Eastern Europe since 1945

The Making of the Modern World

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To our parents

I believed in communism. For me, communism was freedom. That was my mistake. Absolute freedom doesn't exist, especially not in communism, but if I hadn't believed this I wouldn't have become a communist. Of course the quest for such freedom leads to revolution, violence, overthrowing the ruling classes, the long transformation of society by education. But I was convinced that in the end this process was moving towards more and more freedom, no end to this freedom.

Milovan Djilas, January 1992

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Chronology

1 April 1939	Final defeat of the Republican Government during the Spanish Civil War
23 August 1939	Nazi-Soviet Pact: East European Communist Parties adopt new revolutionary programme
3 September 1939	Start of Second World War
22 June 1941	Nazis invade Soviet Union: Balkan Communist Parties start insurrections
May 1943	Dissolution of the Comintern
June 1944	British Government recognises Tito's Communist Government
July 1944	Red Army crosses into Poland: National Liberation Committee established
23 August 1944	King Michael's coup in Romania: formation of coalition government
end August 1944	Stalin's decision to support Bulgarian insurrection
5 September 1944	Soviet Union declares war on Bulgaria
9 September 1944	Communist coup in Bulgaria
1 October 1944	Red Army crosses into Hungary
November 1944	Start of civil war in Poland lasting until summer 1945
December 1944	British suppress communist insurrection in Greece
5 January 1945	Stalin recognises Communist government in Poland
February 1945	Yalta Conference: decision to form National Unity Government in Poland
end February 1945	Stalin supports Communist coup in Romania
March 1945	Stalin shelves plans for Balkan Federation after Allied protests
April 1945	Liberation of Czechoslovakia
8 May 1945	End of Second World War
August 1945	Potsdam Conference: agreement on conditions for signing peace treaties with Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania
4 November 1945	Hungarian elections
11 November 1945	Yugoslav elections
18 November 1945	Bulgarian elections (boycotted by opposition candidates)
2 December 1945	Albanian elections

26 May 1946	Elections in Czechoslovakia
30 June 1946	Polish referendum
27 October 1946	Bulgarian elections in which opposition takes part
19 November 1946	Romanian elections
19 January 1947	Polish elections
February 1947	Truman doctrine; American commitment to anti-communist cause in Greece
March 1947	Stalin's support for Yugoslavia's role in Greece
May 1947	Communists excluded from government in France and Italy
June 1947	Marshall Plan announced
10 July 1947	Stalin instructs Czechoslovak government to reject Marshall Aid
30 August 1947	Hungarian elections
end September 1947	Foundation of Cominform
27 November 1947	New revolutionary stance adopted by Czechoslovak communists
December 1947	Diplomatic offensive launched by Yugoslavia
	Increased aid for Greek communists
end February 1948	Communist coup in Czechoslovakia
	Start of Stalin-Tito dispute
1 March 1948	Yugoslavs decide to resist Stalin's demand that they join a Balkan Federation dominated by Bulgaria and Albania
July 1948	Yugoslavia expelled from the Cominform
	Cominform countries adopt 'soviet' model of industrial planning and collectivised agriculture
May 1949	Trial of Koçi Xoxe
September 1949	Trial of László Rajk
November 1949	Cominform denounces Yugoslav regime: diplomatic relations broken off
December 1949	Trial of Traicho Kostov
June 1950	Yugoslavs establish workers' self management
November 1952	Trial of Rudolf Slánský
	Yugoslav Communist Party renamed League of Communists
6 March 1953	Death of Stalin
15 June 1953	Restoration of diplomatic relations between Soviet Union and Yugoslavia
end June 1953	Brioni plenum of Yugoslav Party ends reform programme
	New Hungarian Prime Minister Imre Nagy introduces 'new course'
16 January 1954	Milovan Djilas disciplined for writing that the Leninist Party was obsolete

23 October 1954	Patriotic People's Front founded in Hungary
February 1955	Khrushchev replaces Malenkov in Soviet Union
March 1955	Nagy deposed in Hungary
26 May 1955	Khrushchev's rapprochement with Tito: inter-state relations restored
February 1956	Khrushchev denounces Stalin at XXth Party Congress
April 1956	New leadership in Poland and other East European states
18 April 1956	Cominform abolished
20 June 1955	Khrushchev's rapprochement with Tito: party relations restored
end June 1956	Riots in Poznan
18 July 1956	Rákosi dismissed at Soviet request Poles cautioned not to relax discipline
19 September 1956	Start of over three weeks of talks between Khrushchev and Tito
19 October 1956	Polish Party Plenum restores Gomułka to leadership: mobilised working class frustrates plans for Soviet armed intervention
23 October 1956	Demonstrations mark start of Hungarian revolution
24 October 1956	Soviet troops intervene in Hungary
30 October 1956	Nagy forms multi-party government: the next day opens talks seeking the withdrawal of Hungary from the Warsaw Pact
2 November 1956	Khrushchev and Tito agree to intervene in Hungary
4 November 1956	Soviet intervention resumes
15 November 1956	Soviet-Polish agreement on the stationing of Soviet troops in Poland
November 1957	Conference of Ruling Communist Parties fails to restore unity to communist movement
April 1958	Yugoslav League of Communists adopts a programme asserting its unique road to socialism
May 1958	Meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact Announcement that Soviet troops will withdraw from Romania
Late 1958	Renewed collectivisation drive
January 1959	XXIst Congress of the Soviet Party New emphasis on economic development and catching up with the West
April 1961	Soviet Union cancels aid to Albania
13 August 1961	Building of Berlin Wall
October 1961	XXIIInd Congress of the Soviet Party Second de-Stalinisation campaign

