

Europe Since WWII (1945-2000)

POLITICAL

Western States strengthened post-war democracies against the bisection of Europe. In the East, the satellite states struggled under Soviet domination. Spies, mistrust, brinkmanship defined Cold War.

HUNGARY: 1956: Hungarian Uprising under Imre Nagy's inspiration. Soviet troops moved in; thousands killed or fled to West.

GERMANY/EAST GERMANY: In the East the *Stasi*, or State Police enlisted tens of thousands of people as "citizen spies." Berlin Wall built in 1963, but relations started to thaw in 1966 with idea of *Ostpolitik*. East German state supported "super athletes."

1968: Global turmoil and unrest prompts political revolt in numerous countries for different causes:

- UNITED STATES: Killing of Martin Luther King led to race riots while involvement in Vietnam led to widespread protests.
- CZECHOSLOVAKIA: Revolt by reformers was put down by Soviet tanks that moved into Prague (called the **Prague Spring**).
- FRANCE: Students, angry about education limitations, formed the New Left. They were joined by angry workers. Charles de Gaulle sent tanks into Paris, damaging his reputation.

BRITAIN: 1979 election of Margaret Thatcher caused Britain to change course with privatization, anti-welfare state, and free markets (reversed labor policies since late 1800s).

POLITICAL: MIDDLE EAST

Israel defeated Arab allies in 1967 and 1973 resulting in oil prices soaring as punishment of U.S. support for Israel. Iraq, ruled by pro-U.S. Shah, collapsed in 1979 and faced a religious takeover. Economic and political malaise resulted in heat up of the Cold War.

POLITICAL: COLLAPSE OF COMMUNIST/END OF COLD WAR

1980-1989: Weekly prayer groups in Leipzig and other German cities kept dream of freedom alive. Demonstrations increased.

1985: Mikhail Gorbachev came to power. He supported economic reforms (*Perestroika*) and allowed for criticism of broken Soviet system to improve productivity. He also supported *glasnost*, which allowed greater openness and criticism of Soviet Government.

1986: The Nuclear disaster at *Chernobyl*, with radiation spreading to Western Europe, further weakened credibility of Soviet Union.

1985-1989: President Reagan, spoke of a "Star Wars" defense system, yet continued to meet with Soviet Leaders. Margaret Thatcher also fostered warm relationship with Gorbachev.

1980-1989 Poland formed *Solidarity*, a labor union under Lech Walesa. Free elections for Poland in 1989.

1989 SUMMER: Austria opened border with communist Hungary

1989 NOVEMBER: Gorbachev visits East Germany and cryptically says that Germany must seize the opportunity. By mid November Berlin Wall was breached, celebrations ensue.

1989 NOVEMBER-DECEMBER: Czechoslovakia dismantles Communism; playwright Vaclav Havel becoming President

1989 Romania rids itself of Nicolae Ceausescu in the only violent overthrow of the 1989 revolutions against Communism.

1990 Germany united

POLITICAL: DECOLONIZATION

UNITED NATIONS was established in San Francisco in 1945. It would play a vital part in welcoming the newly freed former colonial states. In 1947 under the leadership of Gandhi and Nehru, India gained independence from British after Pakistan split off and became a Muslim state. The **Great Partition** was violent.

CHINA: Mao Zedong led Communist takeover.

FRANCE: lost colonies of Indochina (Vietnam), only to set up conditions for 1963-73 Vietnam War. In Northern Africa, Algeria nationalists rebelled against French rule, and was independent by 1962.

AFRICA: other states gained their independence, but were left with vacuum of leadership, tribal divisions, and minimal financial support.

ECONOMIC

USSR: Eastern European satellite states gutted for materials to rebuild Russia after World War II. In the Soviet Union, workers lagged behind in all areas with Communist style system of quotas and limited material goods. Knowledge of Western wealth spread.

WESTERN EUROPE: Formation today's European Union began with economic consolidation similar to Zollverein of 1834.

1951: **European Coal and Steel Community** (under leadership of Robert Schuman) formed to reduce friction over resources.

1957: **Treaty of Rome** created the EEC (European Economic Community), known as the **Common Market** and the EUROATOM for European Atomic Energy Community.

1993: Treaty of Maastricht created EU (and Euro zone) with goal of common currency (Euro) within ten years.

2001: Euro in place. **Multinational Corporations** contributed to major innovations. A rise in technical workers, white collar managers, and service employees led to less union membership.

1970s: Stagflation. Because of their defeat by Israel, OPEC quadrupled the price of oil, which severely crippled Western economies.

As wealth poured into the middle east, inflation soared. Margaret Thatcher led Britain from 1979 to 1990, privatized formerly state-owned industries.

RELIGIOUS

Roman Catholic church was crushed under the power of the Soviet State, especially in Poland. However, in 1962 the **Second Vatican Council** (Vatican II) convened. It modernized the liturgy, changed some procedures, and renounced old religious beliefs of anti-Semitism.

Pope John-Paul's visit to Poland in 1979 supported *Solidarity*, Polish labor union, which had significant impact on collapse of Communism.

SOCIAL

To ameliorate social conditions, welfare state became synonymous with Western European nations. Socialized health care supported child care and maternity leaves. State initiatives supported building of postwar housing blocks in Soviet Union of negligible standards.

Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) wrote *The Second Sex*, criticizing traditional role of *Women2-Reformation*. The pill, or oral contraception, lowered birthrates, while abortion continued to be a pseudo-form of birth control in Soviet Union. In the 1960's writings of Betty Friedan inspired Women's Liberation movement.

INTELLECTUAL

A new school of philosophy called **existentialism** was identified with Albert Camus (1913-1960) and Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980). Since they believed in a Godless world, they believed the individual was responsible for giving his/her own life meaning.

Existentialism reflected the breakdown of morality after World War II. Books such as Orwell's *1984* and Fleming's James Bond series reflected conflicting ideologies and Cold War spies.

Soviet Union: Dissidents such as **Pasternak** were forced to refuse the Nobel Prize in 1957. But other works were published. The Gulag camps of Stalin were emptied and de-Stalinization took place under Khrushchev.

ARTISTIC

Culture reflected the new Cold War. Abstract expressionism included Jackson Pollack (drip canvasses). Italian directors made neorealist films against backdrop of ruined cities. Television and radio exposed Eastern States to Western ideas and consumer materialism. In music, the Beatles, then Woodstock/hippies defined the 60s. Pop art spread from New York to adorn public squares of Europe.