EASTERN EUROPE SINCE 1945

The Making of the Modern World

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EASTERN EUROPE SINCE 1945

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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.
April 1961	Soviet Union cancels aid to Albania.
13 August 1961	Building of Berlin Wall.
October 1961	XXIInd Congress of the Soviet Party. Second de-Stalinisation campaign. Beginnings of Sino-Soviet split. New emphasis on economic development and catching up with the West.
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 Rankovic 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	Ceaușescu rally disrupted. Fighting between demonstrators and security police.
25 December 1989	Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu 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 fighting. UN imposes peace of sorts.
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.
March 1992	Bosnian War starts. Elections in Albania bring Democratic Party to power. Romanian elections give victory to anti-reform President Iliescu.
June 1992	Elections in Czechoslovakia result in decision to dissolve state into Czech Republic and Slovakia.
October 1992	Fall of UDF government in Bulgaria.
May 1993	Former communists and allies return to power in Poland.
March 1994	Prime Minister Meciar temporarily loses power in Slovakia, returns to power in December after October elections.
May 1994	Former communists return to power in Hungary.
September 1994	Socialists return to power in Bulgaria.
November 1995	Wałęsa replaced as Polish president by former communist. Dayton Accord ends the Bosnian War.
June 1996	Conservative government in Czechoslovakia loses overall majority, banking crisis follows. Disputed election in Albania returns Democratic party to power.
November 1996	Reformists win Romanian elections.
December 1996	Widespread demonstrations in Serbia against President Milošević.
Spring 1997	Collapse of socialist government in Bulgaria and return of the UDF to power. Albania descends into anarchy after pyramid selling crisis, foreign troops restore order.
May 1997	Demonstrations in Slovakia after collapse of presidential referendum.
June 1997	Czech Republic faces financial crisis. Socialists win Albanian election.
September 1997	Former communists lose power in Polish elections.