jewish. But these roles were reversed in Poland and Hungary, where many of the most ruthless Stalinists were Jewish. Therefore, de-Stalinization in 1956 was explicitly anti-Semitic as was indigenous anti-Communism thereafter.)

The Communist parties consolidated their power in two phases. Between 1945 and 1948, they purged the non-Communist or national opposition, and then they embarked on resolute programs of Stalinization, destroying democratic institutions and suspending civil rights, oppressing churches, nationalizing commerce and industries, collectivizing agriculture, and purging their own ranks. Yugoslavia was the only Communist country in East Central Europe not sucked into the Soviet bloc. Tito wanted to rule with his own iron fist, had his own ideas about the development of communism in Yugoslavia, and refused to fall into line with the other Communist parties and states in the region. The fact that the Red Army had not liberated Yugoslavia and the West's explicit approval of Tito's nonalignment also gave him considerable latitude. Differences between Tito and Stalin led to a dramatic split in 1948, and this ideological falling-out raised real and imagined tensions between "nationalists" and "Stalinists" in East Central Europe. After Tito refused to subordinate himself to Moscow, "Titoism" became a crime synonymous with "Trotskyism," "bourgeois nationalism," "revisionism," and the betrayal of "the international proletariat," all various designations for not doing things the way Moscow wanted. Throughout East Central Europe, many alleged Communist "aberrationists" were charged with these transgressions, prosecuted at show trials, and imprisoned or executed.

The fundamental issue at stake was whether there was "one road to socialism" designed and dictated by Moscow or many individual "national paths" leading to the same goal. As long as Stalin lived, "national aberrations" were not tolerated. But after his death in 1953, there was a struggle between Stalinists and reform Communists in many East Central European countries that was fueled by the official beginning of de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union in 1956. The pattern of conflict between Stalinists (or Moscow hard-liners) and East Central European reform Communists (who frequently appealed to national sentiments and hence were called "national Communists") was established early on and proved to be enduring. Each attempt to change the system—Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, Poland in 1980/1981, and in the Soviet Union itself in 1991—provoked a neo-Stalinist backlash.

#### *Dividing Germany, 1949*

Despite the big summit meetings in Teheran and Yalta, regular diplomatic consultation on a number of subordinate levels, and the establishment of Allied joint planning commissions during the war, the Allies never managed to agree before the end of the war on how they were going to deal with Germany. Allied planners discussed the idea of dividing Germany into smaller

states as one means of diminishing a future German threat. But they never agreed to divide Germany into the two German states that were established in 1949: the Federal Republic of Germany in the west and the German Democratic Republic in the east. The Germans also initially had nothing to say in the whole affair. After Nazi Germany capitulated on May 8, 1945, the Allies disbanded the Nazi government under the leadership of Admiral Karl Dönitz and eventually arrested its members. The *absence of* a jointly articulated Allied policy toward Germany before the end of the war and the *absence* of a German government after the end of the war created a situation that ultimately facilitated the division of the country four years later.

The last great World War II summit meeting was held in Potsdam, outside Berlin, during July and August 1945. The composition of the Big Three had changed considerably. Churchill had won the war for Britain but lost the postwar elections; Clement Attlee was now the British prime minister. Roosevelt died shortly after the Yalta conference and his vice president, Harry Truman, assumed his place. Germany was the central issue at this meeting. The Allies decided on the Oder-Neisse Line as a provisional German-Polish frontier and endorsed the expulsion of Germans east of it as well as from Czechoslovakia and Hungary. They outlawed the Nazi Party and all its suborganizations, introduced denazification programs, and decided to prosecute leading Nazis at Nuremberg for war crimes and crimes against humanity. They also finally agreed on the modalities for the occupation of Germany and Berlin, which were divided into four zones but were to be jointly administered as a whole.

In theory, a quadripartite body, the Allied Control Council, was to agree unanimously on Allied policy for all of Germany which, in turn, was to be uniformly applied in the four zones by the respective occupational powers. This top-down administration was to be complemented by a bottom-up reorganization of Germany, which involved the reestablishment of political parties, on the one hand, and the rejuvenation of political institutions on a local and provincial levels within the four zones, on the other. The political parties and the provinces (*Länder*) were to be the building blocks of a new German state. A high degree of consensus and cooperation among the Allies would have been necessary for the quadripartite administration of Germany to function as envisioned, but the ability of the Allies to agree on fundamental policy issues disintegrated rapidly after the war. The individual occupational powers were also effectively in a position to act as they saw fit in their respective zones.

The dissension among the Allies on how to administer Germany was a manifestation of deeper differences between the Soviet East and the democratic West. Whether the Allied inability to agree on Germany directly contributed to a greater estrangement between East and West or, conversely, whether ideological confrontation caused a political gridlock in Germany has been a hotly debated issue among historians of different political dispositions. This is an important issue because it raises the question of who was ultimately responsible for the division of Germany—Communists and

Russians in the East or anti-Communists and Americans in the West—or if the division of Germany could have been avoided in the course of dividing of Europe.

In any event, the four Allies failed to establish a central administration for Germany. They argued about whether economic unification should precede political unification, or vice versa, and whether or not national elections should be held. It would be unfair to blame all the Allies' problems on the Soviets. The French, initially more anti-German than anti-Soviet, acted obstructively, too. In 1947, the American and the British occupational regimes created a "bizonia" to coordinate their economic policies, and the French eventually joined this configuration. Meanwhile, the Soviets pursued their own policies in their zone. In 1948, the failure of Allied cooperation in Germany and the success of the Communists in East Central Europe motivated the Western Allies to abandon the idea of German unity for the time being at least, and they drew up plans for the economic and political integration of western Germany into the European and transatlantic west. The Western Allies proposed that the German political parties in the western zones of occupation work out a provisional constitution, and they introduced a reformed West German currency, the *deutsche Mark*. The Soviets responded by withdrawing from the Allied Control Council, introducing an East German Mark, and blockading Berlin. However, their attempt to drive the Western Allies out of West Berlin by starving the inhabitants in the western half of the city was frustrated by a spectacular airlift.

In September 1948, representatives from the *Länder* in the western zones convened in Bonn to draft a provisional constitution, and the adoption and ratification of the Bonner Grundgesetz, or Bonn Basic Law, led to the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in May 1949. The Western perception of West Germany and the Western German perception of the Allied occupation changed dramatically. The Western powers lost an old enemy and gained a new ally. From the West German perspective, the victors stopped occupying Western Germany and began defending its independence. While democracy was being established in West Germany, full-scale Stalinization commenced in East Germany, and it followed the established Communist patterns of coercion and collectivization. East German Communists also drafted and adopted their own version of a constitution, and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), a state of "farmers and workers," was proclaimed in October 1949.

The unwavering allegiance of West Germany to the West and East Germany to the East was extraordinary, and some observers ironically described the Germans' loyalty to their respective states and ideological blocs in terms of the German national psyche: a propensity for order, discipline, and perfectionism under prevailing political circumstances, whatever they may be. After the war, the Germans in the west decided to be the best democrats, and the Germans in the east were resolved to be the best Communists. But, this kind of observation obscures the fact that the political culture that evolved in the FRG represented a break with undesirable German national traditions of authoritarianism, whereas the one that developed in the GDR

did not. The GDR was one of the most successful Communist states in the eastern bloc, not because it was Communist, but because it was "German" in the negative sense of the word. Piety, Prussian organizational logic, Nazism, and Stalinism were compatible in many respects. Thus, the transition from one form of totalitarianism to another—from "brown fascism" to "red fascism"—involved a change of ideologies more than a departure from previous political structures or attitudes.

The Bonn Basic Law and the relationship between the two German states were unusual in many respects. Although the Bonn Basic Law had the legal status of a constitution in the Federal Republic of Germany, it was a provisional document designed to bridge the gap until a definitive constitution for all Germany could be drafted. The FRG assumed the moral and financial responsibilities that came with being the successor state of the Third Reich, whereas the GDR as a "socialist and anti-fascist state" completely dissociated itself from Nazi Germany.

Although the Federal Republic of Germany developed a pragmatic *modus vivendi* with the "second German state" and began to cultivate diplomatic relations with the GDR on several levels in the early 1970s, it never formally recognized the GDR. On the contrary, the FRG considered itself the only legitimate representative of the German people, and it granted FRG citizenship to any German resident of the GDR who was in a position to request it. In this respect, the Germans who were *de facto* citizens of the GDR were *de jure* citizens of the FRG, or potential West Germans. All they had to do is get to the West.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, the FRG not only claimed to be the sole legitimate representative of all Germans; as the only successor state of Nazi Germany, it also maintained that any peace settlement with Germany had to be based on a territorial status quo ante bellum: the German frontiers of 1937. The legal reasoning behind this argument is complicated, but it essentially meant that the FRG—as a partial, provisional, and democratic German state—could not definitively accept those changes in the prewar frontiers of Germany that the Allies had made unilaterally after the war, because the preconditions for recognizing those changes—German unification and the conclusion of a peace treaty—had not been fulfilled. In other words, the war was over, but from a legal point of view, peace had not been concluded.

As a result, the FRG did not formally recognize the postwar annexation of the "eastern regions" of prewar German territory by Poland and the Soviet Union. Although the leading politicians of the Federal Republic of Germany recognized that the "eastern regions" were irrevocably lost for Germany and were wise enough never to turn this formal issue into an actual claim, the fact that the Federal Republic of Germany was bound by a cogent legal argument to question the legitimacy of the postwar frontiers on formal grounds burdened the relations between the FRG and Poland. West German claims were a constant source of anxiety for Poles. They also gave Communist propagandists an opportunity to accuse the Federal Republic of Germany of wanting to revise the European order that World War II had established, just as Hitler did after World War I. (The German-Polish border

issue was finally settled in a bilateral treaty after the unification of Germany in 1990.)

The division of Europe into East and West was at an advanced stage before the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic were established in 1949. Between 1945 and 1948, the Communists had consolidated their control in Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. The Iron Curtain on the "German-German" frontier and, after 1961, the Berlin Wall were the most poignant symbols for the partition of Europe. Germany was not just a microcosm of the East-West split; it was the key to overcoming the division of Europe. As long as Germany was divided, Europe would stay divided.

There were two completely different best-case scenarios for German unification: "neutrality" on Soviet terms or democracy on Western terms. In 1952, the Soviets transmitted a diplomatic note to the Western Allies in which they proposed resuming quadripartite negotiations on the "German question." The so-called Stalin note envisioned the establishment of a Pan-German government in which "progressive" political forces would be (over)represented, the negotiation of a peace treaty, and the unification of Germany based on the condition that Germany would not participate in any military coalitions or alliances in the future. German neutrality or the neutralization of Germany was the price to be paid for unification. The West German government and the Western Allies viewed this Soviet offer with suspicion and eventually rejected it.

