



The Failure of Eastern Europe

1948–1989

The rapid and dramatic failure of Communism in Europe at the end of the twentieth century might make it seem unnecessary to pose the question whether Communism was a good idea that was poorly executed or a bad idea to start with. However, the distinction between methods and principles is important for an understanding of the rise and the demise of Communism. As long as Communists had confidence in the system they had created and believed in method—the assumption that it was possible to improve or to reform the system—it was viable. However, once the Communists lost confidence in the system and recognized that the principles upon which it was based needed to be changed—such as the Communist Party's monopoly on political power or the state's monopoly on the economy—it ceased to be so.

The history of Communism analogously can be seen from two different perspectives. It may be sympathetically or nostalgically viewed as a series of missed opportunities or critically analyzed in terms of its inherent defects: the systemic and moral flaws or political delusions that burdened the Communist experiment from the very start and manifested themselves with greater clarity the longer it lasted. In the former case, Stalin may be accused of ruining or perverting the fundamentally good ideas of Marx and Lenin; in the latter case, Lenin and ultimately Marx are responsible for the basically bad ideas that Stalin executed all too well. Regardless of the perspective one prefers, Stalin is the central figure in the story. He was the architect of building socialism in the Soviet Union before World War II (and killed tens of millions of Soviet citizens in the process of doing so), and he was responsible for exporting it to Eastern Europe in the wake of the victorious Red Army after World War II.

Compared with the “mature socialism” in the Soviet Union that started with the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and took over two decades of struggle and experimentation to achieve, the introduction of Communism to the countries of what came to be called the “Soviet bloc” was a relatively short affair unburdened by theoretical discussions. Stalinism was a distilled version of the Bolshevik experience of revolution and civil war after 1917 and a reflection of the policies Stalin executed

after his rise to power in the late 1920s. It was based on ruthlessly eliminating political opposition to Communism and adopting the economic policies of modernization that Stalin had proposed to “build socialism” in the Soviet Union with equal ruthlessness.

According to Marx's vision, the ultimate revolutionary showdown between a small class of capitalists and a vast class of proletarians was to take place in an advanced industrial society. However, when Lenin and his Bolshevik compatriots started their revolution in 1917, Russia was a far cry from what Karl Marx had in mind when he came up with his theory of proletarian revolution: an autocratic, backward, predominantly agricultural and peasant-based society with a few isolated pockets of industry and a small working class. (Although the relative levels of social and economic development in Central Europe were higher than those in the Soviet Union—the soldiers of the Red Army were surprised by the high material standards of living they found—the social and economic structures of vast parts of Central Europe bore similarities to the ones that existed in Russia before the Bolshevik Revolution. Although parts of east Germany, Polish Silesia, and Bohemia were highly industrialized to start with, much of East Central Europe was characterized by predominantly peasant-based agriculture, low degrees of education and literacy, and low levels of urbanization and industrialization.)

The core features of Stalinism were the concentration of power in the hands of the Communist Party, the state, and ultimately its leader, combined with policies of rapid industrialization and social transformation. Stalin used the same instruments of coercion and terror that he had used to cement his political power—purges, secret police, show trials, draconian punishments, concentration camps for the detention and elimination of real and alleged opponents—to execute economic policies. If Marxism was an industrial philosophy, then Russia needed to become an industrial society. Peasants needed to be turned into industrial workers, and the industrial workers needed to be inculcated with socialist ideology in order to embrace the revolutionary role of the proletariat. Forced industrialization, the collectivization of agriculture, and the introduction of a centrally planned economy based on five-year plans were the keys to the economic and social transformation of the Soviet Union. Stalinism provided the leaders of the respective states the Soviet Union occupied in Eastern Europe with a series of recipes to follow to “introduce socialism,” and they conducted themselves like little Stalins by using the same instruments of terror and intimidation to consolidate their power.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY-STATE AND STATE-ECONOMY

Viewed in the broadest terms, the Soviet style of dominion rested on three pillars: the Communist Party's monopoly on political power, the party's control of the state, and the state's control of the economy. Understanding the primacy of the party in this scheme of things is exceptionally important because the party reproduced its hierarchies everywhere. The premises of Marxism-Leninism and

