SOVIET UNION AND EASTERN EUROPE

Cold War Europe
SOVIET UNION UNDER STALIN

• After WWII to 1953
  – Rigid controls over economic, intellectual, and cultural life
  – Forced labor camps flourished (gulags)
  – KGB increased power
  – Official anti-Semitism led to fabricated charges against Jewish doctors accused of poisoning Kremlin officials
NIKITA KRUSHCHEV

– Attempted some de-Stalinization

– Slight opening of intellectual life
  – Alexander Solzhenitsyn allowed to publish account of life in gulag
SOVIET UNION UNDER
KHRUSHCHEV

– Scientific successes
  • Sputnik
  • Arms Race
SOVIET UNION UNDER KHRUSHCHEV

- Economics
  - Goal to surpass US economy by 1980
  - Decentralized economy somewhat
  - Focused on more consumer goods
  - Failed to fix woeful productivity of Soviet collective farms
  - Incomplete reforms led to downfall in 1964
SOVIET UNION UNDER BREZHNEV

– Leonid Brezhnev

• Selected to lead by the party for his status quo credentials

• Goals
  – = no experimentation
  – = maintain control of the army, *apparatchiki* (members of central party, and state-owned industry
SOVIET UNION UNDER BREZHNEV

– Made Soviet Union have glittering façade to the outside world
  • Failure with the economy
    – Successive Five-Year Plans barely met quotas
    – Not noticed until computer age
      » Still focused on industrial goods
      » Not consumer goods
  • Big social issues
    – Worker absenteeism
    – Alcoholism
    – High infant mortality, suicides and low life expectancy
SOVIET UNION UNDER BREZHNEV

- Maintained façade of control over Soviet dominated countries
  - Brezhnev Doctrine – threat to socialism in one country = threat to socialism everywhere
SOVIET UNION UNDER GORBACHEV

- In late 70s and early 80s, Soviet leadership resembled a geriatric ward
  - Andropov
  - Chernenko
• Mikhail Gorbachev
  – Came to power in 1985
  – Saw need for reform

  – Perestroika = restructuring of centrally planned Soviet economy
SOVIET UNION UNDER GORBACHEV

• Perestroika
  – More consumer goods
  – Decentralized control of in-efficient state-owned economy
SOVIET UNION UNDER GORBACHEV

• Glasnost
  – Openness
  – Soviet citizens encouraged to discuss openly the failures of the past
  – Underground press came out into open
  – Soviet Jews could emigrate
  – Religious freedom (churches reopened)
SOVIET UNION UNDER GORBACHEV

• Chernobyl
  – 1986 nuclear disaster
  – Actually strengthened Gorbachev’s movement for reform and modernization
SOVIET UNION UNDER GORBACHEV

• 1988 trouble for Gorbachev
  – Hard-line defenders of old system v. advocates of immediate free market capitalism
  • Inadequate reforms angered both sides
    – Privatization of land still led to low agricultural production
    – Congress of People’s Deputies took over power from central party, but elected Gorbachev president
    – Reputation hurt at home; great in West
SOVIET UNION UNDER GORBACHEV

• Perestroika and Glasnost
  – Sparked independence movements by ethnic minorities
  – Despite Gorbachev’s efforts to prevent the break-up of the USSR, his “union treaty” actually established greater autonomy for republics by 1991.
    • Hardliners did not want to see the treaty operative
SOVIET UNION UNDER GORBACHEV

• August 1991 coup
  – Gorbachev detained by central party
  – Failed – popular resistance and Boris Yeltsin

  – Gorbachev returned to power briefly
  – Yeltsin outlawed the Communist party in Russia
  – Soviet Union was voted out of existence
RUSSIA SINCE 1991

- Commonwealth of Independent States
  - Formed in 1991
  - Loose confederation of 12 republics
RUSSIA SINCE 1991

• Boris Yeltsin
  – President of new republic
  – Torn between reform and repression

  – 1993 Yeltsin dissolved the legislature – hardliners refused to leave building
    • Violent stand-off
    • 100 dead
    • New constitution
RUSSIA SINCE 1991

