

Cambridge  
IGCSE®

# Modern World History

Option B: The 20th century

# 6

## How secure was the USSR's control over eastern Europe, 1948–c. 1989?

### FOCUS POINTS

- Why was there opposition to Soviet control in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, and how did the USSR react to this opposition?
- How similar were events in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968?
- Why was the Berlin Wall built in 1961?
- What was the significance of 'Solidarity' in Poland for the decline of Soviet influence in eastern Europe?
- How far was Gorbachev personally responsible for the collapse of Soviet control over eastern Europe?

In Chapter 4 you saw how the Soviet Union took control of eastern Europe. You are now going to return to that story and see how far the Soviet Union was able to maintain that control.

You will investigate:

- ♦ how the Soviet Union took control in eastern Europe and how it tried to maintain control
- ♦ why and how some people challenged Soviet control and what happened to them when they did
- ♦ how, finally, changes in the Soviet Union led to the collapse of all the Communist regimes in eastern Europe and indeed the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The key question you will consider is 'how secure' was this control.

The Soviet Union almost certainly did not feel it was secure. It kept up constant pressure on the governments and people of eastern Europe. It was really only the threat of sending in the Red Army that propped up some of the Communist regimes in the region long after their people had lost faith in their government. In the end it was Mikhail Gorbachev's unwillingness to prop them up any longer with Soviet troops that signalled the end of Soviet domination.

So which of these graphs do you think is the best representation of Soviet control through this period?



### And remember...

This chapter overlaps with Chapter 5 (see timeline on pages 74–75). So you will get a more rounded view of the period if you remember that both chapters take their place within the tense Cold War environment. For example:

- ♦ while the USA was fighting the Korean War to push back Communism in the early 1950s, the USSR was sending troops to East Germany to keep Communism in place
- ♦ in 1968 when the USA was facing fierce criticism at home against its policy of containment and the Vietnam War in particular, the Soviet Union was trying to keep the lid on the anti-Soviet ideas that were developing in Czechoslovakia in the Prague Spring.

◀ Here are two versions of the same photo. The first shows the leader of Czechoslovakia, Alexander Dubček. The second is the same photo used by the Communist-controlled media after Dubček had been ousted from power by Soviet troops in 1968.

- 1 How has the photo been changed?
- 2 Why might the photo have been changed?
- 3 What does this tell you about Communist control of Czechoslovakia in 1968?

## Factfile

## Cominform

- Cominform stands for the Communist Information Bureau.
- Stalin set up the Cominform in 1947 as an organisation to co-ordinate the various Communist governments in eastern Europe.
- The office was originally based in Belgrade in Yugoslavia but moved to Bucharest in Romania in 1948 after Yugoslavia was expelled by Stalin because it would not do what the Soviet Union told it to do.
- Cominform ran meetings and sent out instructions to Communist governments about what the Soviet Union wanted them to do.

## Factfile

## Comecon

- Comecon stands for the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance.
- It was set up in 1949 to co-ordinate the industries and trade of the eastern European countries.
- The idea was that members of Comecon traded mostly with one another rather than trading with the West.
- Comecon favoured the USSR far more than any of its other members. It provided the USSR with a market to sell its goods. It also guaranteed it a cheap supply of raw materials. For example, Poland was forced to sell its coal to the USSR at one-tenth of the price that it could have got selling it on the open market.
- It set up a bank for socialist countries in 1964.

## Think!

Stalin used a 'carrot and stick' approach to control eastern Europe. Explain what this means and refer to the information on this page in your answer.

## Source Analysis ▶

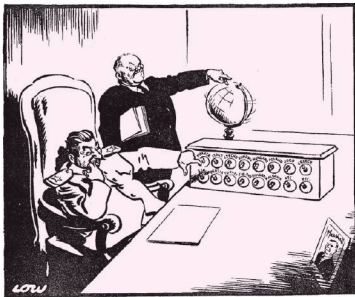
The cartoonist who drew Source 1 was a critic of Stalin. How is he criticising Stalin in this cartoon?

## How did the Soviet Union seize control in eastern Europe?

As you saw in Chapter 4, after the Second World War the Communists quickly gained control of eastern Europe (see Source 17, page 84). The chaotic situation in many of the countries helped them.

- After the war there was a **political vacuum** in many countries in eastern Europe. The Soviet leader Stalin helped the Communist parties in them to win power. Through Cominform (see Factfile) he made sure that these eastern European countries followed the same policies as the Soviet Union. They became one-party states. The Communist Party was the only legal party. Secret police arrested the Communists' opponents.
- There was also a need to **restore law and order**. This provided a good excuse to station Soviet troops in each country.
- The **economies** of eastern Europe were shattered. To rebuild them, the governments followed the economic policies of the Soviet Union. They took over all industry. Workers and farmers were told what to produce. Through Comecon (see Factfile) Stalin made sure that the countries of eastern Europe traded with the USSR. He promised aid to countries that co-operated with the Soviet Union.
- Stalin's public reason for wanting to control eastern Europe was to defend the Soviet Union from invasion from the west. However his subsequent policies showed that he also wanted to benefit from the wealth and resources of eastern Europe.

## SOURCE 1



"WHO'S NEXT TO BE LIBERATED FROM FREEDOM, COMRADE?"

David Low comments on Stalin's control of eastern Europe, 2 March 1948. The person spinning the globe is Molotov, Stalin's foreign minister. On the desk is a photo of General Marshall (see page 86 to see what he proposed for Europe).

## SOURCE 2

*Twenty years ago we jumped head first into politics as though we were jumping into uncharted waters . . . There was a lot of enthusiasm . . . You're like this when you are young and we had an opportunity, which had long been denied, to be there while something new was being created.*

Jiří Ruml, a Czech Communist, writing in 1968.

## How did Soviet control affect the people of eastern Europe?

For some people of eastern Europe the Communists brought hope. The Soviet Union had achieved amazing industrial growth before the Second World War. Maybe, by following Soviet methods, they could do the same. Soviet-style Communism also offered them stable government and security because they were backed by one of the world's superpowers. Faced by shortages and poverty after the war, many people hoped for great things from Communism (see Source 2).

However, the reality of Soviet control of eastern Europe was very different from what people had hoped for.

- **Freedom** Countries that had a long tradition of free speech and democratic government suddenly lost the right to criticise the government. Newspapers were censored. Non-Communists were put in prison for criticising the government. People were forbidden to travel to countries in western Europe.
- **Wealth** Such repression and loss of freedom might have been more accepted if Communism had made people better off. Between 1945 and 1955 eastern European economies did recover. Wages in eastern Europe fell behind the wages in other countries. They even fell behind the wages in the Soviet Union. Eastern Europe was forbidden by Stalin to apply for Marshall Aid from the USA (see page 87) which could have helped it in its economic recovery.
- **Consumer goods** Long after economic recovery had ended the wartime shortages in western Europe, people in eastern Europe were short of coal to heat their houses, short of milk and meat. Clothing and shoes were very expensive. People could not get consumer goods like radios, electric kettles or televisions which were becoming common in the West. Factories did not produce what ordinary people wanted. They actually produced what the Soviet Union wanted.

In addition, they had little chance to protest. In June 1953 there were huge demonstrations across East Germany protesting about Communist policies. Soviet tanks rolled in and Soviet troops killed 40 protesters and wounded over 400. Thousands were arrested and the protests were crushed. Similar protests in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania were dealt with in the same way.

## SOURCE 3

Экономический долг США предоставил Тито и его  
в исследовании мировой сцене. (His name).



A 1949 Soviet cartoon. Marshal Tito, leader of Yugoslavia, is shown accepting money from the Americans. His cloak is labelled 'Judas' – 'the betrayer'. Yugoslavia was the only Communist state to resist domination by Stalin. The Soviet Union kept up a propaganda battle against Tito. Despite the Cold War, there were more cartoons in the official Communist newspapers attacking Tito than cartoons criticising the USA.