Some historians have argued that this was merely a tactical ploy by the Soviet Union to slow down the process of Western European economic and military integration and that it was aimed at preventing the "drift" of the Federal Republic of Germany into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Others, however, view the West's failure to respond to this Soviet initiative as a tragically missed opportunity, and they blame Western politicians of being shortsighted and intransigent. The interpretation of Stalin's 1952 offer is still a source of controversy. In any event, the best Germany that the Soviet Union could imagine was a neutral one: either not associated with the West or disassociated from the West in military and economic terms.<sup>10</sup> This vision also was similar in many respects to the kind of Germany that many representatives of the West German left in the 1980s wished to see: a neutral, demilitarized, and nuclear-free state.

The Soviet proposal for German unification was based on a big compromise, and one of the reasons that the West rejected it was that it wanted reunification on its own democratic terms. These terms were unrealistic, however, because they presupposed the democratic transformation of East Germany as well as the Soviet willingness to let East Germany go. In principle, West German politicians never questioned the importance of German reunification. It was and remained a long-term policy goal and constitutional obligation of the Federal Republic of Germany. However, the prospects of reunification were so dismal that very few people believed it to be a foreseeable event.

The longer the division of Germany lasted, the more acceptable it be-

came on both sides of the Iron Curtain. For example, in the 1950s and 1960s, between 35 and 45 percent of the West Germans surveyed considered reunification to be the most important question in the Federal Republic; after the mid-1970s, however, it was never more than 1 percent.<sup>11</sup> The word "reunification" effectively disappeared from the operative vocabulary of West German politicians and was replaced by other terms reflecting the Western German policy options in German-German relations: *Ostpolitik*, rapprochement, détente, cooperation, normalization. Furthermore, the idea of the unification of Germany or, after 1949, reunification, was a generational issue. That is, it meant much more to the older generations of Germans than to the younger ones who had grown up in two German states and had been taught not only that the division of Germany was the price that the Germans had to pay for the Third Reich but also that it was indispensable to the maintenance of peace in Europe.

### *Starting the Cold War*

As long as the Cold War lasted, there was an ongoing debate among historians and political scientists in the West about who started it and whether it could have been avoided or shortened, and since 1989 they have argued about who won or lost it and why. Neither the time nor the place in which the Cold War began is a source of controversy. It started as a European affair that acquired increasingly clear contours between 1946 and 1949 and assumed global dimensions thereafter. However, historians must establish a hierarchy of causes for the Cold War, and the importance of individual variables such as ideology (or political principle), economics, or national interest can be weighted and combined in various ways. Different interpretations reflect different understandings of the roles played by the Soviet Union and the United States (as well as varying assumptions about the nature of Marxism-Leninism or capitalist democracy).

Theories of the origins of the Cold War can be divided into different schools. The traditional interpretation of the Cold War is the product of an older generation of scholars, many of whom had firsthand experience with Nazism or Stalinism, whereas revisionist interpretations have been proposed by younger generations. "Idealists" and "realists" argue about the motives behind the conflict: The former emphasize the importance of political principle, and the latter underscore the role of economics and national interest. Liberals and conservatives in the United States or representatives of the political left and right in Western Europe also regularly disagree about the Cold War. In conservative terms, the issue at stake is whether or not one was "hard" or "soft" on Communism. Generally speaking, idealists and conservatives support a traditional, pro-American interpretation of the Cold War, whereas realists and representatives of the political left advance various forms of revisionism critical of the United States' role in the initiation and continuation of the conflict.

The initial interpretation of the Cold War took Soviet ideology at face value. It was based on the assumption that the Soviet Union was an expan-

sive and aggressive totalitarian state ruled by a ruthless and unscrupulous dictator and actively pursuing the objective of world domination. The establishment of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Iron Curtain was indicative of Soviet aspirations, and the Western democratic world closed ranks to protect itself and combat the spread of Communism. These issues were not open to interpretation. They were generally recognized as matters of fact.

Revisionists later questioned this version of the story and attempted to invert the logic of the beginning of the Cold War. They maintained, for example, that Soviet policy was more reactive than aggressive, and they contended that the belligerent nature of Western anti-Communism threatened the Soviet Union to such a great extent that it was forced into a defensive posture that entailed clamping down in Eastern Europe. These two schools of thought have enjoyed varying degrees of popularity among different generations of Western Sovietologists and historians.

The older generation of analysts from the 1940s and 1950s, frequently émigrés from East Central Europe or the Soviet Union, advanced a relatively straightforward theory of totalitarianism developed during World War II to describe both Nazism and Communism. This novel form of government tried to subordinate all forms of social, economic, and political organization in a single hierarchy that in turn was dominated by one party and one individual or dictator. Totalitarian ideology envisioned the radical transformation of humankind and society and sanctioned domestic terror and foreign aggression as legitimate means for achieving these ends. Furthermore, totalitarian rule was comprehensive; it penetrated all realms of society. From this perspective, the Cold War was the logical, moral, political, and military continuation of World War II. Hitler had been defeated. Stalin had not.

The younger generation of revisionists who began their careers in the late 1960s criticized this traditional interpretation of the Cold War for being too ideological, uncritical, and methodologically unsophisticated. Instead, they assumed that the Soviet Union was not as bad as the proponents of the totalitarian theory claimed, made a variety of distinctions between Nazism and Communism, and pointed out that Soviet reality was much more complex than the gross simplifications of totalitarian theory. They also believed that the Soviet system was capable of modernization and reform.

Theories about the Cold War fell into corresponding "right-wing" and "left-wing" categories. On one side, the proponents of the traditional theory criticized as totalitarian the tenets of Marxism, socialism, and communism. On the other, many revisionists showed a certain sympathy for Marxist or socialist ideals, and in some cases, they felt that the Soviet Union was basically a good idea that had been poorly executed and had massively gone astray, especially under Stalin. From this perspective, the Soviet Union appeared to be inherently capable of developing into a freer and more prosperous system, especially after Stalin's death in 1953.

Different dates can be used to mark the beginning of the American engagement in the Cold War, each illustrating different political, economic, and strategic dimensions of the conflict. On March 5, 1946, Winston

Churchill gave a speech in Fulton, Missouri, in which he popularized the metaphor of the Iron Curtain. Just over one year later, President Harry Truman told the U.S. Congress that the world was faced with a struggle between two fundamentally incompatible ways of life. One, which the Americans understood as the American way, was based on the "will of the majority" and was "distinguished by free institutions, representative government, [and] free elections," and the other, which relied on "terror and oppression," was "based upon the will of the minority forcibly imposed upon the majority." The immediate occasion for this speech was Truman's request that the United States provide economic and military aid to Greece and Turkey in order to help their respective governments combat Communist insurgents. However, he also stated that the United States was determined in principle to assist those people elsewhere whose freedom was threatened by "armed minorities or by outside pressure."<sup>12</sup> The Truman Doctrine was born.

For Harry Truman and most other Americans and Europeans at this time, the Cold War was a straightforward question of political principle (or political ideology). The choice to be made was between freedom, liberty, and democracy or their absence, although subsequent interpretations made this seem less clear and almost hopelessly complicated.<sup>13</sup> The Cold War worldview distinguished between good and evil, or "us" and "them," in a manner that was perhaps naïve, simplistic, and self-righteous. It also was responsible for a number of dubious U.S. domestic and foreign policies, vigilantes like the "Commie" hunter Senator Joseph McCarthy at home, and an assortment of politically reprehensible allies and client states in the developing world whose only redeeming value was their anti-Communism. Whether the merit of the ideals to which the United States was committed can be used as an excuse for the excesses of the Cold War or, conversely, whether the excesses were indicative of the shortcomings of the ideals themselves is a point that proponents and critics of U.S. policy during the Cold War will continue to debate. Nevertheless, if the Cold War was about ideas, the fundamental choice was clear.

George F. Kennan, one of the most influential personalities in the American foreign policy establishment after the war, was responsible for the classic formulation of the strategy that the United States was to pursue in its confrontation with the Soviet Union. In an article, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," which he published under the pseudonym "X" in the July 1947 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, he outlined the "innate antagonism between capitalism and Socialism" and asserted that "the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies."<sup>14</sup> The Cold War was, in this respect, a confrontation between fundamentally different social, economic, and political systems, each championed by states that emerged from World War II with an unprecedented amount of power: the United States and the Soviet Union.

A "realist" school of international relations would prefer to invert the relationship of political principle to national interest in both the American and Russian cases. The realists maintain that the divergent U.S. and Soviet

ideologies merely veiled the real source of conflict: clashes of national interest on a global scale between two hegemonical powers. This interpretation downplays the importance of ideas because they are just an ideological subterfuge for national economic interests. However, it would be unwise to overlook the fact that Soviet confidence in Soviet ideology—and, one might add, American faith in the American way-of-life—had reached their zeniths after World War II.

It is important not to lose sight of the psychological factors that were at work on both sides. The Cold War was a world historical conflict for the Americans and the Soviets, and each side felt threatened by the other. Whether the mutual perception of these threats ever really matched their actual dimensions or the intentions of the adversaries is a related problem. One may argue that the American fear of Communism at the beginning of the Cold War was commensurate with the Soviet faith in Communism. Certainly one of the peculiarities of the ensuing conflict was that American anti-Communists steadfastly continued to believe in the threat of Communism long after the Communists had ceased believing in Communism's promise and potential. The manner in which the Cold War ended—the Soviet Union collapsed—seems to indicate that the Soviet Union's political posture changed dramatically somewhere along the way. Nonetheless, ideas and ideologies were important at the beginning of the Cold War, and they helped heighten or, as some critics maintain, exaggerate the conflict. This is a problem that I shall discuss later.

Once the United States had announced its intention to contain Communism, it had to articulate economic and military policies to do so, and they were the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In a commencement speech at Harvard University on June 5, 1947, General George Marshall, the U.S. Secretary of State, announced plans for the largest foreign aid program in history, a plan that would bear his name. Historians have argued about how altruistic or imperialist the Marshall Plan, was as well as to what extent the United States needed the "European Recovery Program" as much as the Europeans did. In his speech, Marshall emphasized the idealism underlying the proposal: "Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos." He also made it clear that "governments, political parties, or groups which seek to perpetuate human misery in order to profit therefrom politically or otherwise will encounter the opposition of the United States." But, he did not technically exclude any one from the start: "The program should be a joint one, agreed to by a number of, if not all, European nations."<sup>15</sup>

Although Poland and Czechoslovakia were sincerely interested in participating in this program, the Soviet Union dismissed as "imperialistic" the idea of the Marshall Plan for itself and its "allies" in East Central Europe. But the Western European states participated enthusiastically, and the initial \$13 billion of aid helped lay the foundations for their postwar recovery and prosperity.