	Beginnings of Sino-Soviet split
August 1962	Kádár: 'Those who are not against us are with us' in Hungary
Early 1963	'Revolt of the intellectuals' in Czechoslovakia
July 1963	Plans for a greater degree of Comecon integration abandoned because of Romanian opposition
September 1963	GDR decides to implement the New Economic System throughout the economy
July 1964	Hungarian Central Committee accepts the principles of the New Economic Mechanism
October 1964	Khrushchev replaced by Brezhnev
July 1965	Yugoslavia's second economic reform
July 1966	Reformists secure the dismissal of Ranković in Yugoslavia
March 1968	Student demonstrations in Poland
January 1968	Dubček replaces Novotný as Czechoslovak Party leader
June 1968	Student demonstrations in Yugoslavia
20–1 August 1968	Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia
1970–1	Croat nationalist unrest in Yugoslavia
December 1970	Price increases in Poland lead to 'Baltic Crisis'
May 1971	Honecker replaces Ulbricht in GDR
September 1971	Four Power Agreement on Berlin
November 1972	Measures partially recentralising the economy approved by Central Committee in Hungary
December 1972	Basic Treaty between GDR and German Federal Republic
August 1975	Helsinki Final Act
June 1976	Price increases in Poland result in strikes and demonstrations
September 1976	Foundation in Poland of the Committee for the Defence of Workers (KOR)
January 1977	Foundation of Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia
July 1978	China suspends foreign aid to Albania
July 1980	Price increases in Poland
August 1980	Solidarity free trade union founded in Poland
13 December 1980	Martial law declared in Poland
March–April 1981	Ethnic disturbances in Kosovo
1982	Debt crisis in Yugoslavia. 'Small business reform' in Hungary
July 1983	Martial law lifted in Poland
March 1985	Gorbachev becomes General Secretary of Central Committee of CPSU
October 1987	Slobodan Milošević becomes leader of Serbian League of Communists

August 1988	Polish government decides to negotiate with Solidarity
June 1989	Elections in Poland. Solidarity wins vast majority of seats available to it
August 1989	Solidarity-led government formed in Poland
September 1989	Hungary allows GDR citizens to emigrate via Austria. Government and Opposition Round Table Talks concluded
9 November 1989	Berlin Wall breached
November 1989	Demonstrations in Prague. Zhivkov resigns in Bulgaria
December 1989	Government of National Understanding formed in Czechoslovakia
21 December 1989	Ceauşescu rally disrupted. Fighting between demonstrators and security police
25 December 1989	Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu executed
January 1990	Poland implements Balcerowicz 'shock therapy' programme
March–April 1990	Elections in Hungary. Right of centre coalition government led by Hungarian Democratic Forum
April 1990	Elections in Slovenia. Won by DEMOS coalition
April–May 1990	Elections in Croatia won by nationalistic Croatian Democratic Union
May 1990	Elections in Romania. Won by National Salvation Front which is dominated by former communists
June 1990	Elections in Czechoslovakia. Won by Civic Forum and Public Against Violence
	Elections in Bulgaria. Won by the former communist party
	Miners break up opposition demonstration in Romania
1 July 1990	German currency union
3 October 1990	Germany reunified
November–December 1990	Presidential elections in Poland. Wałęsa elected
	Communist-led government in Bulgaria resigns following strike wave
	Elections in Macedonia, Bosnia Hercegovina, Serbia and Montenegro. Former communists win in Serbia and Montenegro. Weak coalition government in Bosnia and Hercegovina. Nationalist coalition in Macedonia
December 1990–January 1991	Anti-government demonstrations in Albania
April 1991	Elections in Albania. Won by former communists

June 1991	Albanian communist-led government resigns after strike-wave
28 June 1991	Comecon formally dissolved
1 July 1991	Warsaw Pact formally dissolved
June–July 1991	Slovenia established <i>de facto</i> independence after brief hostilities
	Relations between Croatia and Serbia degenerate to protracted civil war
September 1991	Romanian government resigns after demonstrations led by miners. Broad-based interim government formed
October 1991	Elections in Poland. No clear winner. Elections in Bulgaria. Won by Union of Democratic Forces with small majority
December 1991	Albanian Democratic Party withdraws support from coalition government
26 December 1991	Soviet Union formally dissolved, following Gorbachev's resignation on Christmas Day
15 January 1992	The European Community recognises the independence of Slovenia and Croatia and hence the break-up of Yugoslavia