## Think!

- 1 Study Source 3. Why do you think Tito wished to remain independent of the Soviet Union?
- 2 Why do you think the Soviet Union was worried about Tito's independence?
- 3 Look at Source 17 on page 84. Does this help to explain why the Soviet Union allowed Tito to remain independent?
- 4 On a scale of 0–10, how secure do you think Soviet control was in 1953?

## Revision Tip

Make sure you can explain in your own words:

- ♦ the role of Cominform
- ♦ the role of the Red Army in keeping control of eastern Europe.

## Profile

### Nikita Khrushchev



- ♦ Born 1894, the son of a coal miner.
- ♦ Fought in the Red Army during the Civil War, 1922–23.
- ♦ Afterwards worked for the Communist Party in Moscow. Was awarded the Order of Lenin for his work building the Moscow underground railway.
- ♦ In 1949 he was appointed by the Communist Party to run Soviet agriculture.
- ♦ There was a power struggle after Stalin's death over who would succeed him. Khrushchev had come out on top by 1955 and by 1956 he felt secure enough in his position to attack Stalin's reputation.
- ♦ Became Prime Minister in 1958.
- ♦ Took his country close to nuclear war with the USA during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 (see pages 102–109).
- ♦ Was forced into retirement in 1964.
- ♦ Died in 1971.

## Revision Tip

### Khrushchev

Make sure you know two ways in which Khrushchev appeared to be different from Stalin in 1955.

### De-Stalinisation

Write your own definition of 'de-Stalinisation'. Make sure you include:

- ♦ at least two examples
- ♦ an explanation of why it was radical.

## The rise of Khrushchev

Stalin was a hero to millions of people in the USSR. He had defeated Hitler and given the USSR an empire in eastern Europe. He made the USSR a nuclear superpower. When he died in 1953, amid the grief and mourning, many minds turned to the question of who would succeed Stalin as Soviet leader. The man who emerged by 1955 was Nikita Khrushchev. Khrushchev seemed very different from Stalin. He

- ended the USSR's long feuds with China and with Yugoslavia
- talked of peaceful co-existence with the West
- made plans to reduce expenditure on arms
- attended the first post-war summit between the USSR, the USA, France and Britain in July 1955
- said he wanted to improve the living standards of ordinary citizens.

## De-Stalinisation

At the Communist Party International in 1956, Khrushchev made an astonishing attack on Stalin. He dredged up the gory evidence of Stalin's purges (see page 220) and denounced him as a wicked tyrant who was an enemy of the people and kept all power to himself. Khrushchev went on to say much worse things about Stalin and began a programme of de-Stalinisation.

- He closed down Cominform.
- He released thousands of political prisoners.
- He agreed to pull Soviet troops out of Austria (they had been posted there since the end of the Second World War).
- He invited Marshall Tito to Moscow.
- He dismissed Stalin's former Foreign Minister Molotov.
- He seemed to be signalling to the countries of eastern Europe that they would be allowed much greater independence to control their own affairs.

Those in eastern Europe who wanted greater freedom from the Soviet Union saw hopeful times ahead.

### SOURCE 4

*We must produce more grain. The more grain there is, the more meat, lard and fruit there will be. Our tables will be better covered. Marxist theory helped us win power and consolidate it. Having done this we must help the people eat well, dress well and live well. If after forty years of Communism, a person cannot have a glass of milk or a pair of shoes, he will not believe Communism is a good thing, whatever you tell him.*

Nikita Khrushchev speaking in 1955.

### SOURCE 5

*Stalin used extreme methods and mass repressions at a time when the revolution was already victorious . . . Stalin showed in a whole series of cases his intolerance, his brutality and his abuse of power . . . He often chose the path of repression and physical annihilation, not only against actual enemies, but also against individuals who had not committed any crimes against the Party and the Soviet government.*

Khrushchev denounces Stalin in 1956. For citizens of eastern Europe who had been bombarded with propaganda praising Stalin, this was a shocking change of direction.

## Think!

Look at Source 6.

- 1 Make a list of the features of the cartoon that show Khrushchev as a new type of leader.
- 2 Design another cartoon that shows him relaxing the Soviet grip on eastern Europe. Think about:
  - ◆ how you would show Khrushchev
  - ◆ how you would represent the states of eastern Europe (as maps? as people?)
  - ◆ how you would represent Soviet control (as a rope? getting looser? tighter?).

You could either draw the cartoon or write instructions for an artist to do so.

## Focus Task

### How secure was Soviet control?

On page 123 we showed you three graphs. At the end of this chapter you will decide which is the most accurate way to represent Soviet control 1945–90.

Through the rest of this chapter you are going to examine a number of different case studies of Soviet control. Each is to be studied in its own right but you are also going to use them to build your understanding of the bigger picture. Here are some features of the Polish uprising of 1956:

- ◆ workers go on strike for more wages
- ◆ 53 rioters killed by Polish army
- ◆ Polish army loses control
- ◆ Khrushchev moves troops to the Polish border
- ◆ a new leader is appointed who is more acceptable to the Polish people
- ◆ Communists agreed to stop persecuting the Catholic Church.

For each feature decide whether it suggests that Soviet control was strong or weak. There may be some events that could be used to support either view. Make sure you can explain your decisions.

## SOURCE 6



A 1959 Soviet cartoon. The writing on the snowman's hat reads 'cold war'. Khrushchev is drilling through the cold war using what the caption calls 'miners' methods'. The cartoon uses very strong visual images like Khrushchev's modern style of clothing to emphasise his new ideas. And of course he is breaking up the Cold War!

## The Warsaw Pact

One aspect of Stalin's policy did not change, however. His aim in eastern Europe had always been to create a buffer against attack from the West. Khrushchev continued this policy. In 1955 he created the Warsaw Pact. This was a military alliance similar to NATO (see page 91). The members would defend each other if one was attacked. The Warsaw Pact included all the Communist countries of eastern Europe except Yugoslavia, but it was dominated by the Soviet Union (see Source 17, page 84).

## Challenges to Soviet control in eastern Europe

Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin sent a strong signal to opposition groups in eastern Europe that they could now press for changes. The question was: how far would Khrushchev let them go? The first opposition Khrushchev had to deal with as leader was in Poland.

In the summer of 1956 demonstrators attacked the Polish police, protesting about the fact that the government had increased food prices but not wages. Fifty-three workers were killed by the Polish army in riots in Poznan. The Polish government itself was unable to control the demonstrators. Alarmed, Khrushchev moved troops to the Polish border.

By October 1956 Poland was becoming more stabilised. A new leader, Wladyslaw Gomulka, took charge on 20 October. During the Nazi occupation Gomulka had been a popular leader of Communist resistance. However, he was also a nationalist. He had not seen eye to eye with many Polish Communists, who were totally loyal to Stalin. Khrushchev accepted Gomulka's appointment – a popular move in Poland for the next couple of years.

There was also an agreement that the Communists would stop persecuting members of the Catholic Church. The Red Army moved away from the Polish border and left the Polish army and government to sort things out.

Khrushchev was soon put to the test again in Hungary in October 1956.

## Case study 1: Hungary, 1956

From 1949 to 1956 Hungary was led by a hard-line Communist called Mátyás Rákosi. Hungarians hated the restrictions which Rákosi's Communism imposed on them. Most Hungarians felt bitter about losing their freedom of speech. They lived in fear of the secret police. They resented the presence of thousands of Soviet troops and officials in their country. Some areas of Hungary even had Russian street signs, Russian schools and shops. Worst of all, Hungarians had to pay for Soviet forces to be in Hungary.

### SOURCE 7

*Living standards were declining and yet the papers and radio kept saying that we had never had it so good. Why? Why these lies? Everybody knew the state was spending the money on armaments. Why could they not admit that we were worse off because of the war effort and the need to build new factories? . . . I finally arrived at the realisation that the system was wrong and stupid.*

A Hungarian student describes the mood in 1953.

### SOURCE 8

*. . . wearing clothes patterned after Western styles, showing interest in Jazz, expressing liberalism in the arts – was considered dangerous in the eyes of the people's democracy. To cite a small example, let us take the case of my university colleague, John. He showed up at lectures one day several weeks before the revolution in a new suit and a striped shirt and necktie, all of which he had received from an uncle in the United States through gift-parcel channels. His shoes were smooth suede and would have cost one month's wages in Hungary. After classes John was summoned by the party officer. He received a tongue-lashing and was expelled.*

Written by László Beke, a student who helped lead the Hungarian uprising in 1956, in *A Student's Diary: Budapest October 16–November 1, 1956*.