MILITARY AND ECONOMIC BLOCS, 1955–1989



- Member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO, est. 1949) and the European Economic Community (EC, est. 1958)
- Year of accession to NATO
- Year of accession to EC
- NATO member states only
- Nonaligned neutral states
- Member states of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON, est. 1949) and the Warsaw Pact (est. 1955)
- Nonaligned Communist states
- 1956 Anti-Communist revolutions in the East bloc

Map 12.1

the experience of the Bolshevik Revolution dictated that the Communist Party establish an absolute monopoly on political power and permeate the public sphere. Communists effectively eliminated political pluralism in Eastern Europe by introducing one-party rule, and propaganda replaced public opinion. Although a variety of political parties continued to exist on paper in many of the so-called people's democracies in the Soviet bloc, there was no genuine political competition among them. Political contest was limited to infighting inside the Communist Party, and the "leading role" of the Communist Party was enshrined in constitutions of the "people's democracies," along with the perpetual friendship and allegiance of the respective socialist states to the Soviet Union.

Communist parties used their monopolies on political power to reproduce their own hierarchical party structures in all public and social institutions. The party decided which individuals would fill key positions in government, the military, and public administration, and it was a shadow organization in all of these institutions. Furthermore, the one-party-state aspired to exercise as much social control as possible. It sought to replace the multitudes of traditional forms of voluntary association and self-organization associated with civil society with a monolithic network of interlocking, mass organizations that encompassed and snared all spheres of life, public and private, from the cradle to the grave. Thus the paternalistic party-state was responsible for organizing all aspects of private and public life: kindergartens, schools, student life, sports and recreational activities, the arts and culture, health care, housing, and trade unions. The Communist Party and the party-state made their presence felt everywhere. And the Communist regimes monitored all aspects of private and public life, too. Extensive networks of secret police, domestic spying, and political denunciation were part of their regimes of control. People were cautious. The system relied on fear to produce outward conformity. If people were afraid enough, they policed and censored themselves.

The Communist party-state was not just an instrument of political revolution; it was a tool of social revolution, too. The Communist Party used the party-state to expropriate landowners (from peasants with small farms to landed gentry with gigantic estates) and "capitalists" (the owners of most other businesses, commercial, and industrial enterprises, large and small). Through the collectivization of agriculture and the nationalization of industry, the Communist party-state aspired to gain control of the economic assets of society at large, and it did so with varying degrees of success. For example, the collectivization of agriculture was abandoned in Poland, and the German Democratic Republic, one of the ideologically most orthodox regimes, had a comparatively large private sector.

The effective elimination of private capital—something Marx had called for in the *Communist Manifesto* and that Stalin executed in the Soviet Union—was a precondition for the elimination of the free market as a forum for the production, exchange, and consumption of goods and services. Markets are driven by multitudes of decisions made independently by producers and consumers based on their own perceptions of their interests and regulated by the interplay of prices, supply, and demand. Planned economies did away with the decentralized chaos of the marketplace and vagaries of supply and demand. A network of bureaucracies

established priorities from the top down, set targets, planned outcomes, dictated production, and limited consumption.

Public or state or "collective" ownership of property *and* centrally planned economies concentrated economic resources *and* decision making in the hands of the party-state, which assumed responsibility, in theory at least, for directing all core economic activities. The Communist party-state's elimination of political freedoms associated with traditional democracy, such as the protection of individual rights, went hand-in-hand with the Communist party-state-economy's elimination of economic freedoms associated with market economies.

Although the period of "classic" Stalinism in Eastern Europe lasted barely a decade and ended with Nikita Khrushchev's "de-Stalinization" in 1956, a sufficient appreciation of the key ideas that the Communists used in the late 1940s and early 1950s to engineer "building socialism" in Eastern Europe is important to develop a feeling for what life was like in Eastern Europe. The principles upon which the system was based never really changed, although the rigor with which they were applied fluctuated and diminished, and each of the countries in the Soviet bloc eventually developed its own national strain of Communism. However, Soviet propaganda projected a monolithic image of Communism in Eastern Europe, which downplayed important differences between the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe on the one hand, and among the individual states in the Soviet empire on the other hand. Many Western anti-Communists and area specialists, who were trained to analyze Communism during the Cold War, also shared a monolithic perception of Eastern Europe to a great extent, the analysis of which became part of the discipline of Soviet and Eastern European studies. For all practical purposes, the Soviet-Union-and-Eastern-Europe (or "the Soviet bloc") was one region, not two (Central or East Central and Eastern Europe): a uniform block of red on maps that showed political allegiance. What were some of the common experiences for those parts of Central Europe that were incorporated into the Soviet empire?