The political logic of the United States for providing economic aid to Eu-

ropé was relatively simple: If widespread economic hardship had provided a fertile breeding ground for left- and right-wing radicalism and totalitarianism in Europe—the hardships of World War I had directly contributed to the success of the Bolsheviks in Russia and Germany's economic duress helped precipitate the Nazis' rise to power in Germany in 1933—then economic recovery, stability, and prosperity would deprive ideological radicalism of its material basis. They also would enhance the chances of democracy. America, therefore, invested in its allies.

The United States also had concrete economic interests in European reconstruction. World War II had brought the country out of the Depression and had created the most powerful economy in the world. Government analysts recognized that the U.S. economy had to find markets for its productive potential after the war, or otherwise it would experience a dramatic downturn, the consequences of which would be magnified even further by planned cutbacks in federal expenditures related to the war effort. Thus the idea of giving Western European countries grants, credits, and subsidies earmarked for the purchase of U.S. goods and services was born, and it provided a way out of an impending economic dilemma. In helping Europe, the United States helped itself. Aid created the basis for trade and secured new export markets in a postwar global economy in which the United States enjoyed a dominant position.

Furthermore, the fact that government expenditures in the United States did not recede after the war to the extent many people had anticipated they would greatly benefited the American economy. Although government expenditures dropped sharply from 1945 to 1948, they still were more than twice what they had been in 1940, and between 1948 and the end of the 1950s, they nearly doubled again. The main reason for this remarkable increase in government spending was defense. From an ideological or strategic perspective, the obvious purpose of unprecedented peacetime expenditures on defense was to contain Communism by defending the United States, its allies, and American interests throughout the world.

From a fiscal perspective, the billions and billions of dollars spent on defense during the Cold War also helped stimulate economic growth and maintain domestic prosperity in the United States. In other words, defending the American way of life also financed the American way of life for millions of Americans, not to mention the European way of life for millions of West Europeans, too. It allowed Western European governments to invest less in defense—and more on infrastructure, health, housing, education, and social welfare—than they would have been able to if they had spent more on their own defense.

The establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949 put one of the finishing touches on the institutionalization of the Cold War in its initial phase. When World War II ended, American military planners wanted to "get the boys home." The idea of maintaining a considerable and permanent military presence in Europe and the Pacific did not correspond to the United States' isolationist traditions, but the Cold War as a European and a global conflict essentially changed the United States' for-

foreign policy demeanor. As a result of World War II, Western European states had also learned a number of lessons about collective security, and their immediate concern after the war was the German potential for aggression in the future. But the actuality of the Soviet threat in Europe quickly displaced hypothetical considerations about a German one. Western European democracies shared the United States' perception of the Soviet Union as a threat, and they wanted to maintain a U.S. presence in order to deter it.

From the American perspective, Europe was the most important immediate theater of "containment," and the defense of the United States did not start on the Atlantic coast but on the Elbe River. The purpose of NATO was relatively straightforward. The idea of a transatlantic pact for collective security was to keep the United States in, Germany down, and the Soviet Union out. The Warsaw Pact also had similar objectives in Eastern Europe, with one important exception. Its purpose was to keep the Soviet Union in, Germany down, and—as the outcome of the Hungarian revolution in 1956 and the end of the Prague Spring in 1968 demonstrated—East Central Europe down, too.

Critics of U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War maintain that the anti-Communist rhetoric of containment obscured the United States' real objectives: the "hegemonic project"<sup>16</sup> of containing not only its enemies but also its friends and allies. Idealists contend that political principle—"defending the Free World"—was the most important motive of U.S. policy, whereas "realists" and revisionists identify and document less noble and self-serving incentives called "the American national interest."

There is no point denying that American hegemony in Europe (and elsewhere) developed in the course of the Cold War. However, the hegemony of the "American empire" was qualitatively different from the control the Soviets exercised in their own. The distinction between hegemony "by invitation" and by imposition is an important one.<sup>17</sup> "Ami go home!" belonged to the political vocabulary of many Western Europeans, and the frequency of this exhortation increased in proportion to the development of freedom, prosperity, and security in Western Europe. The reason the United States did not comply with this demand was that it represented a minority opinion in functioning democracies that ultimately identified their national security interests with a continuing U.S. presence.

The consequences of dissidence in East Central Europe were different. Nevertheless, Soviet propaganda always emphasized how "friendly" and "fraternal" the Soviet Union's relationships were with its allies. Before 1989, East Central Europeans used to ask one another rhetorically whether the Soviets were their friends or their brothers. The answer to this question was telling: "They are our brothers. You can pick your friends."

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## The Failure of Eastern Europe

1956-1989

When the Cold War started, the concepts of East and West were more than sufficient for describing the political reality of a divided Europe, a division that appeared to be permanent. The Soviet version of Communism and the Soviet Communist version of Eastern Europe seemed to be here to stay. The idea that the Soviet Union would let its empire go was simply unrealistic, according to the experts of that now defunct discipline called Sovietology. The assumption that any attempt to change the political status quo in Eastern Europe would endanger peace not only in Europe but also on a global scale became one of the central premises of East-West relations: peaceful coexistence after the mid-1950s and détente in the 1970s. Then East-West relations deteriorated to such an extent in the early 1980s that H. W. Brands referred to this period as the "Cold War II."<sup>1</sup> Détente ended with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 which demonstrated to the West that the Soviet Union was still intent on aggressively expanding its empire. Ronald Reagan, elected to his first term as U.S. president in 1980, shocked friend and foe alike by referring to the Soviet Union as an "evil empire." The Cold War, East and West, was here to stay.

Of course, not everyone in the Soviet East abandoned the idea of Central Europe. Many members of the older generation—socialized before World War I or during the interwar period—continued to believe in the conservative (traditional, national, and Christian) or "bourgeois" (liberal and enlightened) values that were part and parcel of that Central European tradition defining the region as the easternmost part of Western European civilization. However, the Communist control of public life, the press, and education made Central Europe a "private" and a subversive idea, and it was

exactly this class of "reactionaries" that the Communists wanted to destroy. They attempted to replace traditional intelligentsia with a new class of Eastern European Communist intellectuals systematically recruited from the rural or working classes. These agents of Stalin's agenda for the region were the vanguard of building socialism in Eastern Europe, and they were, in the Communist sense of the word, Eastern Europeans. The next generation of Eastern European intellectuals had a more critical relationship with Moscow. This was partially a result of the de-Stalinization in the mid-1950s that brought the reform Communists into power. They did not believe in a slavish imitation of the Soviet model for building socialism and were interested in pursuing a variety of different "national paths" to Communism, but they were Eastern Europeans, too, because they still embraced a Communist program.

One small group of people continued to propagate the idea of Central Europe: the first wave of Central European émigrés from Soviet Eastern Europe to the West, those who left during the initial period of Stalinization in the late 1940s or early 1950s. (Subsequent waves of émigrés followed: Hungarians in 1956, Czechs and Slovaks in 1968, and Poles in 1981.) They suffered a fate common to all exiles: Very few people in the West seemed to pay attention to them or to show even a remote understanding of the issues that concerned them.

Being disappointed in the West was one of the complaints of Central European émigrés in the West as well as Central European intellectuals in the East. Western ignorance, or a combination of negligence and amnesia, was the main problem. Most people in the West did not even know that the countries that formed the western provinces of the new Soviet empire represented the eastern frontier of Western civilization, nor did they fully understand the true nature of Communism or the implications of Russian Soviet totalitarianism. The "attitude of the average person in the people's democracies" in the East toward the West, as Czesław Miłosz observed in the early 1950s in *The Captive Mind*, his analysis of the relationship of intellectuals to Communism, was "despair mixed with a residue of hope." He described the Eastern intellectuals' attitude toward the West as "somewhat like disappointed love" that "often leaves a sediment of sarcasm."<sup>2</sup>

Given these circumstances, it should be apparent why very few people spoke about Central Europe in the decades following World War II. With the exception of a handful of émigrés and experts, no one in the West seemed to know much about the idea or the region, and many Western specialists, who were trained during the Cold War to analyze Communism, methodologically subsumed most of the region under the umbrella concept of the Soviet East. The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (or "the bloc") were one region, not two (Central or East Central and Eastern Europe). In Eastern Europe itself, the Communists applied the same logic of ideological unity, although they used different concepts to justify it such as "the perpetual friendship of the Soviet Union," "fraternal cooperation," and the "socialist division of labor."

Under such conditions, it seemed unrealistic to talk about Europe in any

## MILITARY AND ECONOMIC BLOCS, 1955-1989



1 Member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO, est. 1949) and the European Economic Community (EC, est. 1958)

NATO 1952 Year of accession to NATO  
EC

1972 Year of accession to EC

—|—| NATO member states only

—|—| Nonaligned neutral states

—|—| Member states of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON, est. 1949) and the Warsaw Pact (est. 1955)

—|—| Nonaligned Communist states

1956 Anti-Communist revolutions in the East bloc

other terms than East and West. But in the early 1980s an increasing number of intellectuals and dissidents in Eastern Europe, a handful of émigrés, academics, journalists, and even a few politicians in the West started to use the concept of Central Europe, or East Central Europe, with greater frequency. There was no real consensus on where this region was, and there were regional and ideological variations on the idea of Central Europe which had one common denominator: Central Europe was a means of searching for alternatives to the Iron Curtain, the Cold War, and the partition of Europe. The political implications of the idea of Central Europe were so enormous that realists tended to dismiss the concept altogether.

It is easy to retrospectively ascertain that the reemergence of the idea of Central Europe paralleled the final crisis of Communism in Eastern Europe during the 1980s. If the bankruptcy of Communism in Eastern Europe was one of the prerequisites for the reemergence of the idea of Central Europe, or some of the most important versions of it, we should look at how Communism failed in Eastern Europe in order to understand the renaissance of Central Europe as an idea and a region.

*Revolutions and Reforms:  
1956, 1968, and 1980-1981*

In light of the failure of Communism, it might seem unnecessary to ask whether Communism was a good idea that was merely poorly executed or a bad idea to start with. The distinction between methods and principles is an important one. As long as Communists believed in method—the possibility of reforming or perfecting the Communist system—it was viable. But once they recognized that the principles on which the system was based had to be changed—such as the Communist Party's monopoly on political power or the state's monopoly on the economy—it was not.

The history of Communism in the twentieth century analogously can be written from two different perspectives. It may be viewed sympathetically as a series of missed opportunities or analyzed critically in terms of its inherent defects: the systemic flaws or moral and political misconceptions that burdened it from the very start and that became clearer with time. In the first case, Stalin may be accused of ruining or perverting the fundamentally good ideas of Lenin and Marx; in the second case, Lenin and ultimately Marx are responsible for the basically bad ideas that Stalin executed all too well. Regardless of the perspective one prefers, Stalin is the central figure in the story. He was the architect of building socialism in the Soviet Union before World War II and responsible for exporting it to Eastern Europe thereafter.