### Focus Task

#### Why was there opposition to Soviet control in Hungary?

- 1 Use the text and Sources 7 and 8 to list reasons why some Hungarians were opposed to Communist control – for example, they resented the presence of Soviet troops.
- 2 List the changes proposed by Nagy's government.
- 3 Which of these proposed changes do you think would be most threatening of the USSR? Give reasons.

### Revision Tip

Test yourself to see if you can remember:

- ♦ two important reasons that the Hungarians rebelled against Soviet control in 1956
- ♦ two changes brought about by Nagy
- ♦ how Khrushchev reacted at first, then changed his mind, then changed it again.

## What happened?

In June 1956 a group within the Communist Party in Hungary opposed Rákosi. He appealed to Moscow for help. He wanted to arrest 400 leading opponents. Moscow would not back him. The Kremlin ordered Rákosi to be retired 'for health reasons'.

The new leader, Ernő Gerő, was no more acceptable to the Hungarian people. Discontent came to a head with a huge student demonstration on **23 October**, when the giant statue of Stalin in Budapest was pulled down.

The USSR allowed a new government to be formed under the well-respected Imre Nagy on 24 October. Soviet troops and tanks stationed in Hungary since the Second World War began to withdraw. Hungarians created thousands of local councils to replace Soviet power. Several thousand Hungarian soldiers defected from the army to the rebel cause, taking their weapons with them.

Nagy's government began to make plans. It would hold free elections, create impartial courts, restore farmland to private ownership. It wanted the total withdrawal of the Soviet army from Hungary. It also planned to leave the Warsaw Pact and declare Hungary neutral in the Cold War struggle between East and West. There was widespread optimism that the new American President Eisenhower, who had been the wartime supreme commander of all Allied Forces in western Europe, would support the new independent Hungary with armed troops if necessary.

## How did the Soviet Union respond?

Khrushchev at first seemed ready to accept some of the reforms. However, he could not accept Hungary's leaving the Warsaw Pact. In November 1956 thousands of Soviet troops and tanks moved into Budapest. The Hungarians did not give in. Two weeks of bitter fighting followed. Some estimates put the number of Hungarians killed at 30,000. However, the latest research suggests about 3,000 Hungarians and 7,000–8,000 Russians were killed. Another 200,000 Hungarians fled across the border into Austria to escape the Communist forces.

## SOURCE 9

In Hungary thousands of people have obtained arms by disarming soldiers and militia men . . . Soldiers have been making friends with the embittered and dissatisfied masses . . . The authorities are paralysed, unable to stop the bloody events.

From a report in a Yugoslav newspaper. Yugoslavia, although Communist, did not approve of Soviet policies.

## SOURCE 10

We have almost no weapons, no heavy guns of any kind. People are running up to the tanks, throwing in hand grenades and closing the drivers' windows. The Hungarian people are not afraid of death. It is only a pity that we cannot last longer. Now the firing is starting again. The tanks are coming nearer and nearer. You can't let people attack tanks with their bare hands. What is the United Nations doing?

A telex message sent by the Hungarian rebels fighting the Communists. Quoted in George Mikes, *The Hungarian Revolution, 1957*.

## SOURCE 11

October 27, 1956. On my way home I saw a little girl propped up against the doorway of a building with a machine gun clutched in her hands. When I tried to move her, I saw she was dead. She couldn't have been more than eleven or twelve years old. There was a neatly folded note in her pocket she had evidently meant to pass on through someone to her parents. In childish scrawl it read: 'Dear Mama, Brother is dead. He asked me to take care of his gun. I am all right, and I'm going with friends now. I kiss you. Kati.'

Written by László Beke, a Hungarian student.

## SOURCE 12



An armed fifteen-year-old girl in Budapest during the Hungarian rising of 1956.

The Western powers protested to the USSR but sent no help; they were too preoccupied with a crisis of their own (the Suez crisis in the Middle East)!

## Outcomes

Khrushchev put János Kádár in place as leader. Kádár took several months to crush all resistance. Around 35,000 anti-Communist activists were arrested and 300 were executed. Kádár cautiously introduced some of the reforms being demanded by the Hungarian people. However, he did not waver on the central issue – membership of the Warsaw Pact.

## Source Analysis

- 1 How do Sources 9 and 10 differ in the impression they give of the Hungarian uprising?
- 2 Why do you think they differ?
- 3 Does the photo in Source 12 give the same impression as either Source 9 or Source 10?
- 4 Work in pairs. Study Sources 9–12 and choose one source. Try to convince your partner that your source is the most useful source for studying events in Hungary in 1956.

## Think!

- 1 Look back at Source 17 in Chapter 4. Why do you think Hungary's membership of the Warsaw Pact was so important to the Soviet Union?
- 2 Why do you think the Hungarians received no support from the West?
- 3 Explain which of these statements you most agree with:

The speed at which the Red Army crushed resistance in Hungary shows how completely the Soviet Union controlled Hungary.

The severity of the Red Army in dealing with Hungary in 1956 shows how fragile the Soviet hold on Hungary really was.



## Case study 2: Czechoslovakia and the Prague Spring, 1968

### SOURCE 13

*In Czechoslovakia the people who were trusted [by the Communist government] were the obedient ones, those who did not cause any trouble, who didn't ask questions. It was the mediocre man who came off best.*

*In twenty years not one human problem has been solved in our country, from primary needs like flats, schools, to the more subtle needs such as fulfilling oneself . . . the need for people to trust one another . . . development of education.*

*I feel that our Republic has lost its good reputation.*

From a speech given by Ludvík Vaculík, a leading figure in the reform movement, in March 1968.

### SOURCE 14

*The Director told them they would produce 400 locomotives a year. They are making seventy.*

*And go look at the scrapyard, at all the work that has been thrown out. They built a railway and then took it down again. Who's responsible for all this? The Communist Party set up the system.*

*We were robbed of our output, our wages . . . How can I believe that in five years' time it won't be worse?*

Ludvík Vaculík quotes from an interview he had with the workers in a locomotive factory run by the Communists.

### Focus Task

#### Why was there opposition to Soviet control in Czechoslovakia?

Use the text and Sources 13–15 to list the reasons for opposition to Soviet control in Czechoslovakia.

Twelve years after the brutal suppression of the Hungarians, Czechoslovakia posed a similar challenge to Soviet domination of eastern Europe. Khrushchev had by now been ousted from power in the USSR. A new leader, Leonid Brezhnev, had replaced him.

### What happened?

In the 1960s a new mood developed in Czechoslovakia. People examined what had been happening in twenty years of Communist control and they did not like what they saw. In 1967 the old Stalinist leader was replaced by Alexander Dubček. He proposed a policy of 'socialism with a human face': less censorship, more freedom of speech and a reduction in the activities of the secret police. Dubček was a committed Communist, but he believed that Communism did not have to be as restrictive as it had been before he came to power. He had learned the lessons of the Hungarian uprising and reassured Brezhnev that Czechoslovakia had no plans to pull out of the Warsaw Pact or Comecon.

The Czech opposition was led by intellectuals who felt that the Communists had failed to lead the country forward. As censorship had been eased, they were able to launch attacks on the Communist leadership, pointing out how corrupt and useless they were. Communist government ministers were 'grilled' on live television and radio about how they were running the country and about events before 1968. This period became known as 'The Prague Spring' because of all the new ideas that seemed to be appearing everywhere.

By the summer even more radical ideas were emerging. There was even talk of allowing another political party, the Social Democratic Party, to be set up as a rival to the Communist Party.

### SOURCE 15

*All the different kinds of state in which the Communist Party has taken power have gone through rigged trials . . . There must be a fault other than just the wrong people were chosen. There must be a fault in the theory [of Communism] itself.*

Written by Luboš Dubrovský, a Czech writer, in May 1968.