The Soviet Union promoted an unprecedented and comprehensive reorientation of East Central Europe from West to East. First of all, it is important to appreciate the sheer physical presence of the Red Army. It liberated most of Eastern Europe during World War II, and it stayed, for the most part, where it was after the war. The formalization of the Soviet military presence in Eastern Europe did not take place until May 1955, when the Warsaw Pact Treaty established a regional security organization analogous to NATO.

The Iron Curtain was a political metaphor when Winston Churchill used the term in 1946, but it became a physical reality of increasing lethal sophistication starting in the 1950s. The frontiers that the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary in the Communist East shared with the Federal Republic of Germany and Austria in the capitalist West consisted of hundreds of miles of uninterrupted barbed wire fence that were patrolled by soldiers with orders to shoot to kill and, as time passed, were augmented by watchdogs, watchtowers, minefields, and electronic sensing devices. The erection of the Berlin Wall on August 13, 1961 ended the exodus of East Germans from the Soviet sector of Berlin to the Western Allied sectors. It represented the ultimate separation of East from



The division of East and West Berlin began with erection of barbed wire fences and barriers along the frontiers of the Soviet zone of occupation in Berlin in August 1961. Within months Berlin's historic Brandenburg Gate was behind a wall erected by the German Democratic Republic to separate East Berlin, left, from West Berlin. Exposed areas along the frontier between East and West Berlin and East and West Germany that the East German authorities maintained were called *Todesstreifen* ("death strips"). East German border patrols had orders to use their weapons to prevent people from "fleeing" the German Democratic Republic and killed hundreds attempting to do so. (AP Photo)

West and became the supreme symbol of a divided Germany and divided Europe. Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, there is no consensus about the number of people who died or were killed attempting to flee the GDR. The number of fatalities ranges from 270 (with 136 in Berlin alone) to over 1,000. After the fortification of the Hungarian border in the mid-1960s, only 300 people managed to escape the East bloc to Austria, and over 13,000 were detained by Hungarian authorities attempting to do so.¹

Central Europe traditionally had drawn its cultural inspirations and economic innovations predominantly from the West; however, after World War II,

the Soviet East became a new and almost exclusive source of inspiration. Many members of the elder generations—socialized before World War I or during the interwar period—continued to believe in the conservative (traditional, national, and Christian) or “bourgeois” (liberal and enlightened) values that were part and parcel of that Central European tradition that defined the region as the easternmost part of Western European civilization. However, the Soviet Union considered Western influences—capitalist, imperialist, decadent, or otherwise—to be fundamentally injurious and undesirable.

Lavishing praise on the leading role of the Soviet Union, emulating the achievements of the Soviet Union, and deferring to Soviet experience and wisdom were required political rituals in the Soviet bloc. Each Communist state in the region had to reinvent itself in the image of the Soviet Union. National histories needed to be rewritten based on the precepts of Marxist historiography. Marxism-Leninism was a mandatory subject taught as civics to school children and as political science to students. Most primary and secondary school students studied twelve years of (mandatory) Russian.

People in the Soviet bloc were subject to an uninterrupted stream of propaganda. The predigital world relied on traditional print and broadcast media (radio, television) to spread information, and it was easy for the Communist state to monopolize and control these media. All producers of information were subject to extensive regimes of censorship, and all consumers of information had to develop a special set of skills to sort the actual facts out from the ideological fiction. Censorship produced a special appreciation for the spoken and the written word in Eastern Europe and finely honed skills of interpretation. Communist authorities jammed the broadcasting frequencies used by the American-funded stations in Eastern Europe and the Voice of America—as well as the BBC World Service. They also jammed the Armed Forces Network, which was not directed at Eastern Europe but offered American-styled programming conceived as “local entertainment” for hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops stationed in the Federal Republic of Germany. This station was especially popular and credible with youth because it played a lot of rock ‘n’ roll.