De-Stalinization in 1956 was the watershed in the history of European Communism. After Stalin's death in 1953, there was a "thaw," a period of liberalization. Nikita Khrushchev eventually emerged victorious in the struggle for power in the Soviet Union, and one of his main concerns was improving the performance of the system he had inherited from Stalin. He understood that innovation, dynamism, and growth would be difficult in an

"administrative-command system" based on excessive centralization, coercion, and fear, and he recognized that the habits and interests of the party bureaucrats were one of the primary obstacles he confronted. Khrushchev also realized that he could not remedy the organizational deficiencies of the Stalinistic system without criticizing the ideology behind it. Therefore, he had to dismantle Stalin's reputation in order to reorganize the system bearing his name.

At the Twentieth Party Congress in early 1956, Khrushchev gave a "secret speech" condemning Stalin. In a tirade lasting for hours, he denounced Stalin's "personality cult," the party purges of the 1930s, the secret police, the extensive network of concentration camps or *gulags*? and Stalin's blundering as a military commander during World War II. He accused Stalin of negligence, incompetence, and deceit which cost millions of Soviet citizens their lives. Stalin and his regime were criminal.

Khrushchev had to mobilize those members of the Communist Party who were interested in reform, against the Stalinist hard-liners who were not, and his strategy for de-Stalinization was to undermine the legitimacy and credibility of the old guard by making them accomplices to Stalin's crimes. Although Khrushchev's program of de-Stalinization was inspired by the domestic problems of the Soviet Union, it also had profound consequences abroad. In the West, many Communists and intellectuals sympathetic to the Soviet Union were completely disillusioned. In Eastern Europe, the Stalinists in power had not been forewarned by Khrushchev about his plans. They were shocked to hear this type of talk coming from Moscow because it undermined their positions, too.

Using the criterion of reform or innovation, the post-World War II history of Communism in the Soviet Union can be divided into four general periods, each of which had far-reaching implications for the status of Communism in Eastern Europe: Stalinism, or the totalitarian period, which lasted until Stalin's death in 1953; de-Stalinization in 1956 followed by a phase of liberalization and experimentation under Nikita Khrushchev until 1964; a period of posttotalitarian retrenchment, consolidation, and stagnation under Leonid Brezhnev from 1964 until his death in 1982 (including the governments of Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, each of whom died shortly after coming to power); and the Gorbachev era from 1985 until 1991.

De-Stalinization illustrated the extent to which a change in Communist doctrine in the Soviet Union affected the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. On the one hand, the Soviet Communists' willingness or unwillingness to experiment with reform at home determined the Eastern European Communists' latitude to experiment with (or against) the system in their own countries. On the other hand, innovation in the Soviet Union inevitably created problems for those Communist regimes in Eastern Europe that were more conservative than the one in Moscow itself. De-Stalinization in the Soviet Union created a crisis for the reigning Stalinists of Eastern Europe in the mid-1950s (especially Poland and Hungary), just as Gorbachev's initiatives of perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness) created problems for the representatives of the old Brezhnev era in Eastern Europe



in the second half of the 1980s (especially the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria).

Furthermore, de-Stalinization sparked a debate among those Eastern European intellectuals who had embraced the socialist vision. These so-called revisionists were philosophers who, as Marxists, criticized Stalin and argued in the name of Marx for a return to more genuine socialist values and ideals. They assumed that there had to be not only philosophical but also political alternatives to the Russian Soviet version of Communism: perhaps even a "third way" between the type of capitalist democracy that had developed in the West and the socialism that had arisen in the East during the Cold War.

The question whether there was only one true path or many paths to socialism had been at the heart of the split between Stalin and Tito in 1948. The fact that Khrushchev sought a reconciliation with Tito in 1955 was an indication that attitudes were changing in Moscow, and after 1956 Khrushchev had to de-Stalinize Soviet foreign policy as well. Khrushchev was prepared, within limits, to allow Communist regimes in Eastern Europe a certain amount of latitude to experiment with "national paths." De-Stalinization helped to intensify the conflicts in Eastern Europe between the Moscow-oriented Stalinists, who were in power, and the reform-oriented, "national Communists," many of whom had previously been accused of "Titoism." It also provided an opportunity for the peoples of Eastern Europe to express their discontent with the Stalinist system.

Infighting among the different wings of the Communist Party and the potential for popular protest created explosive situations in Poland and Hungary in 1956, with events getting out of hand in Poland first. In June, some 50,000 workers in Poznań, an industrial center west of Warsaw, rioted against increases in prices and work quotas. The protest spread across the country, and as it began gaining momentum and support, it took on an increasingly anti-Communist tone. The Stalinists in power used Stalinist methods to squelch it, by calling on the Polish army, which led to more than fifty deaths and hundreds of wounded. Confronted with the prospect of continued unrest and pressure from the nationalistic wing of the Communist Party, the Polish Stalinists desperately sought a way to prevent the situation from deteriorating further.

This desperation paved the way for the political comeback of Władysław Gomułka, a former first secretary of the Polish Communist party who himself had been a victim of the Stalinists. (He was a national Communist who had been accused of "Titoism" in 1948 and was removed from power.) Gomułka was rehabilitated and reinstated in his old position in October 1956, and he managed to defuse the explosive situation. As a nationalist and a victim of the Stalinists, he had the sympathy of the population at large, and he announced a program of Polish de-Stalinization that enhanced his popularity. The Soviet Union followed events in Poland with great apprehension, and there was a strong likelihood of a Soviet intervention. (Khrushchev was prepared to tolerate anti-Stalinist reform but not anti-Communist revolu-

tion.) But Gomułka managed to convince Khrushchev that Poland's commitment to Communism and the Soviet Union was still intact.

The political setting in Hungary in 1956 was similar to that in Poland. There had been infighting between the Stalinists and the national reform Communists in the party and considerable popular discontent with the Stalinist system, based on its poor economic performance. The dynamics of the protest and reform evolved differently, however. In Hungary, Communist intellectuals, not workers, spearheaded the antiregime protest. They were devastated by tales of terror that accompanied de-Stalinization and wanted to see Mátyás Rákosi, Hungary's premier Stalinist, ousted from office. Many intellectuals sympathized with Imre Nagy, a more liberal and popular Communist leader who had been appointed prime minister in 1953 and tried to de-Stalinize Hungary before the official advent of de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union. However, Rákosi and his cohorts maneuvered Nagy out of office in 1955 and then expelled him from the Communist Party. In an attempt to pacify the situation, the Soviets helped orchestrate a change of leadership in July and replaced Rákosi with one of his associates, Ernő Gero. Replacing one Stalinist with another did very little to calm the situation. Antiregime protesters, mainly students, began making bolder and bolder demands, and they were encouraged by how events had transpired in Poland in October.

At a large demonstration in Budapest on October 23, 1956, the protesters demanded political liberalization, the dissolution of the secret police, and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary. It still is not clear how the shooting started, but gunfire sparked a revolution that began on the streets of Budapest and swept through the nation like wildfire. Workers and farmers swelled the ranks of the protesters, who armed themselves and clashed with the police, the Hungarian army, and Soviet units.

The days that followed were full of confusion, attempts at reconciliation, misunderstandings, and violence. Gero stepped down, and Nagy stepped in to form a new government that included several non-Communists. He also negotiated with the Soviet Union about withdrawing Soviet troops from Hungary, and they actually began leaving Budapest. Within a week of October 23, Nagy proclaimed the restoration of a multiparty system, announced Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, and declared the country's neutrality. (Nagy obviously had in mind the 1955 precedent of Austrian neutrality: neither East nor West but in the middle.) He appealed to the United Nations, and many Hungarians expected help from the West, particularly the United States. The tough talk of American anti-Communists had created the impression that the United States would help anti-Communists in Eastern Europe once they started helping themselves. But this was not to be the case.

The massive intervention of the Soviet army on November 4 crushed the Hungarian revolution which, in Communist parlance, was subsequently called the "Counterrevolution." János Kádár, a Communist who had been imprisoned under the old Stalinist regime and, like Nagy, made a political comeback during the first days of the revolution by becoming the first sec-

retary of the Communist Party, conspired with the Soviets to form a new government. The proclamation of the new Kádár government coincided with an attack by Soviet tanks on Budapest. Nagy and a number of his compatriots sought refuge in the Yugoslav embassy in Budapest. Fighting continued around the country for about another week, but the revolutionaries were hopelessly outnumbered and outgunned. More than 10,000 people died in the uprising, and almost 200,000 fled to Austria, where they received asylum.

Although Nagy and his associates were guaranteed safe-conduct by Kádár and the Yugoslav ambassador, they were kidnapped by the Soviets as soon as they left the Yugoslav embassy, taken to Romania, and then eventually returned to Hungary. They were tried and executed on June 16, 1958, and buried in unmarked graves.

Nagy had envisioned for Hungary some "third way," a combination of neutrality and socialism. But in the eyes of the Communists he had committed two "crimes": By reintroducing a multiparty system, he had abandoned one of the central precepts of Marxism-Leninism, and by withdrawing from the Warsaw Pact, he had directly threatened the Soviet Union's national security interests. The political monopoly or "leading role" of the Communist Party and the unity of the Soviet bloc were not to be questioned. (In 1989, Hungary's reform Communist regime rehabilitated Nagy by giving him a state funeral on the thirty-first anniversary of his execution on June 16. At the time, observers interpreted the reburial of Nagy as a funeral ceremony for Hungarian Communism.)

Hungarians like to compare their revolution of 1956 with the revolution of 1848. (Incidentally, after 1989, the dates on which these revolutions began—March 15, 1848 and October 23, 1956—became Hungarian national holidays.) In both cases, they fought against imperial powers for national freedom and lost because of Russian intervention. But they won the compromises that followed the defeats, by regaining a considerable amount of national autonomy.

After 1848, Hungary eventually negotiated the Compromise of 1867 with Austria. Although Kádár initially clamped down on the "counterrevolutionary elements" after 1956, under his leadership Hungary eventually became the most liberal Communist regime in the Eastern bloc. It was characterized by a willingness to experiment with economic decentralization or market elements, modest prosperity, and a relatively good human rights record. One general assumption is that the Hungarians showed the Soviets their teeth, and as a result, the Soviets were prepared to give them an exceptional amount of leeway. This is only half of the story, however. The West, always interested in encouraging independence from Moscow, was more than glad to support experimentation and rewarded Hungary for its initiative with generous financial support and favorable trade conditions.

Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic weathered relatively well the initial phase of de-Stalinization without de-Stalinizing, but this just postponed the issue. In Czechoslovakia, Antonín Novotný exercised a Stalinist monopoly on power from 1948 until 1968 as first secretary of the Communist Party and president of Czechoslovakia. The belated de-Stalin-

ization of Czechoslovakia was not inspired by popular protest or intellectuals, however. It originated within the Communist Party itself, which was concerned about the country's sluggish economic performance and general political malaise. At the beginning of 1968, a younger generation of reform-minded Communists maneuvered Novotný and the other conservative representatives of the old guard out of power, and under the leadership of a new party secretary, the dynamic and liberal Slovák Alexander Dubček, they began a series of sweeping reforms known as the "Prague Spring."