### How did the Soviet Union respond?

The Soviet Union was very suspicious of the changes taking place in Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia was one of the most important countries in the Warsaw Pact. It was centrally placed, and had the strongest industry. The Soviets were worried that the new ideas in Czechoslovakia might spread to other countries in eastern Europe. Brezhnev came under pressure from the East German leader, Walter Ulbricht, and the Polish leader, Gomułka, to restrain reform in Czechoslovakia.

The USSR tried various methods in response. To start with, it tried to slow Dubček down. It argued with him. Soviet, Polish and East German troops performed very public training exercises right on the Czech border. It thought about imposing economic sanctions – for example, cancelling wheat exports to Czechoslovakia – but didn't because it thought that the Czechs would ask for help from the West.

In July the USSR had a summit conference with the Czechs. Dubček agreed not to allow a new Social Democratic Party. However, he insisted on keeping most of his reforms. The tension seemed to ease. Early in August, a conference of all the other Warsaw Pact countries produced a vague declaration simply calling on Czechoslovakia to maintain political stability.

Then seventeen days later, on 20 August 1968, to the stunned amazement of the Czechs and the outside world, Soviet tanks moved into Czechoslovakia.

There was little violent resistance, although many Czechs refused to co-operate with the Soviet troops. Dubček was removed from power. His experiment in socialism with a human face had not failed; it had simply proved unacceptable to the other Communist countries.

## SOURCE 16

Yesterday troops from the Soviet Union, Poland, East Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria crossed the frontier of Czechoslovakia . . . The Czechoslovak Communist Party Central Committee regard this act as contrary to the basic principles of good relations between socialist states.

A Prague radio report, 21 August 1968.

## SOURCE 17

The party and government leaders of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic have asked the Soviet Union and other allies to give the Czechoslovak people urgent assistance, including assistance with armed forces. This request was brought about . . . by the threat from counter revolutionary forces . . . working with foreign forces hostile to socialism.

A Soviet news agency report, 21 August 1968.

## SOURCE 18

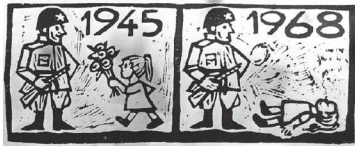


Czechs burning Soviet tanks in Prague, August 1968.

## Source Analysis

- 1 Explain how and why Sources 16 and 17 differ in their interpretation of the Soviet intervention.
- 2 What is the message of Source 19?

## SOURCE 19



A street cartoon in Prague.

## SOURCE 20

*When internal and external forces hostile to socialism attempt to turn the development of any socialist country in the direction of the capitalist system, when a threat arises to the cause of socialism in that country, a threat to the socialist commonwealth as a whole – it becomes not only a problem for the people of that country but also a general problem, the concern of all socialist countries.*

The Brezhnev Doctrine.

## Outcomes

Unlike Nagy in Hungary, Dubček was not executed. But he was gradually downgraded. First he was sent to be ambassador to Turkey, then expelled from the Communist Party altogether. Photographs showing him as leader were 'censored' (see page 122).

Before the Soviet invasion, Czechoslovakia's mood had been one of optimism. After, it was despair. A country that had been pro-Soviet now became resentful of the Soviet connection. Ideas that could have reformed Communism were silenced.

Dubček always expressed loyalty to Communism and the Warsaw Pact, but Brezhnev was very worried that the new ideas coming out of Czechoslovakia would spread. He was under pressure from the leaders of other Communist countries in eastern Europe, particularly Ulbricht in East Germany. These leaders feared that their own people would demand the same freedom that Dubček had allowed in Czechoslovakia.

## The Brezhnev Doctrine

The Czechoslovak episode gave rise to the Brezhnev Doctrine. The essentials of Communism were defined as:

- a one-party system
- to remain a member of the Warsaw Pact.

## Focus Task A

### How similar were the uprisings of 1956 and 1968?

One question which historians often consider is how similar the uprisings of 1956 in Hungary and 1968 in Czechoslovakia actually were. The table below gives you a number of ways to compare the two events. Work through pages 128–31, make your own copy then complete the table.

Issue	Hungary, 1956	Czechoslovakia, 1968	How similar? Give reasons
Aims of rebels			
Attitude towards Communism			
Attitude towards democracy			
Attitude towards the USSR			
Attitude towards the West			
Why the USSR intervened			
How the USSR intervened			
Response of the rebels			
Casualties			
Eventual outcome			

Here are a few points to help you get the table started, but you will have to decide where they fit and add your own as well.

- ◆ Abolish secret police
- ◆ Around 200,000 fled the country
- ◆ Because of the threat to leave Warsaw Pact
- ◆ Dubček downgraded
- ◆ Fear that other states would demand the same freedoms
- ◆ Less censorship
- ◆ Pitched battles in the streets
- ◆ Wanted a more human form of Communism
- ◆ Wanted free elections with more than one party
- ◆ Withdraw Soviet troops

### Revision Tip

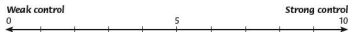
You don't need to learn this whole table but be sure you can explain:

- ◆ two ways in which the Hungarian and Czech uprisings were similar
- ◆ two ways in which they were different.

## Focus Task B

### How secure was Soviet control of Hungary and Czechoslovakia?

Here are various events from the two invasions. For each event decide where it should go on this line. Does it suggest that Soviet control was weak, strong or somewhere in between?



There may be some events that you think could be used to support either view. Whatever you decide you must include notes to explain your decision.

#### Hungary

- ◆ Imre Nagy forms new government
- ◆ Khrushchev sends in troops
- ◆ Nagy imprisoned and executed
- ◆ Nagy's plans
- ◆ Opposition to Rákosi
- ◆ Rákosi not supported by Moscow
- ◆ Rákosi removed
- ◆ Rebellion
- ◆ Soviet tanks move in and then withdraw
- ◆ Two weeks of fierce street fighting

#### Czechoslovakia

- ◆ Censorship eased in Czechoslovakia
- ◆ Czech Communist leaders were heavily criticised for corrupt and incompetent rule
- ◆ Plans to set up Social Democratic Party
- ◆ USSR argued with Dubček to slow down the pace of reform
- ◆ Troops carried out training exercises on the border of Czechoslovakia
- ◆ The USSR considered sanctions against Czechoslovakia but feared they would not work
- ◆ Tanks moved into Prague on 20 August 1968
- ◆ There was little violent resistance in Czechoslovakia
- ◆ Dubček was removed
- ◆ The Brezhnev Doctrine

## Case study 3: The Berlin Wall

### SOURCE 21



A 1959 Soviet cartoon – the caption was: 'The socialist stallion far outclasses the capitalist donkey'.

### Source Analysis

- 1 Look at Source 21. What is the aim of this cartoon?
- 2 How might someone living in a Communist country react to it?

### SOURCE 22

West Berlin . . . has many roles. It is more than a showcase of liberty, an island of freedom in a Communist sea. It is more than a link with the free world, a beacon of hope behind the iron curtain, an escape hatch for refugees. Above all, it has become the resting place of Western courage and will . . . We cannot and will not permit the Communists to drive us out of Berlin.

President Kennedy speaking in 1960, before he became President.

You have already seen how Berlin was a battleground of the Cold War (see Source 22). In 1961 it also became the focus of the Soviet Union's latest attempt to maintain control of its east European satellites.

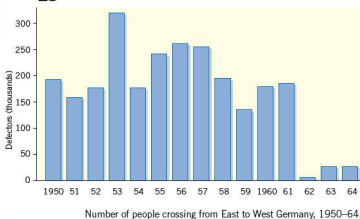
### The problem

The crushing of the Hungarian uprising (see page 128) had confirmed for many people in eastern Europe that it was impossible to fight the Communists. For many it seemed that the only way of escaping the repression was to leave altogether. Some wished to leave eastern Europe for political reasons – they hated the Communists – while many more wished to leave for economic reasons. As standards of living in eastern Europe fell further and further behind the West, the attraction of going to live in a capitalist state was very great.