• Yeltsin
  – Reforms floundered – caused return of communists and Soviet nationalists to duma
  – 1994-1996 Russian army got bogged down in the ethnic conflict in Chechnya
  – 1999 Yeltsin resigns
RUSSIA SINCE 1991

• Vladimir Putin
  – Yeltsin’s hand-picked successor
    – Worked to advance Russia’s independent position in world affairs
    – Promoted economic development
    – Centralized state authority
RUSSIA SINCE 1991

• Putin after 2004
  – Increased state control of media
  – Repression of internal opponents
  – Often called the “good tsar” to see Russia through transition
RUSSIA SINCE 1991

• Russia – current problems
  – Terrorism in Chechnya
  – Government corruption
  – Inequality between urban and rural areas
  – Organized crime
  – Decaying military infrastructure
  – Declining life expectancy
EASTERN EUROPE

• After WWII
  – Eastern Europe remained under Soviet domination
  – To combat the Marshall Plan, USSR developed its own framework for integration in the East known as the COMECON
EASTERN EUROPE

• Eastern European satellites followed three basic themes
  – 1. One-party police states
    • All parties except the Communist Party were banned
    • Strict control of speech, culture, and religion
2. Planned economies

- Soviet model = centralized control via party bureaucrats
- Assigned specific economic roles
  - East Germany = heavy industry
  - Romania = oil production
  - Bulgaria = agricultural production
EASTERN EUROPE

– 3. Collectivization of agriculture
  • Collective farms
EASTERN EUROPE

• Variations in the Soviet Bloc
  – Poland – more relaxed economy + improved relations with the Catholic Church
  – Hungary – attempted to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact in 1956. Caused Soviet army to crush the attempt
  – Czechoslovakia – attempted liberalization in 1968, called “Prague Spring”. Crushed!
EASTERN EUROPE – COLLAPSE OF SOVIET CONTROL

• **Poland** – Communist government unable to control Solidarity this time, calls for free elections where communist leader Jaruzelski is roundly defeated and appoints a non-communist prime minister
EASTERN EUROPE – COLLAPSE OF SOVIET CONTROL

- **Hungary** – Kadar stripped of his power as communist leader and Hungarian Communist Party is replaced by Socialist Party, which promises free elections
EASTERN EUROPE – COLLAPSE OF SOVIET CONTROL

- Germany – old communists in power resign, East German government orders opening of Berlin Wall and within days Germany is reunited under one leader, Helmut Kohl (unification recognized by world in early 1990)
EASTERN EUROPE – COLLAPSE OF SOVIET CONTROL

- Czechoslovakia – Vaclav Havel’s supporters known as the Civic Forum force communist leader Gustav Husak out of power and elect Havel as president
EASTERN EUROPE – COLLAPSE OF SOVIET CONTROL

- **Romania** – the only violent revolution where communist leader Nicholae Ceausescu fires on opposition crowds, but later is overthrown and along with his wife executed.
EASTERN EUROPE – COLLAPSE OF SOVIET CONTROL

• Yugoslavia
  – Yugoslav leader **Tito** keeps the many different ethnic and national groups under control – his death eventually leads the country into chaos and civil war
EASTERN EUROPE – COLLAPSE OF SOVIET CONTROL

- Nationalist leaders Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia and Franjo Tudjman in Croatia gain authority
- 1991 – Slovenia and Croatia declare independence from Yugoslavia
EASTERN EUROPE – COLLAPSE OF SOVIET CONTROL

• civil war erupts in 1992 between Serbs and Croatians
  – Serbia accuses Croatia of fascism / while Croatia accuses Serbia of being a Stalinist regime
  – both forces attempt to divide up Bosnia-Herzegovina
  – Muslims in Bosnia are caught in the middle and are subject to “ethnic cleansing” by the Serbs
EASTERN EUROPE – COLLAPSE OF SOVIET CONTROL

• NATO led by the United States does strategic bombing of Serbia to remove the Serbs from Sarajevo

• 1995 – peace agreement signed in 1995 in Dayton, Ohio
EASTERN EUROPE – COLLAPSE OF SOVIET CONTROL

- Serbs again force NATO into action by attacking Albanians in Kosovo in 1999
  - an air campaign – the largest since World War II – is sent to protect the ethnic Albanians
  - 2000 – revolution overthrows Milosevic