The introduction of socialism in Eastern Europe was the source of an exceptional amount of economic hardship. After World War II, the Soviet Union initially was interested in extracting as many resources from the countries it had occupied as needed to mend its own wartorn economy, and in the course of ten years, it sapped somewhere between 14 and 20 billion dollars from Eastern Europe: an amount commensurate with, if not surpassing, the 16 billion dollars of post-war aid that the United States provided to Western Europe under the Marshall Plan. An estimated two-thirds of this tribute came from East Germany alone, where one-quarter of industrial plants were dismantled and shipped to the Soviet Union, along with sundry items in 100,000 boxcars of household goods, including 60,000 pianos, 459,000 radios, and 264,000 wall clocks and standing clocks.² While the Soviet Union was extracting resources from Eastern Europe, the individual Stalinist regimes in the region were extracting resources from their respective populations. The initial phase of “building socialism” was accompanied by widespread

economic deprivation. Each country established its own regime of Stalinist police terror, forced labor camps, prisons, and show trials to deal with political dissidence and economic dissatisfaction. Regime critics and chronic complainers often suffered the same fates.

A restratification of society went hand-in-hand with the socialist agenda. Communists were intent on replacing the traditional elites and intelligentsia in East Central Europe with a new class of younger intellectuals and technocrats recruited from the rural or working classes, and these upwardly mobile representatives of the working class were among the greatest advocates and beneficiaries of the system. (The children of traditional “class enemies” conversely were systematically excluded from the benefits of higher education.) Communist Party membership varied on a country-to-country basis in Eastern Europe in the 1950s: between 3.4 percent in Romania and 11.6 percent in Czechoslovakia.³ Party membership and ideological conformity were keys to accessing opportunity and institutional advancement as *apparatchiks*—the functionaries who filled bureaucratic positions in the apparatus—and Communist parties throughout the region soon were crowned by a “new class” of high-ranking party officials and technocrats: the so-called *nomenklatura*.

The centrally planned model of industrialization was based on forcing the development of heavy industry at the expense of other forms of production, and this entailed shifting investment from consumer goods to industrial goods. Mines and steel mills became the symbols of socialist progress in Eastern Europe. In Poland, Communists planned a model working-class city outside of Kraków—Nowa Huta (the “New Steel Mill”)—and in Hungary a project along the same lines bore the name of Stalin: Sztálinváros (“Stalin’s City”) on the Danube south of Budapest. Both projects illustrated the shortcomings of socialist planning in their own rights. The steel mills of Nowa Huta dumped life-threatening amounts of pollution on Kraków, and it made no sense for a country like Hungary that was devoid of iron ore to establish a steel industry in the first place.

Socialist economies in the East never managed to do what capitalist economies in the West had done after the initial phase of heavy industrial development. They did not effectively shift resources from heavy industry to light industry for the production of consumer goods, nor did they develop service industries. As of the 1980s, they lagged hopelessly behind in information technology and telecommunications. (Here the Western embargo on exporting strategically sensitive or “dual use” technologies to the Soviet Union or its allies proved to be especially effective.) There was plenty of demand for consumer goods, of course, but consumer demand was not something that the top-down planning mechanisms took into account.

What did socialist macroeconomic policy mean in terms of everyday life for most people? Eastern Europe was a dark, dirty, and austere place.⁵ There never seemed to be enough light. Twenty-watt light bulbs were ubiquitous inside, and there was an absence of adequate street lighting outside. It is difficult to imagine how dark a city like Prague—colorful and vibrant today—was at night in winter in the 1970s or 1980s. It also was eerie because there were so few people out on the streets simply because there was no place to go and not much to do. (Incidentally,

by 2008 Prague had passed Vienna as the premier tourist destination of Central Europe and boasts of over 10 million guest nights booked per year.)

Coal was the primary source of energy in Eastern Europe, and the use of lignite or "brown coal" was widespread. The German Democratic Republic, for example, depended on lignite to cover over half of its energy needs, and the reliance on this low-grade, high-pollution coal could be seen and felt everywhere. The cities of Eastern Europe smelled like the sulphur that was a by-product of lignite's dirty burn, fog had a light amber hue due to all of the pollutants suspended in it, and a fine film of sooty grime seemed to be everywhere. Children in many cities suffered from chronic bronchitis and other respiratory disorders caused by pollution, and coal-related emissions caused widespread environmental degradation. Some of the most ecologically devastated forests in Europe were on the Czechoslovak-East German border of northern Bohemia and Saxony in the Erzgebirge region.