The contrast was particularly great in the divided city of Berlin. Living standards were tolerable in the East, but just a few hundred metres away in West Berlin, East Germans could see some of the prize exhibits of capitalist West Germany – shops full of goods, great freedom, great wealth and great variety. This had been deliberately done by the Western powers. They had poured massive investment into Berlin. East Germans could also watch West German television.

In the 1950s East Germans were still able to travel freely into West Berlin. From there they could travel on into West Germany. It was very tempting to leave East Germany with its harsh Communist regime and its hardline leader, Walter Ulbricht. By the late 1950s thousands were leaving and never coming back (see Source 23).

### SOURCE 23



Those who were defecting were very often highly skilled workers or well-qualified managers. The Communist government could not afford to lose these high-quality people. More importantly, from Khrushchev's point of view, the sight of thousands of Germans fleeing Communist rule for a better life under capitalism undermined Communism generally.

## The solution

In 1961 the USA had a new President, the young and inexperienced John F Kennedy. Khrushchev thought he could bully Kennedy and chose to pick a fight over Berlin. He insisted that Kennedy withdraw US troops from the city. He was certain that Kennedy would back down. Kennedy refused. However, all eyes were now on Berlin. What would happen next?

At two o'clock in the morning on Sunday 13 August 1961, East German soldiers erected a barbed-wire barrier along the entire frontier between East and West Berlin, ending all free movement from East to West. It was quickly replaced by a concrete wall. All the crossing points from East to West Berlin were sealed, except for one. This became known as Checkpoint Charlie.

Families were divided. Berliners were unable to go to work; chaos and confusion followed. Border guards kept a constant look-out for anyone trying to cross the wall. They had orders to shoot people trying to defect. Hundreds were killed over the next three decades.

### SOURCE 24

A



B



Stages in the building of the Berlin Wall.

### SOURCE 25



East German security guards recover the body of a man shot attempting to cross the wall in 1962.

### SOURCE 26

*The Western powers in Berlin use it as a centre of subversive activity against the GDR [the initial letters of the German name for East Germany]. In no other part of the world are so many espionage centres to be found. These centres smuggle their agents into the GDR for all kinds of subversion: recruiting spies; sabotage; provoking disturbances.*

*The government presents all working people of the GDR with a proposal that will securely block subversive activity so that reliable safeguards and effective control will be established around West Berlin, including its border with democratic Berlin.*

*A Soviet explanation for the building of the wall, 1961.*

## Outcomes

For a while, the wall created a major crisis. Access to East Berlin had been guaranteed to the Allies since 1945. In October 1961 US diplomats and troops crossed regularly into East Berlin to find out how the Soviets would react.

On 27 October Soviet tanks pulled up to Checkpoint Charlie and refused to allow any further access to the East. All day US and Soviet tanks, fully armed, faced each other in a tense stand-off. Then, after eighteen hours, one by one, five metres at a time, the tanks pulled back. Another crisis, another retreat.

The international reaction was relief. Khrushchev ordered Ulbricht to avoid any actions that would increase tension. Kennedy said, 'It's not a very nice solution, but a wall is a hell of a lot better than a war.' So the wall stayed, and over the following years became the symbol of division – the division of Germany, the division of Europe, the division of Communist East and democratic West. The Communists presented the wall as a protective shell around East Berlin. The West presented it as a prison wall.

### SOURCE 27

*There are some who say, in Europe and elsewhere, we can work with the Communists. Let them come to Berlin.*

President Kennedy speaking in 1963 after the building of the Berlin Wall.

### SOURCE 28



A Soviet cartoon from the 1960s. The sign reads: 'The border of the GDR (East Germany) is closed to all enemies.' Notice the shape of the dog's tail.

### Revision Tip

You need to be able to give:

- ♦ two reasons that the Soviet Union built the Berlin Wall
- ♦ a full explanation of each reason.

### Focus Task

**Why was the Berlin Wall built in 1961?**

#### Stage 1

Work in pairs.

Make a poster or notice to be stuck on the Berlin Wall explaining the purpose of the wall. One of you do a poster for the East German side and the other do a poster for the West German side. You can use pictures and quotations from the sources in this chapter or use your own research.

Make sure you explain in your poster the reasons why the wall was built and what the results of building the wall will be.

#### Stage 2

Discuss with your partner: Do you think the building of the Berlin Wall shows that Communist control of East Germany was weak or that it was strong?

Choose pieces of evidence from the past three pages that could be used to support either viewpoint and explain how it could be used that way.

## Case study 4: Solidarity in Poland, 1980–81

### SOURCE 29

- More pay
- End to censorship
- Same welfare benefits as police and party workers
- Broadcasting of Catholic church services
- Election of factory managers

Some of Solidarity's 21 demands.

### Profile

#### Lech Walesa



- Pronounced Lek Fowensa.
- Born 1943. His father was a farmer.
- He went to work in the shipyards at Gdansk.
- In 1976 he was sacked from the shipyard for making 'malicious' statements about the organisation and working climate.
- In 1978 he helped organise a union at another factory. He was dismissed.
- In 1979 he worked for Eltromontage. He was said to be the best automotive electrician. He was sacked.
- With others, he set up Solidarity in August 1980 and became its leader.
- He was a committed Catholic.
- In 1989 he became the leader of Poland's first non-Communist government since the Second World War.

### Revision Tip

Make sure you know:

- ♦ two demands made by Solidarity in 1980
- ♦ one reason why Solidarity was crushed in 1981
- ♦ one reason why you think the rise and fall of Solidarity is a significant event in history.

Throughout the years of Communist control of Poland there were regular protests. However, they were generally more about living standards and prices than attempts to overthrow Communist government.

During the first half of the 1970s Polish industry performed well so the country was relatively calm. But in the late 1970s the Polish economy hit a crisis and 1979 was the worst year for Polish industry since Communism had been introduced. This is what happened next.

<b>July 1980</b>	The government announced increases in the price of meat.
<b>August 1980</b>	Workers at the Gdansk shipyard, led by Lech Walesa, put forward 21 demands to the government, including free trade unions and the right to strike (see Source 29). They also started a free trade union called Solidarity. Poland had trade unions but they were ineffective in challenging government policies.
<b>30 August 1980</b>	The government agreed to all 21 of Solidarity's demands.
<b>September 1980</b>	Solidarity's membership grew to 3.5 million.
<b>October 1980</b>	Solidarity's membership was 7 million. Solidarity was officially recognised by the government.
<b>January 1981</b>	Membership of Solidarity reached its peak at 9.4 million – more than a third of all the workers in Poland.

## Reasons for Solidarity's success

You might be surprised that the government gave in to Solidarity in 1980. There are many different reasons for this.

- **The union was strongest in those industries that were most important to the government** – shipbuilding and heavy industry. A general strike in these industries would have devastated Poland's economy.
- **In the early stages the union was not seen by its members as an alternative to the Communist Party.** More than 1 million members (50 per cent) of the Communist Party joined Solidarity.
- **Lech Walesa was very careful** in his negotiations with the government and worked to avoid provoking a dispute that might bring in the Soviet Union.
- **The union was immensely popular.** Almost half of all workers belonged. Lech Walesa was a kind of folk hero.
- **Solidarity had the support of the Catholic Church** which was still very strong in Poland.
- **The government was playing for time.** It hoped Solidarity would break into rival factions. The government also drew up plans for martial law (rule by the army).
- **Finally, the Soviet Union had half an eye on the West.** Solidarity had gained support in the West in a way that neither the Hungarian nor the Czech rising had. Walesa was well known on Western media and people in the West bought Solidarity badges to show their support. The scale of the movement ensured that the Soviet Union treated the Polish crisis cautiously.

Following this success membership of Solidarity increased quickly.

## SOURCE 30

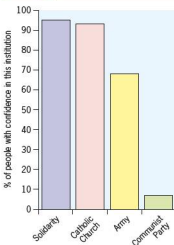
*Inequality and injustice are everywhere. There are hospitals that are so poorly supplied that they do not even have cotton, and our relatives die in the corridors; but other hospitals are equipped with private rooms and full medical care for each room. We pay fines for traffic violations, but some people commit highway manslaughter while drunk and are let off . . . In some places there are better shops and superior vacation houses, with huge fenced-in grounds that ordinary people cannot enter.*

Extract from 'Experience and the Future', a report drawn up in 1981 by Polish writers and thinkers who were not members of the Communist Party. They are describing the inequality in Poland between Communist Party members and ordinary people.

