

- **History of Central Europe**

1980s

● Soviet block 1980s

- **Leonid Brezhnev** (leading USSR 1964 – 1982): Brezhnev Stagnation
- Growing economical crises over all Soviet Bloc
- Growing prices: Hungary and Poland x keeping low prices USSR and Romania – but no any goods
- No technological development, focus on heavy industry
- x REFORMS of **Mikhail Gorbachev**
- Spread fear of war - in 1983 nuclear rockets were deployed and USSR spread information of possible attacks
- 1982 † **Leonid Brezhnev**, successor **Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov** (General Secretary of CP of USSR, he held a position until his death February 1984), **Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko** (led USSR until his death March 1985)
- Since 1985 **Mikhail Gorbachev** – General Secretary of CP of USSR

● Mikhail Gorbachev

- **M. Gorbachev's** positions within CP created opportunities to travel abroad: **1972** he headed a Soviet delegation to Belgium; **1975** he led a delegation to West Germany; in **1983** he headed a delegation to Canada to meet with Prime Minister **Pierre Trudeau**; in **1984** he met in GB. Prime Minister **Margaret Thatcher**
- **Y. V. Andropov** died in 1984, and indicated that he **wanted M. Gorbachev** to succeed him as general secretary x **Konstantin Chernenko** took power; after **K. Chernenko's** death the following year, it became clear to the party hierarchy that younger leadership was needed
- **M. Gorbachev** was elected General Secretary by the Politburo on 11 March 1985

Identity cards of the general
secretary Central Committee of the
Communist Party of the Soviet
Union

General Secretary: M. Gorbachev



- M. Gorbachev

• Mikhail Gorbachev - reforms

• *Perestroika*

- **M. Gorbachev** initiated his new policy of "*perestroika*" (literally "*restructuring*" in Russian) and its attendant radical reforms in 1986; they were sketched, but not fully spelled out
- 17th CP Congress in February – March 1986
- The "*reconstruction*" was proposed: attempt to overcome the economic stagnation by creating a dependable and effective mechanism for accelerating economic and social progress
- **M. Gorbachev** was aware of the complicated economic situation of USSR and its lag behind the advanced "capitalist world"; only in the area of technology related to the armaments and aerospace industries similar level
- Economic and Political Reforms of **M. Gorbachev** certainly did not intend to dismantle the Eastern Bloc, but on the contrary, to strengthen and "restore" the socialist system
- He did not regret having a strong inspiration for his policy: the reforms of the Czechoslovak Prague Spring of 1968 (**Democratic Socialism with the Human Faces**)

• **Mikhail Gorbachev - reforms**

• *Glasnost*

- 1988 **M. Gorbachev's** introduced “*glasnost*” - Soviet people got freedoms – never before, e.g. greater freedom of speech
- Press became far less controlled
- Thousands of political prisoners and many dissidents were released
- **M. Gorbachev's** goal in undertaking “*glasnost*” was to pressure conservatives within the CP who opposed his policies of economic restructuring, and he also hoped that through different ranges of openness, debate and participation
- Political release - abandoning so-called **Brezhnev's doctrine** - had evoked within the USSR and its satellites (mainly Poland and Hungary), which had been hardly possible to keep without using force solutions (army, security forces) – new chances for changes
- Eastern block in the form in which it had been constituted after World War II - on the basis of Yalta and Potsdam agreements – slow collapse

• **Mikhail Gorbachev – foreign policy**

- April 1985 - suspension of the deployment of SS-20s in Europe as a move towards resolving intermediate-range nuclear weapons
- September 1985 – proposition: Soviets and Americans both cut their nuclear arsenals in half
- October 1985 - he went to France: his first trip abroad as Soviet leader
- November 1985 - Geneva Summit - **Mikhail Gorbachev** and **Ronald Reagan** (no concrete agreement was made, M. Gorbachev and R. Reagan struck a personal relationship and decided to hold further meetings)
- January 1986 often referred to as the '*January Proposal*' - **M. Gorbachev** announced his proposal for the **elimination** of intermediate-range nuclear weapons in Europe and his strategy for eliminating all of the Soviet nuclear arsenal by the year 2000
- July 1986 **M. Gorbachev** began the process of withdrawing troops from **Afghanistan** and **Mongolia**