The Czechoslovak reformers avoided going as far as Imre Nagy had done in Hungary in 1956. There is no indication that they intended to abandon the doctrine of the Communist Party's monopoly on power or withdraw from the Warsaw Pact. They still regarded the Communist Party as an agent and instrument of reform but believed that it would be possible to develop a freer and more prosperous form of "Communism with a human face," and they recognized that political liberalization was the prerequisite for economic reform. The Prague Spring changed the relationship of the citizens to the Communist party-state by granting them more political freedom, which won them over to participate in reforming the system. Censorship and restrictions on travel outside of the country were lifted, and genuine criticism and individual initiative suddenly were not only permitted but even encouraged by the Communist Party itself. A new economic strategy was instituted, based on the introduction of market elements and competition into a socialist economy that still was based on the Communist idea of the collective (or state) ownership of the means of production—that is, the absence of private property in the capitalistic sense.

The Czech and Slovák response to these innovations was enthusiastic, even euphoric, and "Back to Europe" became a popular slogan. By avoiding coercion and actually sacrificing control, Dubček gained genuine popular support which ultimately enhanced his power and the legitimacy of his regime. But conservative Communists inside and outside of Czechoslovakia did not understand how it was possible to gain control by losing it, and they viewed the Czechoslovak experiment and the people's enthusiasm for it with increasing suspicion and apprehension. If the people liked it so much, something had to be wrong.

There has been a lot of speculation about what could have happened if an invasion of Warsaw Pact troops had not ended the Prague Spring on August 20, 1968. Dubček and his compatriots either went too far, or Communists less inclined to reform assumed that they would. Unlike Hungary in 1956, there was neither revolution nor armed resistance and bloodshed. But like Hungary in 1956, the reform Communists in power condemned the intervention, and conservative Communists negotiated behind their backs directly with the Soviets to install a new regime with the help of Soviet tanks. The West was shocked, but the overriding priority of détente contributed in its own way to the occupation of Czechoslovakia.

Dubček, effectively deprived of power after the invasion, was gradually eased out of office and replaced in 1969 by Gustav Husák, a conservative Communist and former victim of Czechoslovak Stalinism. Husák then pro-

ceeded to purge the Communist Party of its reformers—one-third of its membership—and to introduce a program of "normalization" that placed greater emphasis on the production of consumer goods coupled with the systematic persecution of dissent and a debilitating maintenance of the status quo. Leonid Brezhnev justified the Warsaw Pact's occupation of Czechoslovakia in terms of defending the achievements of socialism; the Brezhnev Doctrine of "limited sovereignty" made it clear that the Soviet Union would not tolerate too much experimentation in the Warsaw Pact because it threatened the Soviet Union's vital ideological and strategic interests.

The year 1968 was a turning point in East Central Europe in a number of respects. It marked the "culmination of the conflict between critical intellectuals and political power"<sup>4</sup> that had started with de-Stalinization in 1956. Many intellectuals who as party members, "revisionists," or Marxists had previously believed that the system could be reformed now recognized that it could not. A new generation of dissidents was born that abandoned Marxism as an intellectual program and "Communism with a human face" as a political one. In its place they adopted a political vocabulary with a striking affinity to that used in the West at the beginning of the Cold War. They were concerned about issues of principle, the moral dimension of politics, human rights, truth, and justice. But they also dismissed as cosmetic the changes made in the system since de-Stalinization and started analyzing it in terms of the continuity between what Stalin had created and Brezhnev and his comrades were maintaining. They began to talk about a "posttotalitarian system" or a "Stalinist-Brezhnevite system."

After the Prague Spring, a number of developments in the West added to the Western inability to understand the East Central European experience with Communism. The student revolutions of 1968 accompanied the rise of the "New Left," a renaissance of interest in Marxism and neo-Marxism, and protests against the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War. Many academics and intellectuals in the West considered the right-wing rhetoric of American Cold War anti-Communism to be an ideological subterfuge for "American imperialism," and this form of anti-anti-Communism was explicitly anti-American. The American empire was frequently seen as a greater threat than the Soviet empire. Some form of Marxism-Leninism appeared to be the only antidote for "American imperialism" in the developing world, and in some circles there was open admiration for the leaders of "struggles for national liberation," such as North Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh or Cuba's Che Guevara.

At the same time, the concept of totalitarianism went out of fashion among the younger generation of Western Sovietologists—the members of the older generation were veterans of World War II and the Cold War—because it was too ideological and methodologically unsophisticated for the theoretical and empirical purposes of social scientists. The Soviet Union's system obviously was different from Western systems. Nonetheless, the Soviet system was a system, and so its behavior could be explained using system theory, and its performance could be measured using quantitative analysis. After all, it had a constitutional and an institutional framework, decision-

making processes, social classes, interest groups, "lobbies" that bargained for resources, patterns of distribution, and the like, and it was pursuing a program of economic and social modernization.

Furthermore, the interplay between the spirit of leftist protest in the West and the methodological innovation in the social sciences inspired by neo-Marxist approaches increased the sympathy for socialism among a new generation of academics and intellectuals. In many cases, they sympathized with the ideals of socialism and preferred them to the materialistic and money-grubbing values of consumer capitalism. Based on their data, the Soviet system seemed to be doing well, and most Western social scientists were convinced that it could be reformed in the long run.

This was one of the premises for the "convergence theory" of capitalism and communism that was popular in the West in the 1970s. Social democratic and labor parties were in power in many Western European states. These left-of-center governments adopted policies based on state intervention, tax increases, additional public spending, and comprehensive as well as redistributive social welfare schemes, and they shared the conviction that shifting the public-private mix in the economy in favor of state expenditure, ownership, and control was the most desirable path of development. At the time, the general structural trend in Western Europe appeared to be away from capitalism and toward a social welfare system: "Less free market" and "more state" were the ideas behind "capitalism with a human face."

Although the idea of "Communism with a human face" had failed dramatically in 1968, there also were attempts to reform the Communist economies of Eastern Europe: strategies for economic change that left intact the Communist monopoly on political power. For example, in 1968 Hungary introduced a "New Economic Mechanism" that decentralized the planning process, gave individual enterprises more autonomy, introduced competition among economic agents, and placed greater emphasis on the production of consumer goods. A new school of socialist reform economists devised different "plan and market" schemes to improve the system's economic performance. Along with the relatively good human rights record of the Kádár regime, this appeared to be a promising development.

Poland launched an ambitious program of economic modernization, or "second-wave industrialization." It purchased Western technology with Western credit with the intention of producing more and better commodities. Some of them were to be sold in the West to generate the hard currency to pay the debt incurred, and the remainder would flow into the domestic or East bloc market. But grafting Western technology onto an inefficiently organized Eastern European economy failed and left Poland with a massive foreign debt. (Hungary also borrowed heavily, with fundamentally the same results.) Elsewhere there were other experiments along the lines of "consumer socialism." Incremental economic liberalization appeared to be the trend in Eastern Europe.

The proponents of the convergence theory thought that the structural experimentation of the Eastern European Communist states indicated that they were gradually moving in the same direction as the Western European so-

cial welfare states, although from a completely inverted point of departure. If more *statě* and less market was the Western European pattern of development, then less *statě* (centralization) and more market (elements) appeared to be the Eastern European pattern. Furthermore, if both these trends continued, the structural convergence of these divergent systems at some *ideál* midpoint in the future could be extrapolated. Both systems would ultimately evolve into Swedish-style *sociál* welfare states, and Eastern European Communists eventually would become Western European-style *Sociál* Democrats. The entire region would become ideologically equidistant from the Soviet Union and the United States, and Central Europe would become a neutral zone. The nonconfrontational environment of *détente*, the aversion of many Western *sociál* scientists to Cold War terminology, and the European vision of a symmetrical withdrawal of the superpowers from Central Europe made this scenario popular at the time.

The intellectual worlds of East Central European and Western intellectuals drifted apart during the *latě* 1960s and 1970s. The great majority of East Central European intellectuals abandoned Marxism, adopted the concept of totalitarianism to describe Communism, and rejected the idea of being able to reform the Communist system. At the same time, many Western academics and intellectuals abandoned totalitarian terminology and adopted ideas colored by Marxism or neo-Marxism. They displayed more and more sympathy for socialism and were convinced that the Communist system could be reformed. It was truly a strange situation. After 1968, leftist intellectuals in the West started using a political vocabulary similar to the one that East Central European intellectuals had definitively abandoned in 1968, and East Central European intellectuals adopted a political vocabulary that had a great affinity to the classic Cold War terminology that Western anti-Communists started using in 1948. In both cases the problem was finding a way change the status quo. East Central Europeans looked wistfully to the West, and a fair share of Western intellectuals looked hopefully to the East.

When the independent trade union movement of Solidarity emerged in Poland in 1980, the prospects for a change in East-West relations were not very promising. The strikes that began in the Gdańsk shipyard in the summer of 1980 were precipitated by increases in food prices, and they were similar in this respect to the previous waves of protest that had erupted after price hikes in Poland in 1970 and 1976, both of which had been bloodily repressed. However, the movement for independent trade unions that emerged from this discontent went far beyond the traditional union concerns.

The Polish workers' movement was flanked by the Catholic Church, on one side, and a relatively large group of peasant-farmers who owned and tilled their own land, on the other. Both these features of Polish society indicate to what extent Stalinization had failed in Poland. The Communists had failed to break the influence of the church, which was especially strong in rural areas, and they never managed to collectivize agriculture. Given the demographics of Polish industrialization and urbanization, the average Polish workers' roots were those of a Catholic peasant-farmer, which was not the

stuff out of which good Communists (and, in some cases, good workers) were made.<sup>5</sup>

Two important "alliances" preceded the rise of Solidarity. First, after the Polish strikes in 1976, dissident intellectuals started showing concern for the interests of the working class, and a series of initiatives helped bridge the traditional gap between the intellectual dissent of relatively isolated individuals and the workers' protest with its mass potential. Second, Polish intellectuals, many of whom were anticlerical (either as representatives of traditional, enlightened European liberalism or as former Marxists), reconciled themselves to working with the Catholic Church on practical issues, instead of against it on fundamental issues. In other words, "Catholic and non-Catholic intellectuals found more and more common ground in the defence of common values, common sense and basic rights."<sup>6</sup> The idea of self-defense—defending the people against the violence and transgressions of the *statě*—became one of the unifying principles of action. Last, although we should not overestimate how religious the Poles were—Communism did succeed to a great extent in creating a modern, secular society—the church was a strong and popular organization in Poland, and it always had provided the Polish nation with a haven during times of occupation and duress.