## Think!

Between August 1980 and December 1981, Solidarity went through some rapid changes. Choose two moments in this period that you think were particularly important in the rise and fall of Solidarity and explain why they were important.

## SOURCE 31



The results of an opinion poll in Poland, November 1981. The people polled were asked whether they had confidence in key institutions in Poland. It is known that 11 per cent of those polled were Communist Party members.

In February 1981 the civilian Prime Minister 'resigned' and the leader of the army, General Jaruzelski, took over. From the moment he took office, people in Poland, and observers outside Poland, expected the Soviet Union to 'send in the tanks' at any time, especially when the Solidarity Congress produced an 'open letter' saying that they were campaigning not only for their own rights but for the rights of workers throughout the Communist bloc. It proclaimed that the Poles were fighting 'For Your Freedom and For Ours'.

Jaruzelski and Walesa negotiated to form a government of national understanding but when that broke down in December, after nine months of tense relationships, the Communist government acted. Brezhnev ordered the Red Army to carry out 'training manoeuvres' on the Polish border. Jaruzelski introduced martial law. He put Walesa and almost 10,000 other Solidarity leaders in prison. He suspended Solidarity.

## Reasons for the crushing of Solidarity

Military dictators are not required to give reasons for their actions. But if they did what might Jaruzelski have to say?

- **Solidarity was acting as a political party.** The government declared that it had secret tapes of a Solidarity meeting setting up a new provisional government – without the Communist Party.
- **Poland was sinking into chaos.** Almost all Poles felt the impact of food shortages. Rationing had been introduced in April 1981. Wages had increased by less than inflation. Unemployment was rising.
- **Solidarity itself was also tumbling into chaos.** There were many different factions. Some felt that the only way to make progress was to push the Communists harder until they cracked under the pressure. Strikes were continuing long after the Solidarity leadership had ordered them to stop.

The Soviet Union had seen enough. It thought the situation in Poland had gone too far. If Poland's leaders would not restore Communist control in Poland, then it would. This was something the Polish leaders wanted to avoid.

The Communist government had regained control of Poland but in December 1981, looking back on the past eighteen months, two things were obvious:

- The Polish people no longer trusted the Communists leadership.
- The only thing that kept the Communists in power was force or the threat of force backed by the USSR. When Jaruzelski finally decided to use force, Solidarity was easily crushed. The lesson was clear. If military force was not used, then Communist control seemed very shaky indeed.

## The significance of Solidarity

In the story of Soviet control of eastern Europe Solidarity was significant for a number of reasons:

- It highlighted the failure of Communism to provide good living standards and this undermined Communism's claim to be a system which benefited ordinary people.
  - It highlighted inefficiency and corruption (see Source 30 for example).
  - It showed that there were organisations which were capable of resisting a Communist government.
  - It showed that Communist governments could be threatened by 'people power'.
- If Soviet policy were to change Communist control would not survive.

What do you expect to happen next?

## Focus Task

**What was the significance of Solidarity for the decline of Soviet influence in eastern Europe?**

'Solidarity died as quickly as it started, having achieved nothing.'

How far do you agree with this statement? Support your answer with evidence from pages 136 and 137.



## Profile

### Mikhail Gorbachev



- Born 1931. One grandfather was a kulak – a landowning peasant – who had been sent to a prison camp by Stalin because he resisted Stalin's policy of collectivisation. The other grandfather was a loyal Communist Party member.
- His elder brother was killed in the Second World War.
- Studied law at Moscow University in the 1950s. Became a persuasive speaker.
- Worked as a local Communist Party official in his home area. By 1978 he was a member of the Central Committee of the party and in charge of agriculture.
- In 1980 he joined the Politburo.
- He was a close friend of Andropov, who became Soviet leader in 1983. He shared many of Andropov's ideas about reforming the USSR. When Andropov was leader, he was effectively second in command.
- In 1985 he became leader of the USSR.
- In October 1990 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

## Think!

Why do you think the Warsaw Pact leaders did not believe Gorbachev when he told them the Soviet Union would no longer interfere in the internal affairs of other communist countries?

## Revision Tip

Identify two problems in the USSR that led to Gorbachev's new policy towards eastern Europe.

# Enter Mikhail Gorbachev

Gorbachev became leader of the Soviet Union in 1985. He was an unusual mix of idealist, optimist and realist.

- The realist in him could see that the USSR was in a terrible state. Its economy was very weak. It was spending far too much money on the arms race. It was locked into an unwinnable war in Afghanistan.
- The idealist in Gorbachev believed that Communist rule should make life better for the people of the USSR and other Communist states. As a loyal Communist and a proud Russian, he was offended by the fact that goods made in Soviet factories were shoddy, living standards were higher in the West and that many Soviet citizens had no loyalty to the government.
- The optimist in Gorbachev believed that a reformed Communist system of government could give people pride and belief in their country. He definitely did not intend to dismantle Communism in the USSR and eastern Europe, but he did want to reform it radically.

## Gorbachev's policies in eastern Europe

Gorbachev also had a very different attitude to eastern Europe from Brezhnev. In March he called the leaders of the Warsaw Pact countries together. This meeting should have been a turning point in the history of eastern Europe. He had two messages.

### 'We won't intervene'

#### SOURCE 32

*The time is ripe for abandoning views on foreign policy which are influenced by an imperial standpoint. Neither the Soviet Union nor the USA is able to force its will on others. It is possible to suppress, compel, bribe, break or blast, but only for a certain period. From the point of view of long-term big time politics, no one will be able to subordinate others. That is why only one thing – relations of equality – remains. All of us must realise this . . .*

Gorbachev speaking in 1987.

Gorbachev made it very clear to the countries of eastern Europe that they were responsible for their own fates. However, most of the Warsaw Pact leaders were old style, hardline Communists. To them, Gorbachev's ideas were insane and they simply did not believe he meant what he said.

### 'You have to reform'

Gorbachev also made it clear that they needed to reform their own countries. He did not think Communism was doomed. In fact he felt the opposite was true. Gorbachev believed the Communist system could provide better healthcare, education and transport. The task in the USSR and eastern Europe was to renew Communism so as to match capitalism in other areas of public life. However, they did not believe him on this count either.

In the next few years these leaders would realise they had made a serious error of judgement.

## Gorbachev's reforms

He had to be cautious, because he faced great opposition from hardliners in his own government, but gradually he declared his policies. The two key ideas were *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring).

- **Glasnost:** He called for open debate on government policy and honesty in facing up to problems. It was not a detailed set of policies but it did mean radical change.
- In 1987 his **perestroika** programme allowed market forces to be introduced into the Soviet economy. For the first time in 60 years it was no longer illegal to buy and sell for profit.

SOURCE 33  
A

Polish, Hungarian and Romanian dogs get to talking. 'What's life like in your country?' the Polish dog asks the Hungarian dog.

'Well, we have meat to eat but we can't bark. What are things like where you are from?' says the Hungarian dog to the Polish dog.

'With us, there's no meat, but at least we can bark,' says the Polish dog.

'What's meat? What's barking?' asks the Romanian dog.

B

East German leader Erich Honecker is touring East German towns. He is shown a run-down kindergarten. The staff ask for funds to renovate the institution. Honecker refuses. Next he visits a hospital, where the doctors petition him for a grant to buy new surgical equipment. Honecker refuses. The third place on Honecker's itinerary is a prison. This is pretty dilapidated, and here too the governor asks for money to refurbish. This time Honecker immediately pulls out his cheque book and insists that not only should the cells be repainted but that they should be fitted with new mattresses, colour televisions and safes. Afterwards an aide asks him why he said no to a school and a hospital, but yes to a prison. Honecker says, 'Where do you think we will be living in a few months' time?'

Examples of anti-Communist jokes collected by researchers in eastern Europe in the 1980s.