• **Mikhail Gorbachev – foreign policy**

- October 1986 **M. Gorbachev** and **R. Reagan** met in Reykjavík to discuss reducing intermediate-range nuclear weapons in Europe - agreed in principle to removing INF systems from Europe and to equal global limits of 100 INF missile warheads; agreed in principle to eliminate all nuclear weapons in 10 years (by 1996), instead of by the year 2000
- **R. Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative** meant that the summit is often regarded as a failure - no concrete agreement - leading to a staged elimination of nuclear weapons x in the long term this would culminate in the signing of the **Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty** in 1987



- **M. Gorbachev and R. Reagan**

• **Mikhail Gorbachev – foreign policy**

- February 1988 - announced the full withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan (withdrawal was completed the following year)
- 1988 **M. Gorbachev** announced: abandonment of the **Brezhnev Doctrine** and allow the Eastern bloc nations to freely determine their own internal affairs (abandonment of the Brezhnev Doctrine allowed the rise of popular upheavals in Eastern Europe 1989, in which Communism was overthrown)
- June 1989 elections in Poland and the communist government had been deposed
- 6 July 1989 speech arguing for a "*Common European Home*"; Council of Europe in Strasbourg – **M. Gorbachev** declared: "*The social and political order in some countries changed in the past, and it can change in the future too, but this is entirely a matter for each people to decide. Any interference in the internal affairs, or any attempt to limit the sovereignty of another state, friend, ally, or another, would be inadmissible.* "
- Lost of Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe effectively ended the **Cold War** – **M. Gorbachev** was awarded the Otto Hahn Peace Medal in Gold in 1989 and the Nobel Peace Prize on 15 October 1990

Czechoslovakia

- Persecution of the opposition continued - against **Charter 77**
- State security carries out the action “*Asanace*” - inconvenient opponents of the opposition persuaded to emigrated, bullied, tortured, lost of citizenship; leaders remained

Petruška Šustrová

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8eJ-C5--NI>



Plastic People of the Universe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jYlKwvGkRy0>



- Czechoslovak dissent

• Czechoslovakia – Catholic Opposition

- Clergymen were required to be licensed; in attempting to manipulate the number of clergy, the state even sponsored a pro-government organization of Catholic priests- Association of Catholic Clergy *Pacem in Terris*
- 1984 *František Cardinal Tomášek* the Czech primate invited the *Pope* to come to Czechoslovakia; Pope accepted, but the trip was blocked by the government
- The cardinal's invitation and the pope's acceptance were widely circulated in samizdat. A petition requesting the government to permit the papal visit had 17,000 signatories
- The Catholic Church did have a massive commemoration of the 1,100th anniversary in 1985

• Czechoslovakia

- Demonstrations - **August 1988, Spring** and **Summer 1989** (fear of the failed reform of the USSR, fears of the debt of the CSSR - caused by the modernization of the economy - and dissatisfaction with lack of democratization)
- So-called **samizdatas** (a prohibited, often described on typewriters smuggled from the Western countries), **Charter 77** itself issued a samizdat magazine from 1978 called *Information on Charter 77*
- May 1980 **G. Husák** re-elected – President
- April 1981 – 16th Congress of CP: indications of noncompliance with the plan set for growth of the economy
- Czechoslovakia – fear of situation in Poland (martial law)
- 1985 **M. Gorbachev** and his reforms x Czechoslovak normalizers had shown little willingness to reflect this new course of **M. Gorbachev**