Finally, there was plenty of consumer demand in Eastern Europe but never enough to buy. Shortages of commodities of all kinds—ranging from staples like meat and potatoes to simple necessities like soap or light bulbs—were frequent and chronic. Bananas and oranges were truly exotic fruits, and the "socialist oranges" imported from Cuba—hard and green—bore little resemblance to capitalist oranges from the Mediterranean or the United States. (After the fall of the Berlin Wall, some West Germans ridiculed the East German need to satisfy the pent-up demand for simple pleasures like tropical fruit by calling them *Bananenfresser*: "banana-feeders.") A tremendous amount of time and energy in daily routines went to organizing the simplest goods or to waiting in line. The palette of consumer goods was narrow, workmanship was shabby, and design was functionally ugly.

There were official years-long waiting lists for certain prized commodities, such as automobiles (some with two-stroke engines that made the motors whine, none of which had catalytic converters). One of the structural by-products of this state of affairs was "forced savings." People had money, but there was nothing for them to buy. The one thing that socialist planned economies did produce in abundance for everybody was shortages, and learning how to manage shortages eventually became one of the underlying principles in socialist economies for producers and consumers alike. The only thing the Soviet bloc really was good at producing was conventional and nuclear arms: tanks and missiles. There were chronic shortages of simple commodities such as toilet paper and sanitary napkins.⁶ (An insufficient Western appreciation of the day-to-day problems of women from Eastern Europe made encounters between feminists inhabiting these two so dramatically different worlds in the 1980 and 1990s tragicomic. Feminists, who addressed the problems of patriarchal oppression from the perspectives of the prosperous West, were not always comprehensible for women whose problems were dictated by Communist oppression in the poverty-stricken East.⁷)

In light of the many obvious things that socialist economies did wrong, it is important to ask what they did right. Most economists would agree that rapid industrial development was one of the primary accomplishments of socialist economies (admittedly at great human and economic cost, but rapid nonetheless). The

socialist agenda of rapid industrialization went hand-in-hand with the idea of an egalitarian redistribution of opportunities in society. Communists appealed to economic performance and social justice to legitimize socialism, and there are a number of indicators that can be used to document some of the relative successes of the socialist experiment. It provided an unprecedented number of previously disadvantaged individuals with access to health care, education, welfare, and improved employment opportunities. Infant mortality and illiteracy rates dropped dramatically, and access to primary, secondary, and university education improved. Many young people moved from the countryside to the city to become members of the urban labor force. Housing was cheap and the prices for basic commodities low and stable. Communism gave a lot of people a lot of opportunities they otherwise would not have had, and the egalitarianism it promoted was one of its genuinely popular attributes. Retrospectively it is easy to ascertain that socialism was a misguided form of modernization, but it was modernization nonetheless.

It also is important to appreciate to what extent socialism in Eastern Europe initially was regarded as an economic success by many observers. Karl Marx had identified the proletariat as "the grave-diggers of capitalism," and in 1956 Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev confidently boasted in front of Western diplomats: "History is on our side. We will bury you!"⁸ The capitalist West took the challenge of the Communist East exceptionally seriously after World War II, and the existence of Communism as a robust and viable alternative to capitalism contributed substantially not only to the reform of capitalism in the West in general but also to the subsequent development of social welfare states in Western Europe in particular. Economists were impressed by the rates of growth and production in socialist economies in the 1950s and 1960s, and by the 1970s socialist countries represented "over one-third of the world's population and industrial output."⁹ It was clear in the 1970s and 1980s that growth rates were slowing down and that socialist economies were beset by a myriad of structural and environmental problems. However, the dimensions of the economic crisis of socialism were by no means apparent to contemporary observers, and the political leaders of the Communist regimes were firmly in control.