## Defence spending

He also began to cut spending on defence. The nuclear arms race was an enormous drain on the Soviet economy at a time when it was in trouble anyway.

After almost 50 years on a constant war footing, the **Red Army** began to shrink.

## International relations

At the same time, Gorbachev brought a new attitude to the USSR's relations with the wider world.

- He withdrew Soviet troops from Afghanistan, which had become such a costly yet unwinnable war.
- In speech after speech, he talked about international trust and co-operation as the way forward for the USSR, rather than confrontation.

## Gorbachev and President Reagan

Ronald Reagan became US President in January 1981. He was President until 1988. He had only one policy towards the USSR – get tough. He criticised its control over eastern Europe and increased US military spending.

In a way, Reagan's toughness helped Gorbachev.

- It was clear by the late 1980s that the USSR could not compete with American military spending. This helped Gorbachev to push through his military spending cuts.
- Reagan got on quite well with Gorbachev himself. As superpower relations improved, the USSR felt threatened by the USA. This meant there was less need for the USSR to control eastern Europe.

SOURCE 34  
A

The Soviet Union would remain a one party state even if the Communists allowed an opposition party to exist. Everyone would join the opposition party.

B

When American college students are asked what they want to do after graduation, they reply: 'I don't know, I haven't decided'. Russian students answer the same question by saying: 'I don't know, they haven't told me'.

Anti-Communist jokes told by US President Reagan to Mikhail Gorbachev at their summit meetings in the late 1980s.

## Implications for eastern Europe

As Gorbachev introduced his reforms in the USSR the demand rose for similar reforms in eastern European states as well. Most people in these states were sick of the poor economic conditions and the harsh restrictions that Communism imposed. Gorbachev's policies gave people some hope for reform.

## 'Listen to your people'

In July 1988 Gorbachev made a speech to the leaders of the Warsaw Pact countries. He planned to withdraw large numbers of troops, tanks and aircraft from eastern Europe. Hungary was particularly eager to get rid of Soviet troops and, when pressed, Gorbachev seemed to accept this. In March 1989 he made clear again that the Red Army would not intervene to prop up Communist regimes in eastern Europe. What followed was staggering.

## Source Analysis

- 1 Why do you think President Reagan was so fond of jokes like those in Source 34A and B?
- 2 Do you think it is strange that Gorbachev was upset by these jokes? Explain your answer.
- 3 Can jokes really be useful historical sources? Explain your answer.
- 4 If you think jokes are useful sources, do you think the jokes in Source 33 are more or less useful than the jokes in Source 34? Explain your answer.

# The collapse of Communism in eastern Europe



**1 May 1989**  
Hungarians begin dismantling the barbed-wire fence between Hungary and non-Communist Austria.

**June**  
In Poland, free elections are held for the first time since the Second World War. Solidarity wins almost all the seats it contests. Eastern Europe gets its first non-Communist leader, President Lech Walesa.

**September**  
Thousands of East Germans on holiday in Hungary and Czechoslovakia refuse to go home. They escape through Austria into West Germany.

**October**  
There are enormous demonstrations in East German cities when Gorbachev visits the country. He tells the East German leader Erich Honecker to reform. Honecker orders troops to fire on demonstrators but they refuse. Gorbachev makes it clear that Soviet tanks will not move in to 'restore order'.

**November**  
East Germans march in their thousands to the checkpoints at the Berlin Wall. The guards throw down their weapons and join the crowds. The Berlin Wall is dismantled.

**November**  
There are huge demonstrations in Czechoslovakia. The Czech government opens its borders with the West, and allows the formation of other parties.

**December**  
In Romania there is a short but very bloody revolution that ends with the execution of the Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu.

**The Communist Party in Hungary renames itself the Socialist Party and declares that free elections will be held in 1990.**

**In Bulgaria, there are huge demonstrations against the Communist government.**

**March 1990**  
Latvia leads the Baltic republics in declaring independence from the USSR.

## People power

The western media came up with a phrase to explain these events – people power. Communist control was toppled because ordinary people were not prepared to accept it any longer. They took control of events. It was not political leaders guiding the future of eastern Europe in 1989 but ordinary people.

### SOURCE 35

#### Source Analysis ▶

Study Source 35. We are going to study the story in the source.

- 1 What is the man in the foreground doing?
- 2 Would this have been possible at an earlier date? Why?
- 3 Who are the men watching from above? Why is it significant that they are just watching?
- 4 How would you summarise this scene: joyful? sad? powerful? other words?

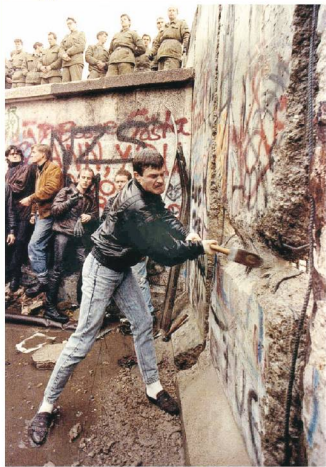
Now let's think about the story of the source:

- 5 What is significant about the fact that the photographer was even able to take this picture?
- 6 The photographer was probably a freelance photographer who hoped to sell this picture to as many different newspapers as he could. Do you think he would have been successful? Why?
- 7 Which countries would have been most likely to publish this photograph? Why?

### SOURCE 36

*For most west Europeans now alive, the world has always ended at the East German border and the Wall; beyond lay darkness . . . The opening of the frontiers declares that the world has no edge any more. Europe is becoming once more round and whole.*

*The Independent, November 1989.*



A demonstrator pounds away at the Berlin Wall as East German border guards look on from above, 4 November 1989. The wall was dismantled five days later.

#### Revision Tip

Remember two examples of 'people power' weakening Communist control of eastern Europe in 1989–90.

## Reunification of Germany

With the Berlin Wall down, West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl proposed a speedy reunification of Germany. Germans in both countries embraced the idea enthusiastically.

Despite his idealism, Gorbachev was less enthusiastic. He expected that a new united Germany would be more friendly to the West than to the East. But after many months of hard negotiations, not all of them friendly, Gorbachev accepted German reunification and even accepted that the new Germany could become a member of NATO. This was no small thing for Gorbachev to accept. Like all Russians, he lived with the memory that it was German aggression in the Second World War that had cost the lives of 20 million Soviet citizens.

On 3 October 1990, Germany became a united country once again.

# The collapse of the USSR

Even more dramatic events were to follow in the Soviet Union itself.

1990

MARCH

Gorbachev visited the Baltic state of **Lithuania** – part of the Soviet Union. Its leaders put their views to him. They were very clear. They wanted independence. They did not want to be part of the USSR. Gorbachev was for once uncompromising. He would not allow this. But in March they did it anyway.

Almost as soon as he returned to Moscow from Lithuania, Gorbachev received a similar demand from the Muslim Soviet Republic of **Azerbaijan**. What should Gorbachev do now? He sent troops to Azerbaijan to end rioting there. He sent troops to Lithuania. But as the summer approached, the crisis situation got worse.

MAY

The **Russian Republic**, the largest within the USSR, elected Boris Yeltsin as its President. Yeltsin made it clear that he saw no future in a Soviet Union. He said that the many republics that made up the USSR should become independent states.

JULY

**Ukraine** declared its independence. Other republics followed.

By the end of 1990 nobody was quite sure what the USSR meant any longer. Meanwhile Gorbachev was an international superstar. In October 1990 Gorbachev received the **Nobel Peace Prize** for his contribution to ending the Cold War.

1991

APRIL

The Republic of **Georgia** declared its independence.

AUGUST

The USSR was disintegrating. Reformers within the USSR itself demanded an end to the Communist Party's domination of government. Gorbachev was struggling to hold it together, but members of the Communist elite had had enough.

Hardline Communist Party members and leading military officers attempted a **coup** to take over the USSR. The plotters included Gorbachev's Prime Minister, Pavlov, and the head of the armed forces, Dmitry Yazov. They held Gorbachev prisoner in his holiday home in the Crimea. They sent tanks and troops on to the streets of Moscow. This was the old Soviet way to keep control. Would it work this time?