• Czechoslovakia – demonstrations 1988

- 21st August 1988 - Wenceslas Square made the first major anti-regime demonstrations since 1969
- 28th October 1988 - the 70th anniversary of the birth of Czechoslovakia – suppressed by security forces
- 10th December 1988 (Škroupovo Square in Prague) the first official permitted demonstration - Human Rights Day
- November 1988 **Czechoslovak Helsinki Committee** was established, other organizations observing disrespecting of human rights
- The anti-Communist opposition mainly Charter 77 had been perceived on the international scene: official **breakfast with eight representatives of Czechoslovak dissent (Václav Havel, Jiří Dienstbier, Václav Malý,...)** was organized by French President **Francois Mitterand** on the occasion of his visit on 9th December 1988 at French Embassy in Prague

• 1989 in Czechoslovakia

- First manifestations of discontent of 1989 – January – 20th Anniversary of **Jan Palach's** death - lasted from 15th to 22nd January , known as **Palach's week**
- June 1989 - **Manifesto Several Sentences** (Demanding an accelerated democratization, freedom of speech, the release of political prisoners)
- 21st August 1989 - demonstration in Prague, this time also with the participation of foreign Activists from Hungary and Poland – suppressed by the police
- 28th September 1989 (Day St. Wenceslas) and a particularly massive demonstration on 28 October (Anniversary of the emergence Czechoslovakia)
- Since the end of September 1989, citizens of GDR begun to flow to Czechoslovakia - they applied for asylum; other GDR citizens headed to Germany via Hungary, which in June 1989 opened the border with Austria (the first country of the Eastern Bloc, which destroyed the so-called Iron Curtain - Border barriers)
- 9th November 1989 – **Fall of Berlin Wall** - supported the impression of **unsustainability of the system in Czechoslovakia**
- 17th November 1989 - 60th anniversary of the closing Czech universities by Nazi and commemorated: **Jan Opletal in Prague started** permitted student demonstration. **Narodní třída** conflict with the security forces (they wanted to prevent to continue the march towards Wenceslas Square), many students were injured; brutality towards students had caused a violent reaction - high school students have entered the strike; protests "uncontrollably" spread all over the country

• Velvet Revolution/Gentle Revolution

- Was a non-violent transition of power in Czechoslovakia, occurring from 17th November 1989 to 29th December 1989
- Popular demonstrations against the one-party government of CP combined students and older dissidents and others...
- Result was the end of 41 years of one-party rule in Czechoslovakia, and the subsequent dismantling of the planned economy and conversion to a parliamentary republic
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vh3r8tULh1A>;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJBSApaQRn8>



- **Velvet Revolution** was a non-violent revolution in Czechoslovakia: 17th November – 29th December 1989
- Dominated by student and other popular demonstrations against the single-party government of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia - led to the collapse of the party's control of the country, conversion to a parliamentary republic
- November 17th 1989 - police suppressed student demonstration in Prague - sparked a series of popular demonstrations from 19th November to late December
- Number of protesters, two-hour general strike involving all citizens of Czechoslovakia was held on 27th November

• **Czechoslovakia**

- Czechoslovakia announced on 28th November - that it would relinquish power and dismantle the single-party state
- 10th December 1989 - President **Gustáv Husák** appointed the first largely non-communist government in Czechoslovakia since 1948, and resigned
- **Alexander Dubček** was elected speaker of the Federal Parliament on 28th December and **Václav Havel** the President of Czechoslovakia on 29th December 1989

● Poland

- By the mid-1960s increasing economic and political difficulties
- December 1970 - high price led to a wave of strikes
- Government introduced a “*New Economic Program*“ based on large-scale borrowing from the West - resulted in an immediate rise in living standards x program failed because of the 1973 oil crisis
- Late 1970s the government of **Edward Gierek** was finally forced to raise prices - led to another wave of public protests
- 1978 – **Karol Wojtyla** – pope **John Paul II** – supporting communistic opposition