This triangular coalition of workers, intellectuals, and priests supplied the potential for mass protest with intellectual direction and moral authority. Although the poor performance of the Polish economy and the ineptitude of the Communists who managed it were the immediate sources of popular discontent, there were a number of Polish national traditions that aggravated it: anti-Russian sentiments, revolutionary romanticism, patriotism, and Roman Catholicism. All these elements seemed to coalesce when Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, the archbishop of Kraków, was elected Pope John Paul II in 1978. The election of the first non-Italian pope in centuries was not only a spectacular confirmation of Poland's Western or "Roman" orientation; it also created a feeling of national pride and acted as a catalyst in what can only be described as a spiritual or moral revolution.

The dynamics of the "Solidarity revolution" are complicated. The Poles had learned from the Hungarian revolution of 1956 and the Prague Spring of 1968. They therefore dismissed the idea of violently overthrowing Communism because they considered violence an inappropriate means of change, and they no longer believed in the Polish Communist Party's ability to reform Communism. (Nor did the Polish Communists. Their main interest was maintaining privilege and power.) What started out as a strike in Gdańsk in the summer of 1980 ended up less than eighteen months later as an independent organization of 10 million members (almost one-third of the Polish population), and Solidarity's demands on the government grew as the movement did. The idea of self-defense made way for the concept of self-management, which implied self-government. If Poland really was a "workers' *statě*," as the Communists always had maintained, then the workers started demanding real rights from the Communist Party in their own *statě*.

Solidarity completely undermined the legitimacy of the Polish Commu-

nist party-state, but it did not try to seize political power. Instead, its strategy was based on the insight that the party-state could not be reformed but that society could. The idea of a society that renewed and reorganized itself—a "civil society" independent of the state and whose interaction with the state was based on the rule of law and the observation of fundamental human rights—was one of the movement's guiding principles, and Solidarity was internationally recognized in the West from the far left to the far right because virtually everybody could find something in its program with which they could identify.

Solidarity pursued a strategy of "self-limiting revolution," based on non-violence and constraint, to wring concessions from the Communist party-state and managers of the state-run economy, and it progressively increased the scope of its autonomous activities. Pragmatists and fundamentalists in the movement argued about how far Solidarity could or should push its demands. As a precautionary measure, Solidarity explicitly stated that it had no intention of pulling Poland out of the Warsaw Pact. But it was perfectly clear to the Soviets and conservative Communist regimes elsewhere that a peaceful, democratic, national, anti-Communist revolution was in progress, and they were afraid that it might be contagious.

The Solidarity movement exacerbated the economic crisis in Poland and created a political one. A vacuum developed in which the Polish Communist Party had effectively lost control, but Solidarity—for tactical reasons and as a matter of principle—was not prepared to assume it. The Solidarity experiment thus ended on December 13, 1981, when (Communist) General Wojciech Jaruzelski proclaimed a national emergency and martial law and assumed the positions of Communist party secretary and prime minister. Because there were no emergency powers provisions in the Polish constitution, which would have given him extraordinary powers, Jaruzelski had to impose martial law. (Jaruzelski's declaration of martial law prevented a Soviet intervention, the consequences of which, most Poles agree, would have been catastrophic, and as much as Poles despised him in 1981, since then he has been rehabilitated largely for this preemptive measure.)

Since Poland obviously was not at war with a foreign state, it was clear to the members of the Solidarity movement that the government had declared war on civil society. The Jaruzelski government rounded up thousands of activists and put them in internment camps and banned Solidarity and its various suborganizations. Unlike the situation in Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968, however, the Jaruzelski regime did not isolate and disperse protest effectively or break the will to resist. It merely outlawed the former and contained the latter. Solidarity then went underground as a resistance movement and continued its struggle against a government that most Poles regarded as illegitimate and perceived as foreign. The international protest was loud but ineffectual, and Poles were disappointed in those Western European heads of state, such as the West German chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, who criticized Solidarity for its recklessness and considered the Jaruzelski regime's restoration of order to be "necessary."

The initial demoralization and disillusionment were great after the dec-

laration of martial law in Poland in December 1981, and everyone was prepared for a long political winter. The repertoire of East Central European options seemed to be exhausted: Violent revolution had failed in Hungary; "Communism with a human face" had failed in Czechoslovakia; and Solidarity's peaceful, negotiated transformation of the Communist system, "self-limiting revolution," had failed, too.

In 1982, the Hungarian dissident György Konrád made the following observation:

The three medieval kingdoms of East Central Europe—Polish, Czech, and Hungarian—seem to have been the work of peoples who had great powers of survival. In one way or another, they paid dearly for their independence. Even though the centuries-old experiment in independence has still not reached a successful conclusion, this continuing tenacity is proof that the struggle for self-determination will go on until self-determination has been achieved.

Konrád's prognosis for the chances of change in the Communist world at that time was pessimistic and long term: "Three attempts have failed; the seventh will succeed." The Communist system may not have been robust, but it was intact. In a variation on the old phrase of "Communism with a human face," the Polish dissident Adam Michnik called it "Stalinism with its teeth knocked out." Under these discouraging circumstances, people started talking about Central Europe.

### *The Idea of Central Europe*

The career of the concept of Central Europe since 1945 has been truly unusual. After World War II, for at least three decades, people stopped using the term in the present tense. No one ever wanted Germans to talk about *Mitteleuropa* again. "Central Europe" was thus a nebulous concept when it began to come back into circulation in the early 1980s, reflecting different perceptions of the East-West problem on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Although an auspicious denouement of the East-West conflict was one of the premises of the idea of Central Europe, even those people who used the term could not agree on the causes or the nature of this conflict or on the most appropriate means of ending it. The regional dynamics of the East-West conflict and the divergent attitudes toward the reform potential of the Communist system also influenced the evolution of different Central Europe ideas. Three versions of "Central Europe" emerged: in the Federal Republic of Germany in the West, in and around the frontiers of neutral Austria, and behind the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe.

In West Germany, Central Europe was a concept adopted by the left, ranging from the ecological-pacifist, "basis democracy" Green movement to the Social Democrats. They all were interested in reviving the process and practice of détente and believed in the central premise of Social Democratic *Ostpolitik*, that "change through rapprochement" or peaceful cooperation with the Communist system was the best means of transforming it. They

also were opponents of the arms race and, in some cases, of the membership of the Federal Republic in NATO. Troop reductions and disarmament, the creation of a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe, neutralism or neutrality for the Federal Republic of Germany, and a symmetrical withdrawal of the superpowers from not only Germany but also the entire region were some of the key elements of this vision for Central Europe.<sup>8</sup> After these preconditions were satisfied, German reunification could be seriously addressed. Assumptions about the potential benefits of actively reintroducing détente, convergence theory, the democratic potential of reform Communism, and, in some cases, the possibility of a "third way" between (Soviet) Communism and (American) capitalism all were operative here.

This version of Central Europe was the most sensitive to the international and strategic dimensions of the East-West conflict. The quality of the relations between the Soviet Union and the United States and their allies in Eastern and Western Europe determined the general international framework for discussing the idea of Central Europe, based on the premise that a fundamental change in the relationship between the superpowers—and hence their conduct and presence in Central Europe—was necessary in order to change the status quo. It was difficult to envision under what circumstances either the United States or the Soviet Union might withdraw from the region, but it was clear that both of them had to go. There naturally was much disagreement on which of the superpowers represented the greater threat and hence was the bigger obstacle. For example, for the West German peace movement, it was the United States and NATO.

The German-German frontier was the toughest line of European confrontation in the East-West conflict. In terms of troops and conventional and nuclear weapons, East and West Germany were the most highly militarized region in world history. Parity and deterrence—a "balance of terror"—were strategic doctrines in both East and West, but it was difficult for representatives of both military establishments to agree in quantitative and qualitative terms on who had what. The complicated tactical and strategic relationships between conventional and nuclear forces, combined with mutual suspicion and the assumption that the other side never admitted to having a critical advantage that was upsetting the balance of power, made troop and arms reduction talks between the superpowers relatively futile exercises.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, Western security experts tended to agree that unilateral Western reduction was undesirable or even dangerous, because it either would upset the balance of power or could be interpreted as a sign of weakness and thus encourage the Soviet Union as the benefiting power to take advantage of its position of superiority. During the renewed arms race of the 1980s, unilateral reduction and withdrawal were basically what the West German left demanded (and was lavishly praised as "progressive" by Soviet propaganda). The idea of getting the Americans out of West Germany, getting West Germany out of NATO, and declaring German neutralism or neutrality had a strong affinity to what Stalin wanted to achieve with his famous offer in 1952. The leftist West German scenario for Central Europe was based

on the assumption that if the United States were to go, then the Soviet Union would leave. Then after the Soviets left, not only Central Europe would come into its own, but reform communism or real socialism would flourish, too. This, however, was a worst-case scenario for the conservatives: a "Finlandization" of West Germany.

Finns have always been troubled by the use of the term "Finlandization." After World War II, the Finnish government concluded a treaty of mutual cooperation and assistance with the Soviet Union that took into account certain Soviet security interests. For example, Finland was obliged to cooperate with the Soviet Union in case of another war with Germany. Otherwise, Finland pursued a judicious policy of neutrality after 1945, which ensured its independence.

In reference to Western European affairs, "Finlandization" was a negative term that reflected conservative fears that the Western European left might succeed in neutralizing Western Europe. However, in the Eastern European context, after the mid-1980s until 1989, "Finlandization" or "self-Finlandization" was a best-case scenario for countries like Poland and Hungary. Dissidents and reformers speculated that the Soviet Union might let countries out of the Eastern bloc if they, like Finland after World War II, were prepared to make some concessions to the Soviet Union's national security interests and to refrain from joining Western military or economic alliances.

If the West German debate about Central Europe reflected the immediacy of the East-West conflict, then a second, different version of Central Europe evolved in and around Austria. The Iron Curtain may have been impenetrable between East and West Germany, but the contours of the East-West conflict softened along the frontiers of neutral, nonaligned Austria. It was not a member of either of Europe's military and economic blocs—NATO and the European Community or the Warsaw Pact and COMECON—and in this respect it was neither East nor West. In terms of its economic and political systems, Austria was a Western European state, but it jettisoned like a peninsula into Eastern Europe.

Austria's neighbors in Eastern Europe envied its neutrality, which in 1955 had allowed it to get out of the East-West conflict. As a small and neutral state, it threatened virtually no one, and some political scientists speculated that Austrian neutrality could serve as a model for other small states in the region. No one really was sure how an incremental neutralization of the blocs, one state at a time, could be achieved, but it seemed to be a good idea.