REVOLUTIONS AND REFORMS: 1956, 1968, 1980–81

The post-World War II history of Communism in the Soviet Union can be divided into four general periods, and the relationship of the Soviet Union to its Eastern European empire changed in each of them. Stalinism, or the classical totalitarian period, started immediately after World War II and lasted until after Stalin's death in 1953. The Soviet Union intervened directly and massively in the domestic politics of its client states in Eastern Europe and acted like a classical colonial power by extracting resources from its periphery for the benefit of its own imperial hinterland. De-Stalinization in 1956 was followed by a brief eight years of liberalization and experimentation under Nikita Khrushchev that included two scary Cold War confrontations: a Soviet ultimatum demanding the withdrawal of Western forces from West Berlin in 1961 and the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. During this second period, the Soviet Union assumed a new relationship to Eastern Europe "familiar

from the history of empires: it began to pay an economic price for the political structure it had built over the previous decade¹⁰ and started subsidizing its client states. A third twenty-year period of post-totalitarian retrenchment, consolidation, and stagnation is associated with the reign of Leonid Brezhnev from 1964 until after his death in 1982. It includes the brief interregnums of Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko: both septuagenarians from the old guard who were terminally ill upon coming to power in 1982 and 1984, respectively. A fourth and final era of renewed liberalization, experimentation, and reform is associated with the political career of Mikhail Gorbachev from 1985 until 1991. The creation and the maintenance of the Soviet system in Eastern Europe were punctuated by two brief periods of reform. Stalin created a system that Khrushchev tried to reform, Brezhnev tried to maintain, and Gorbachev tried to reform.

De-Stalinization in 1956 was the watershed in the history of European Communism. After Stalin's death in 1953, there was a brief "thaw" in East-West relations, and Nikita Khrushchev eventually emerged victorious in the struggle for power in the Soviet Union. One of his major concerns was to improve the performance of the system he had inherited from Stalin. He understood that innovation, dynamism, and growth were improbable in an "administrative-command system" based on excessive centralization, coercion, and fear, and he recognized that the habits and interests of the party bureaucrats in the Soviet Union were one of the primary obstacles he confronted. Khrushchev also realized that he could not remedy the organizational deficiencies of the Stalinist system without criticizing the ideology and the man behind it. Therefore, he had to dismantle Stalin's reputation in order to reorganize the system that bore his name.

At the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956, Khrushchev gave a "secret speech" condemning Stalin. In a tirade that lasted for hours, he denounced Stalin's "personality cult," the party purges of the 1930s, the secret police, the extensive network of concentration camps or *gulags*,¹¹ and the generalissimo's blundering as a military commander during World War II. He accused Stalin of negligence, incompetence, and deceit that cost millions of Soviet citizens their lives. Stalin and his regime were criminal.

Khrushchev had to mobilize those members of the Communist Party who were interested in reform against the Stalinist hard-liners who were not, and his strategy for de-Stalinization was to undermine the legitimacy and credibility of the old guard by making them accomplices to Stalin's crimes. Although Khrushchev's program of de-Stalinization was inspired by the domestic problems of the Soviet Union, it also had profound consequences abroad. In the West, many Communists and intellectuals sympathetic to the Soviet Union were completely disillusioned. Khrushchev did not forewarn the Stalinists in power in Eastern Europe about his plans. They were shocked to hear this type of talk coming from Moscow because it undermined their positions, too.

De-Stalinization illustrated to what extent a change of Communist doctrine in the Soviet Union affected the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. On the one hand, the preparedness of Communists in the Soviet Union to experiment with reform at home, or, conversely, the lack thereof, determined the latitude that Eastern European Communists had to experiment with (or against) the system

in their own countries. On the other hand, innovation in the Soviet Union inevitably created problems for those Communist regimes in Eastern Europe that were more conservative than the one in Moscow itself. De-Stalinization in the Soviet Union instigated a crisis for the reigning Stalinists of Eastern Europe in the mid-1950s (in particular in Poland and Hungary) just as Gorbachev's initiatives of perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness) created problems for the representatives of the old Brezhnev era in Eastern Europe in the second half of the 1980s (in particular the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria).

Furthermore, de-Stalinization sparked a debate among those Eastern European intellectuals who had embraced the socialist vision. The so-called revisionists were philosophers who, as Marxists, criticized Stalin and argued in the name of Marx for a return to more genuine socialist values and ideals. They assumed that there had to be not only philosophical but also political alternatives to the Russian Soviet version of Communism: perhaps even a "third way" between the type of capitalist democracy that had developed in the West and the socialism that had arisen in the East in the course of the Cold War.