• **Poland**

- 1980s - Strikes and protests followed, but were not nearly as widespread as those of August 1980: last mass street demonstration that **Solidarity** was able to muster occurred on 31st August 1982, the second anniversary of the **Gdańsk agreements** (accord reached as a result of the strikes that took place in Gdańsk; workers went on strike in August 1980 in support of the 21 demands of **Interfactory Strike Committee** which eventually led to the creation of **Solidarity**)
- 1981 – government of **Wojciech Jaruzelski** to declared martial law (from December 13, 1981 to July 22, 1983) - authoritarian communist government drastically restricted normal life by introducing martial law in an attempt to crush political opposition
- "***Military Council of National Salvation***" banned **Solidarity** officially on 8 October 1982
- Leader of **Solidarity** **Lech Wałęsa**
- Requirements: economical, Democratic civil rights
- Soviet Union - supported the military coup
- 1983 **Solidarity** cancelled

• **Poland**

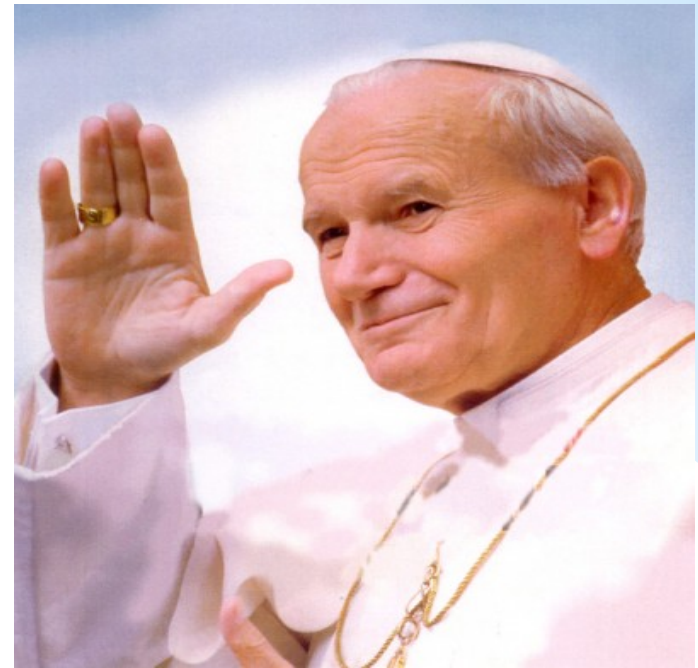
- September 1986 - government declared a general amnesty and prepared some reforms
- **L. Wałęsa** was urged to reconvene the National Commission but he refused, preferring to deal with the circle of Solidarity's Expert Commission advisers
- National Executive Commission led by **L. Wałęsa** was established in October 1987
- Other opposition groups such: **Fighting Solidarity, Federation of Fighting Youth, Freedom and Peace Movement and Orange Alternative** organized street protests in form of colorful happenings that assembled thousands of participants
- Nationwide strikes broke out in the spring and summer of 1988 weaker than the strikes of 1980 and were discontinued after the intervention by **L. Wałęsa** (secured the regime's commitment to begin negotiations with the opposition).
- The strikes were the last act of active political involvement of the workers, not connected to **Solidarity** veterans and opposed to socially harmful consequences of the economic restructuring in progress

• **Poland**

- During CP plenary session of January 1989, **W. Jaruzelski** and his ruling formation overcame the Central Committee's resistance by threatening to resign and CP decided to allow re-legalization of Solidarity and to approach its leaders for formal talks
- From 6 February to 4 April 1989 - 94 sessions of talks between 13 working groups, which became known as the "***Round Table Talks***" resulted in political and economic compromise reforms
- Talks resulted in the **Round Table Agreement**, by which political power was to be vested in a newly created bicameral legislature and president who would be the chief executive
- By 4 April 1989 numerous reforms and freedoms were agreed and **Solidarity**, now in existence as the Solidarity Citizens' Committee - was again to be legalized as a trade union and allowed to participate in semi-free elections