The practice of mediating between the two rival blocs, cultivating cordial relationships with its immediate neighbors despite ideological differences, and promoting regional cooperation across national frontiers were essential to Austria's foreign policy. Austria's practice of neutrality also benefited from the admittedly nostalgic but nonetheless positive associations that the memories of "old" imperial Habsburg Austria evoked throughout the region. Despite the Iron Curtain, the peoples of various states shared a history, despite their differences. In this part of the world, *Mittleuropa* had nothing to do with Germany. Rather, it was Habsburg territory, and Vienna

was the indisputable capital of this cultural empire and the historical hub of a cosmopolitan network of cities: Trieste in Italy, Ljubljana in Slovenia, Zagreb in Croatia, Cluj in Transylvanian Romania, Chernovtsy and Lviv in Ukraine, Kraków in Poland, Prague and Bratislava in Czechoslovakia, and Budapest in Hungary.

The border between neutral and nonaligned Austria and nonaligned but Communist Yugoslavia was the least problematic seam between the Communist East and the democratic West in Europe. In the late 1970s the Austrian provinces of Upper Austria, Carinthia, and Styria; the Italian provinces of Friuli, Trentino-South Tyrol, and Venice; and the Yugoslav republics of Slovenia and Croatia established a regional "working group" to discuss shared Alpine-Adriatic problems and concerns and to arrange transnational planning in the region despite the differences in political systems. There were many topics on the agenda, ranging from traffic and ecological issues to tourism, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange.

This initiative was a modest attempt to emphasize the region's common interests, not the national or ideological frontiers that separated them, and it was not only a unique experiment in transnational cooperation but also a great popular success. The idea of a common Central European past justified the logic of cooperation. The idea of being Central European also fed on the northern Italian provinces' discontent with Roman politics and the fact that Italy's wealthier and economically more advanced north was tired of financing the country's underdeveloped south. Likewise, the northern republics of Yugoslavia were more highly developed than the southern ones. Slovenes and Croats resented footing the bill for Balkan backwardness and Communist inefficiency just as much as northern Italians did for southern Mediterranean underdevelopment and Mafia corruption. In both cases, the concept of "Central Europe" was full of separatist potential. In Yugoslavia, too, it reminded Slovene and Croatian nationalists and anti-Communists that they had previously lived outside a state dominated by Orthodox Serbs (before 1918) or Serbian Communists (before 1945). In this context, Central Europe was a Roman Catholic, Western European, and Habsburg idea.

A completely different version of Central Europe evolved between Vienna and Budapest. Austrian-Hungarian relations developed so auspiciously during the 1970s that they became a model of East-West cooperation. Austria's investments in Hungary, joint ventures, and the judicious foreign policy of the Austrian federal chancellor, Bruno Kreisky, led to cooperation reminiscent of the good old days, and in the mid-1980s, the countries lifted their bilateral visa requirements. Hundreds of thousands of Hungarians went to Austria for a taste of the West, and just as many Austrians went to Hungary to shop in the East.

Austrian neutrality combined with its good-neighbor policies helped create a nonconfrontational environment that promoted liberalization in its historical hinterland behind the Iron Curtain. Extrapolated to European politics, the Austrian-Hungarian model of neutrality and social democracy in the West plus economic and political liberalization in the East seemed to have some promise for the future.

Austrian Social Democrats shied away from using the term "Central Europe," but more conservative Austrian Christian Democrats, above all the Austrian politician Erhard Busek, did not, because they were more comfortable with Roman Catholicism and the cultural traditions of the Habsburg Empire as unifying elements of the region. In the mid-1980s, Busek brought new impetus into the Central European debate by combining the idea of common cultural traditions with demands for more human rights and cooperation in the region. He considered Central Europe to be a "project" in which Austria could play an important role, and in the early 1980s he was one of the few Western European politicians who actively sought and cultivated contacts with East European intellectuals and dissidents, in Poland and Hungary in particular.

The last and ultimately most important version of the idea of Central Europe was the product of Eastern European intellectuals: dissidents at home and émigrés abroad. It was anti-Soviet and anti-Russian, on the one hand, and "remarkable for its omission of Germany and 'the German question,'"<sup>10</sup> on the other. The idea of a confederation of states situated between the Soviet or Russian East and the German West and stretching from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Adriatic Sea in the south played a considerable role in many of these intellectuals' versions or visions of Central Europe. The historical precedents for Central Europe were nostalgically transfigured multinational empires—the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the north and the Habsburg Empire in the south—whose parameters could be defined not only historically but also in traditional religious and enlightened philosophical terms. Central Europe was Roman Catholic and "westward-looking, cosmopolitan, secular-humanist, and rationalist."<sup>11</sup>

Proponents of this idea of Central Europe shared many of the sentiments of the Western European peace movements. Although they—like most intellectuals on both sides of the Iron Curtain—were critical of the American presence in Europe and the consequences of American "cultural imperialism" and consumerism, Eastern European dissidents and intellectuals recognized the Soviet Union and Communism as greater threats. Consequently they had a rather reticent relationship with the Western European peace movements, because many of the advocates of peace and disarmament in the West failed to understand how dangerous the Soviet Union and Communism really were or to understand that the absence of human rights and democracy in the East bloc were peace issues as well.<sup>12</sup> This version of the Central European idea identified a fundamental change in the Eastern European political system as the prerequisite for real peace in Europe, an insight that made it anti-Communist.

The Czech novelist and essayist Milan Kundera provided a classic definition of Central Europe in an article published in November 1983 in Paris (later translated into English and German). He described the "three fundamental situations" that developed in Europe after World War II as "that of Western Europe, that of Eastern Europe, and, most complicated, that of the part of Europe situated geographically in the center, culturally in the West, and politically in the East." He also was specific about where Central Europe

was. It consisted of "an uncertain zone of small nations between Russia and Germany," historically coextensive with the Habsburg Empire and Poland.

The "tragedy of Central Europe," with the exception of "little Austria," was that it had been "kidnapped" by the Soviet Union after World War II. The Western European inability to distinguish between Central and Eastern Europe also was indicative of a larger and more profound crisis. Kundera accused the West of not even noticing that part of the European West had disappeared into the Soviet East and of accepting the logic of a divided Europe. His diagnosis of the fact that "Europe no longer perceives its unity as a cultural unity" was that "Europe itself is in the process of losing its own cultural identity."<sup>13</sup>

Kundera did not offer a concrete political program, but he did have a political claim shared by many other representatives of the Central European idea: The division of Central Europe into an East and a West after World War II was illegitimate. Advocates of the idea of Central Europe may not have agreed on where Central Europe was or which strategies should be pursued or could be used to turn the idea of Central Europe into reality, but they shared "the experience of small nations subjected to large empires" and the "unique experience of living under Soviet-type Communist systems since Yalta."<sup>14</sup> The histories of these small nations and their encounters with Communism provided them with different perspectives, too, but the Eastern European proponents of the idea of Central Europe shared several attitudes and convictions.

If politics meant violently wresting power from the Communists or attempting to influence the existing state or governmental policy, most dissident intellectuals were "antipolitical." One of the problems of the totalitarian or posttotalitarian systems in the Eastern bloc was the omnipresence of politics—the state, the party, the police. Therefore, the idea was not to take the power from "them" but, rather, to destroy the system by redefining the relationship of the state to society. The idea of a "civil society" that was independent of the institutions of the centrally administered and bureaucratic party state and whose relationship to it was regulated by certain principles and game rules was shared by many proponents of the idea of Central Europe. They believed in the tenets of political liberalism but not necessarily economic liberalism,<sup>15</sup> and this made human rights and the rule of law into core Central European issues. It was society's task to control the state, not vice versa.

Many dissidents and intellectuals resorted to fundamental philosophical issues and moral discourse. It really did not make much difference whether their critiques of Communism were based on the terminology of modern existentialism, traditional Catholic moral theology, or common sense. For example, Václav Havel's famous samizdat essay "Living in the Truth" was inspired by the work of the Czech philosopher and fellow dissident Jan Patočka, one of the cofounders of Charta '77 who, in turn, had been influenced by German phenomenology and existentialism.

Pope John Paul II stood firmly in the tradition of Roman Catholic moral theology and social doctrine. Many advocates of the idea of Central Europe

did not hesitate to talk about the differences between good and evil, truth and lies, or human dignity and moral depravity. Many dissidents believed that certain ideas were worth suffering for, and the absence of basic rights and freedoms gave them an appreciation for those things often taken for granted in functioning democracies in the West, like habeus corpus and due process or the freedoms of speech, the press, and assembly. Individual existential rectitude and the ethics of solidarity coalesced into one conviction: "our" truth versus "their" lies.

Generalizations about the dimensions and the consequences of dissidence in the region are dangerous. Both ideas and popular protest were important in the revolutions of 1989, but we should not assume that the majority of people were inspired by the dissidents' ideas for a long time before 1989 or that the Communist regimes in the region had uniformly become soft. For example, the Czechoslovak dissidents in Charta '77, were relatively isolated from the population at large and were systematically persecuted, regularly imprisoned, or forced to do menial labor. Therefore, they had a different experience with protest than did their Polish counterparts in Solidarity, who were not ostracized from society to the same extent and could rely on social support systems typical of a "civil society."

Furthermore, at a time when Czechoslovak and Polish dissidents were going in and out of jail in the early and mid-1980s, some Hungarian dissidents started to enjoy the fruits of the Kádár regime's liberality and began traveling between Eastern Europe and the West. Some Yugoslav intellectuals enjoyed similar freedoms, but there was virtually no organized dissident in East Germany. Although the regime spectacularly expelled a few prominent protesters, West Germany paid ransom for all the others. Between 1963 and 1989, the Federal Republic of Germany "bought free" around 34,000 political prisoners from the German Democratic Republic. After the late 1970s, the going rate or ransom for a political prisoner was DM 95,847 per head, around \$40,000.<sup>16</sup> Under these circumstances, it was odd that after 1989 some West Germans had the audacity to criticize East Germany for the absence of dissidents.

### *The Gorbachev Factor*

Virtually no one anticipated the revolutions of 1989 in the early 1980s, not to mention the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. It will take political scientists, economists, and historians a generation to sort out why the revolutions of 1989 happened when they did, how they were related to the ultimate collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union in 1991, and what role the Cold War played in both these dramas. Retrospectively, it is truly amazing to what extent experts on Communism and the Soviet Union failed to see what was coming.<sup>17</sup> Billions of dollars were spent on studying Communism, and some of the West's best minds were engaged in this enterprise. The precision instruments of Western Sovietology did not have much predictive power, nor for that matter, did the crystal balls of East Central European dissidents and intellectuals. The winners of the revolutions of 1989 (in



East Central Europe) and the Cold War (in the West) were just as surprised at their victories as the Communist losers were at their defeats in 1989 (in East Central Europe) and in the Soviet Union in 1991.