Huge crowds gathered in Moscow. They strongly opposed this military coup. The Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, emerged as the leader of the popular opposition. Faced by this resistance, the conspirators lost faith in themselves and the coup collapsed.

This last-ditch attempt by the Communist Party to save the USSR had failed. A few days later, Gorbachev returned to Moscow.

DECEMBER

Gorbachev might have survived the coup, but it had not strengthened his position as Soviet leader. He had to admit that the USSR was finished and he with it.

In a televised speech on 25 December 1991, Gorbachev announced his own resignation and the end of the Soviet Union (see Source 37).

## Think!

Think of a suitable headline for each of the six episodes in the collapse of the USSR summarised in the table.

# The end of the Cold War

## Think!

Read Source 37 carefully. Three statements are in bold.

Do you agree or disagree with each statement? For each statement, write a short paragraph to:

- explain what it means, and
- express your own view on it.

## SOURCE 37

A sense of failure and regret came through his [Gorbachev's] Christmas Day abdication speech – especially in his sorrow over his people 'ceasing to be citizens of a great power'. Certainly, if man-in-the-street interviews can be believed, **the former Soviet peoples consider him a failure.**

**History will be kinder.** The Nobel Prize he received for ending the Cold War was well deserved. Every man, woman and child in this country should be eternally grateful.

**His statue should stand in the centre of every east European capital;** for it was Gorbachev who allowed them their independence. The same is true for the newly independent countries further east and in Central Asia. No Russian has done more to free his people from bondage since Alexander II who freed the serfs.

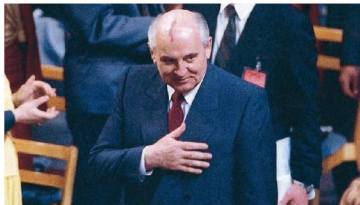
From a report on Gorbachev's abdication speech, 25 December 1991, in the US newspaper the *Boston Globe*.

## SOURCE 38

He had no grand plan and no predetermined policies; but if Gorbachev had not been Party General Secretary, the decisions of the late 1980s would have been different. The USSR's long-lasting order would have endured for many more years, and almost certainly the eventual collapse of the order would have been much bloodier than it was to be in 1991. The irony was that Gorbachev, in trying to prevent the descent of the system into general crisis, proved instrumental in bringing forward that crisis and destroying the USSR.

Extract from *History of Modern Russia* by historian Robert Service, published 2003. In this extract he is commenting on the meeting in March 1985.

## SOURCE 39



Mikhail Gorbachev after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, 15 October 1990.

## SOURCE 40

### Doonesbury

BY GARRY TRUDEAU



Soviet Control In Ea... A cartoon by Doonesbury which appeared in the *Guardian* on 13 June 1988.

## Focus Task A

### How far was Gorbachev personally responsible for the collapse of control over eastern Europe?

You are making a documentary film called 'The Collapse of the Red Empire' to explain the how and why of Soviet control of eastern Europe. The film will be 60 minutes long.

- 1 Decide what proportion of this time should concentrate on:
  - a) people power
  - b) problems in the USSR
  - c) Actions by Western leaders such as Reagan
  - d) Actions of political leaders in eastern Europe
  - e) Mikhail Gorbachev.
- 2 Choose one of these aspects and summarise the important points, stories, pictures or sources that your film should cover under that heading.

## Focus Task B

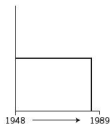
### How secure was Soviet control of eastern Europe?

You now know a lot about Soviet control of eastern Europe:

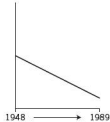
- ◆ how and why Communists seized control of each country in the 1940s (Chapter 4)
- ◆ how the Soviet Union successfully crushed opposition and threats to control from the 1950s to the 1980s
- ◆ how the Communist regimes of eastern Europe and the USSR collapsed so suddenly in 1989–90.

Here are the three graphs from page 123. Which do you think best represents the story of Soviet control of eastern Europe?

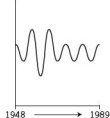
If you pick this graph, you think Soviet control stayed steady for years, then collapsed in 1989.



If you pick this graph, you think Soviet control gradually decreased over time.



If you pick this graph, you think Soviet control fluctuated in response to various crises.



If you think none of them is right then draw your own. Explain your graph using evidence from this chapter. You could refer back to your work for the Focus Tasks on pages 127, 132 and 137.

## Keywords

Make sure you know what these terms mean and are able to define them confidently.

- ◆ Berlin Wall
- ◆ Brezhnev Doctrine
- ◆ Censorship
- ◆ Checkpoint Charlie
- ◆ Co-existence
- ◆ Comecon
- ◆ Cominform
- ◆ Communism
- ◆ Communist bloc
- ◆ De-Stalinisation
- ◆ Freedom of speech
- ◆ Glasnost
- ◆ Iron curtain
- ◆ Martial law
- ◆ NATO
- ◆ Nobel Peace Prize
- ◆ One-party state
- ◆ People power
- ◆ Perestroika
- ◆ Politburo
- ◆ Red Army
- ◆ Reunification
- ◆ Secret police
- ◆ Socialism
- ◆ Solidarity
- ◆ Soviet republics
- ◆ Summit meeting
- ◆ Superpower
- ◆ The Prague Spring
- ◆ Trade union
- ◆ Warsaw Pact

## Chapter Summary

### The USSR and eastern Europe

- 1 After the Second World War, Communist governments were elected or forced on most countries of eastern Europe.
- 2 They were not directly ruled by the USSR but their Communist governments did what the USSR wanted and when they did not the USSR sent troops and tanks (the Red Army) to force them to follow the USSR's wishes.
- 3 Life in these countries was tightly controlled with censorship, a secret police and all industry directed to meeting the needs of the Soviet Union rather than making goods for ordinary people.
- 4 The countries formed a military alliance called the Warsaw Pact – the members would defend each other if any member was attacked.
- 5 In Hungary in 1956 the Communist government was very unpopular and the people resented the lack of freedom. There were demonstrations and protests. A new leader was chosen (with Soviet approval) who promised greater freedom but when he also decided to leave the Warsaw Pact the USSR changed and sent the Red Army to crush the rising.
- 6 In 1961 an increasing number of people in Communist East Germany were leaving by crossing into capitalist West Germany. The USSR responded by building the Berlin Wall – and stopping all movement from East to West Berlin. It stayed in place for 28 years and became a symbol of Cold War tension.
- 7 In Czechoslovakia in 1968 after mass protests the Communist government tried to introduce more freedom for its people. Again, the Soviet Union sent the Red Army to crush the protests.
- 8 In 1980 a trade union in Poland called Solidarity led a protest movement against Communist control that was tolerated to start with until the army took over in Poland and Solidarity was crushed.
- 9 In 1985 Gorbachev became leader of the USSR. He believed the USSR needed to change and he introduced two key ideas: glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring).
- 10 He also told the Communist governments of eastern Europe that the USSR was no longer going to intervene to prop them up. They were on their own. In 1988 he began to withdraw Soviet troops from eastern Europe.
- 11 The impact of this was not immediately clear but by 1989 people in eastern Europe began to test what this meant in practice. First of all Hungarians began to dismantle the barbed-wire fence between Hungary and the west. Over the rest of the summer of 1989 people acted similarly throughout eastern Europe, culminating with the dismantling of the Berlin Wall (while troops looked on) in November.
- 12 Gorbachev was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for helping to end the Cold War between the USA and the USSR but he was not popular in the USSR. The USSR fragmented and he resigned as leader on Christmas Day 1991.

## Exam Practice

See pages 168–175 and pages 316–319 for advice on the different types of questions you might face.

- 1(a) What were glasnost and perestroika? [4]  
(b) Explain why Mikhail Gorbachev changed Soviet policy towards eastern Europe. [6]  
(c) 'Gorbachev almost singlehandedly ended Communist control of eastern Europe.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. [10]
- 2 Study Source 26 on page 134. How far do you think Source 26 is a reliable source? Explain your answer using the source and your own knowledge. [7]
- 3 Study Source 28 on page 135. Why was this source published at this time? Explain your answer using details of the source and your knowledge. [7]