• **Poland**

- Semi-free elections - Polish legislative elections of 4 June 1989 - the results of the voting were released, a political earthquake followed
- Solidarity candidates captured all the seats they were allowed to compete for in the Sejm, while in the newly established Senate they captured 99 out of the 100 available seats
- The communists suffered a catastrophic blow to their legitimacy
- December 1989 changes to the Polish constitution were made, officially eliminating the "socialist" order: Marxist references were removed and the name of the country was changed back to the Polish Republic
- 1990 **W. Jaruzelski** resigned as Poland's president and was succeeded by **L. Wałęsa** - won the 1990 presidential elections
- CP dissolved itself in 1990 and transformed into the Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland
- Warsaw Pact was formally dissolved on 1st July 1991 and the last Soviet troops left Poland in September 1993
- 27th October 1991 - first entirely free Polish parliamentary elections since the 1920s took place



● Hungary

- Hungary achieved some lasting economic reforms and limited political liberalization during the 1980s (major reforms only occurred following the replacement of **János Kádár** General Secretary of CP in 1988)
- 1988 Parliament adopted a “*Democracy package*“ included trade union pluralism, freedom of association, assembly, and the press, new electoral law, radical revision of the constitution,...
- **Imre Nagy** whom communists had executed decades ago was rehabilitated

- August 1989 **Pan-European Picnic** - a peace demonstration held on the Austrian-Hungarian border - led to the fall of the **Iron Curtain**
- In October 1989 Communist Party convened its last congress and re-established itself as the Hungarian Socialist Party
- October 1989 parliament adopted legislation providing for multi-party parliamentary elections and a direct presidential election
- The legislation transformed Hungary from a People's Republic into the **Republic of Hungary**, guaranteed human and civil rights, separation of powers among the judicial, legislative, and executive
- 1st free parliamentary election - May 1990: Democratic Forum (MDF) winning 43% and Free Democrats (SZDSZ) capturing 24%.
- Prime Minister **József Antall**
- March 1990 - June 1991 Soviet troops left Hungary, total number of Soviet military and civilian personnel stationed in Hungary was around 100,000

• **Hungary**

• GDR

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snsdDb7KDkg>
- 1989 public anger over the faking of results of local government elections - people applied for exit visas or left the country
- August 1989 Hungary removed its border restrictions and unsealed its border - 13,000 people left East Germany by crossing the "green" border via Czechoslovakia into Hungary and then on to Austria and West Germany
- Many demonstrations against CP - Leipzig
- **Kurt Masur**, conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, led local negotiations with the government and held town meetings in the concert hall
- The demonstrations eventually led – **E. Honecker** to resign in October, and he was replaced by a slightly more moderate communist - **Egon Krenz**

- November 1989 - a few sections of the **Berlin Wall** were opened, resulting in thousands of East Germans crossing freely into West Berlin and West Germany
- East Germany held its last elections in March 1990, winner was coalition headed by the East German branch of **West Germany's Christian Democratic Union**
- GDR held its last elections in March 1990 - winner was a coalition headed by the East German branch of West Germany's Christian Democratic Union which advocated speedy reunification
- After **2+4 Talks** - were held involving the two German states and the former Allied Powers which led to agreement on the conditions for German unification.
- The five original East German states that had been abolished in 1952 were recreated
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- **2+4 Talks** → **Treaty on the Final Settlement With Respect to Germany**/the **Two Plus Four Agreement** was negotiated in 1990 between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic ("Two"), and the Four Powers which occupied Germany at the end of World War II in Europe: France, USSR, GB and US
- In the treaty the Four Powers renounced all rights they held in Germany, allowing a united Germany to become fully sovereign (1991)
- October **1990** five states officially joined the Federal Republic of Germany and East and West Berlin united as a city-state



- **Fall of Berlin Wall**

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