There are different schools of thought regarding the most important causes of the events of 1989 as well as their relationship to the dynamics of the Cold War as a superpower conflict. Changes in Central Europe were determined by the complex interaction of different fields of forces operating on international, regional, and national levels. The development of a qualitatively new relationship between the superpowers after Mikhail Gorbachev's rise to power in the mid-1980s, the Soviet Union's dramatic change of policy in its own sphere of influence thereafter, and the dynamics of protest throughout East Central Europe each played indisputably important roles. These issues will be addressed in terms of the possible answers to three questions: Did the West (or the United States or Ronald Reagan) win the Cold War? Did Gorbachev's attempts to reform Communism end it in a manner that created new perspectives for Central Europe, or did East Central Europeans liberate themselves?

Which strategy contributed most to the demise of Communism? Idealists and realists, people "hard" and "soft" on Communism, and advocates of deterrence and détente all want credit for making the greatest contribution to ending the Cold War. All of them certainly contributed to its demise. There was no unified Western strategy but, rather, a number of different policies that shifted from one governmental administration to the next, from "hard" to "soft," and from country to country. This in itself kept a fundamentally rigid Communist system off balance and contributed to its demise.<sup>18</sup> For the sake of argument, one can identify two extreme positions: the get-tough policies of the Reagan administration in the early 1980s versus the détente policies or the German Social Democratic version of *Ostpolitik* in the early 1980s.

Proponents of the arms race and rearmament maintain that the West, particularly the United States, recognized that they could be used to change the Communist system. This strategy was based on the fact that the American economy was more efficient than the Soviet economy. Therefore, increases in defense expenditures ultimately cost the Soviet Union much more than they did the United States. The arms race drew a disproportionate amount of resources in the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc away from other economic sectors, which prevented investments in other spheres such as modernization, infrastructure, or consumer goods.

In other words, the United States' strategy for the arms race was to exploit the inherent deficiencies of Soviet-style planned economies and to drive them to the brink of economic disaster. For many years, American policymakers assumed that the Soviet Union spent about twice as much of its gross domestic product on defense as the United States did: 12 percent to the United States' 6 percent. (In the 1970s and 1980s, the figures on Soviet defense spending were revised upward to 16 or even 20 percent.) Making the Soviets compete in a race not exclusively based on arms but, rather, on

the overall allocation of economic resources drove the Soviet economy into a structural crisis that forced them to reform.

One of the simplest versions of this story is that Ronald Reagan won the Cold War. The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) was not the straw but the two-by-four that broke the proverbial camel's back. The Soviets *reacted* to American policy by putting Mikhail Gorbachev into power. Therefore the billions of dollars spent on defense paid off in the long run and demonstrated the systemic superiority of market economies over planned economies in terms of efficient resource allocation. The system that could produce both guns and butter—both strategic and consumer goods—won over the one that had to make a structural choice between guns or butter. Cruise missiles and Coca Cola could not be beat.

The various representatives of the German Social Democratic *Ostpolitik*, the protagonists of détente, and the left in general have a difficult time making a case for their contributions to ending the Cold War. Many believed that the Communist system somehow could be reformed. The strategy of this kind of détente was to cooperate with those in power in Moscow, East Berlin, Warsaw, and elsewhere in a manner that would contribute to the system's liberalization and thus improve the conditions of those who had the misfortune of living under it. The objective was to work with the powers that be in order to make Communism more tolerable for all the parties involved, not to win the Cold War.

According to this view, dissidents actually obstructed the process of systemic transformation via rapprochement. Therefore they did not really fit into the strategy of détente but were, on the contrary, sometimes a wrench in the works because their demands were unrealistic. From the European détente or Social Democratic perspective of *Ostpolitik*, tougher anti-Communists always used Eastern European dissidence as leverage on the Communists in order to prevent further reform. Since 1989, the representatives of the tough-on-Communism stance conversely have accused the proponents of détente of directly helping maintain the Communist system by working with it. For example, the DM 3.5 billion that West Germany paid to East Germany for humanitarian purposes between 1963 and 1989—for the release of political prisoners and the reunification of separated families—certainly did not contribute to the demise of the Communist system and was but a fraction of the monies, credits, and goods that East Germany received from West Germany over the years.

Proponents of détente have developed their own version of the story based on the same deficiencies of the Communist system, and they attempt to explain how détente, not deterrence, led to its demise. Détente always attempted to promote more openness within the Communist system itself. The Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and the beginning of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) process, especially with its emphasis on human rights, multilateral diplomacy, and confidence-building measures, was a turning point in East-West relations.<sup>19</sup>

Because the Communist system collapsed *after* 3. new phase of East-West

détente in the mid-1980s, one may argue that détente, not deterrence, was the key to the end of the Communist system. According to this view, the *external pressure* of vitriolic Western anti-Communism helped sustain a system that was terminally ill. Furthermore, it contributed to keeping in power conservative, anti-reform-minded Communists who helped maintain the system. The denouement of East-West tensions after Gorbachev's rise to power in the mid-1980s, which created an atmosphere in which the Soviet Union felt it could address domestic reform, therefore is comparable to removing the buttresses from a dilapidated building which, in this case, collapsed once it was no longer being held up by external means. The central premise of this theory is that Soviet Communism would have failed *sooner* had Western, and in particular American, anti-Communism not exerted the external pressures necessary to hold it together.

The fact that both the proponents of détente and deterrence have cogent arguments for being responsible for the end of the Cold War is a good indication that both these approaches may overestimate the consequences of Western European and American policies on the development of Soviet foreign and domestic policies. Anyone naïve enough to maintain that Western policies "brought Gorbachev into power" does not understand how the Soviet system worked.

Conjectural arguments are admittedly of questionable value; however, had Chernenko or Andropov lived longer or had a younger generation "Brezhnevist" primarily interested in maintaining the status quo assumed the leadership of the Soviet Union instead of Gorbachev, the revolutions of 1989 (and 1991) most likely would not have happened when they did and how they did. It is reasonable to assume that a more conservative and ideologically orthodox Soviet leader could have maintained the Soviet system much longer—at great cost, of course—but he could have maintained it nonetheless. It was obvious to all observers that the Soviet empire was overextended, but the assumption that the Soviet Union would follow the path of all other great empires by crumbling soon was not widespread.<sup>20</sup>

This raises another problematic issue: the role of "great men in history." Gorbachev undoubtedly deserves to be placed in this category, although he failed to accomplish what he wanted to—that is, reform the Communist system—but he failed grandly. He can be compared with other central figures in the history of the Communist system who also attempted to reform it and failed: Imre Nagy, Alexander Dubček, and Nikita Khrushchev.

In the comparison with Nagy and Dubček, the question to ask is how a system so thoroughly based on stability, conformity, control, loyalty, and ultimately a certain lack of ingenuity could have let some one like Gorbachev—daring, prepared to experiment, and innovative—get so far? Did all the Communist Party's filtering mechanisms fail? Was Gorbachev an accident, a fluke, or, until his rise to power, a brilliant impostor? Comparisons with Khrushchev are less speculative. Gorbachev embodied the necessity of systemic change; he personified historical powers at work. Like Khrushchev, he had to dislodge entrenched interest groups in the system in order to change the system, and this required criticizing the representatives and

benefactors of his predecessor, Brezhnev. Glasnost and perestroika—"de-Brezhnevization"—was a form of de-Stalinization or even a continuation of the process that Khrushchev had begun and Brezhnev had interrupted. Some sympathetic observers even felt that Gorbachev was bringing back the Russian Revolution to a point where the historical record might be rectified by a new start. In theoretical terms, he returned to the mid-1920s, the period after Lenin but before Stalin. A gigantic "New Economic Plan"<sup>21</sup> might have belatedly set the Soviet experiment aright.

Gorbachev was an unusual Soviet leader in a number of respects. Given the geriatric status of the leadership of the Brezhnev era, he was a young man and not a veteran of World War II. This undoubtedly was an important element of his psychological makeup and colored his perceptions of Germany in particular and the West in general. Although he sincerely believed in the principles of the socialist system, he was not an ideologue, and as a realist he knew that propaganda regarding the alleged "superiority" of Soviet system bordered on nonsense. In order to gain the political leverage he needed to reform the Soviet system, he also violated one of the fundamental rules of Communist government. Instead of beating the people over the head with the Communist Party, he began beating the party over the head with the people. He recognized that his reforms could be successful only if the people helped initiate and carry them. All the well-worn metaphors used to describe the consequences of these measures are accurate. Gorbachev let the genie out of the bottle or opened Pandora's box.

Gorbachev also recognized either that the Soviet Union had lost the arms race or that the cost of competing was too high. In any event, he needed to end it in order to divert the tremendous economic resources the Soviet Union spent on defense from military to civilian economic sectors; otherwise he would not have the resources he needed to implement his ambitious program of restructuring the Soviet economy. It is important to emphasize here that Gorbachev made a *political* decision based on the *economics* of the Cold War. Adherents of the resource allocation theory of the arms race are correct in pointing out that it cost the Soviet Union much more than it cost the United States, a fact that brought out all the deficiencies inherent in the Soviet economy to the detriment of the system as a whole. But the economics of the Cold War did not "force" Gorbachev, as some proponents of the arms race assume, to make this decision.

In order to pursue his project of sweeping domestic reform in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev had to change Soviet policy toward the West, and the denouement of East-West tensions created a new environment in superpower relations that undoubtedly enhanced the prospects of change in East Central Europe in the late 1980s. Gorbachev not only stopped seeing the Western system of military and economic alliances as an active threat. He also began perceiving Western Europe as a potential partner. He rethought the relationship of the Soviet Union with its own empire, and he concluded that East Central Europe was not as important to the Soviet Union's national security as it once had been.

He was prepared to let the states of the Soviet bloc go their own way,

# Epilogue

## Postrevolutionary Paradoxes

Central Europe Since 1989

During the last six months of 1989 the Communist regimes in the Eastern Bloc came down one by one: in July in Poland, in Hungary in September, in East Germany in November, and in Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria in December. One thing all of these revolutions obviously had in common was that they displaced the old Communist order, and the coincidence of 1989 with the bicentennial celebration of the French Revolution in 1789 was an appropriate historical accident. Francois Furet, one of the premier French historians of the French Revolution, drew parallels between 1989 and "the ideas of 1789 or the American Revolution: human rights, the sovereignty of peoples, free elections, markets" and compared the Communist regimes with the *ancien régime* of late-eighteenth-century France: hated, immobile, and incompetent.

Furet also took this opportunity to criticize the European Left, which traditionally interpreted the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 as a legitimate expression of French revolutionary ideals. The revolutions of 1989 represented the belated victory of "old ideas"—the moderate, late-eighteenth-century principles liberal-democratic revolutions—over the radically modern ones of early-twentieth-century "Bolshevik-Jacobinism":

We are witnesses to revolutions, which are simultaneously counter-revolutions: uprisings by the people in the name of the establishment or reestablishment of liberal democracy; we are seeing the end of the revolutionary idea that has determined the horizons of the Left, far beyond strictly Marxist-Leninist circles, for two hundred years.

According to Furet, in 1989 the future of Communism and socialist planned economies ironically became democracy and a rationalist market system.