The question of whether there was only one true path to socialism or many had been at the heart of the split between Stalin and Tito in 1948. The fact that Khrushchev sought reconciliation with Tito in 1955 was an indication that attitudes were changing in Moscow, and after 1956 Khrushchev had to de-Stalinize Soviet foreign policy, too. Khrushchev was prepared, within limits, to allow Communist regimes in Eastern Europe a certain amount of latitude to experiment with "national paths." De-Stalinization contributed to intensifying the conflicts in Eastern Europe between the Moscow-oriented Stalinists, who were in power, and the reform-oriented "national Communists," many of whom previously had been accused of "Titoism" and punished for their deviation accordingly. It also provided an opportunity for the peoples of Eastern Europe to express their discontent with the Stalinist system.

Infighting between the different wings within the Communist Party and the potential for popular protest created explosive situations in Poland and Hungary in 1956, and events got out of hand in Poland first. In June, some 50,000 workers in Poznań, an industrial center west of Warsaw, rioted against increases in prices and work quotas. Protest spread across the country, and as it began gaining momentum and support, it took on an increasingly anti-Communist tone. The Stalinists in power used Stalinist methods to suppress it by calling on the Polish army, and this intervention led to over fifty deaths and hundreds of wounded. Confronted with the prospects of further popular unrest and pressure from the nationalistic wing within the Communist Party, the Polish Stalinists desperately sought a way to prevent a further deterioration of the situation. This constellation paved the way for the political comeback of Władysław Gomułka, a former first secretary of the Polish Communist Party who was a victim of the Stalinists himself. (He had been accused of "nationalist deviations," expelled from the party in 1949, and imprisoned from 1951 to 1954.) Gomułka was rehabilitated and reinstated in his old position in October 1956, and he managed to defuse an explosive situation. As a nationalist and victim of the Stalinists, he enjoyed the

sympathies of the population at large, and he announced a program of Polish de-Stalinization, which enhanced his popularity. The Soviet Union followed events in Poland with great apprehension, and Soviet party elites secretly discussed the prospect of a Soviet military intervention. However, Gomulka managed to convince Khrushchev that Poland's commitment to Communism, the Soviet Union, and the Warsaw Pact was intact and that Polish Communists could maintain order in their own house.

The political setting in Hungary in 1956 was similar to the one in Poland. There had been infighting between Stalinists and national reform Communists within the party and considerable popular discontent with the Stalinist system based on its oppression and poor performance. However, the dynamics of protest and reform evolved differently in Hungary, where Communist intellectuals and students, not workers, spearheaded anti-regime protest. They were devastated by tales of terror that accompanied de-Stalinization and wanted to see Mátyás Rákosi, Hungary's number one Stalinist, ousted from office. Many intellectuals sympathized with Imre Nagy, a liberal and more popular Communist leader who had been appointed prime minister in 1953 and attempted to de-Stalinize Hungary before the official advent of de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union. However, Rákosi and his cohorts maneuvered Nagy out of office in 1955 and then expelled him from the Communist Party. In an attempt to pacify the domestic political strife in Hungary, the Soviets orchestrated a change of leadership in July and replaced Rákosi with one of his associates, Ernő Gerő. However, replacing one Stalinist with another did very little to calm the situation. Furthermore, anti-regime protesters, in particular students, were encouraged by how events had transpired in Poland in October.

A student demonstration in Budapest on October 23, 1956, attracted over 100,000 supporters, who protested for political liberalization, the dissolution of the secret police, and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary. It still is not clear how the shooting started, but gunfire sparked a revolution that began on the streets of Budapest and swept the nation like wildfire. Workers and farmers swelled the ranks of the protesters, who armed themselves and clashed with the police, the Hungarian army, and Soviet units. The days that followed were full of confusion, attempts at reconciliation, misunderstandings, and violence.

Gerő stepped down, and Nagy stepped in to form a new government that included several non-Communists. Nagy also negotiated with the Soviet Union about the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary, and they actually began leaving Budapest. Within a week of October 23, Nagy proclaimed the restoration of a multiparty system, announced the Hungarian withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, and declared Hungarian neutrality. (Nagy obviously had in mind the precedent of the kind of bloc-free neutrality Austria had declared in 1955: a country neither East nor West but in the middle.) He then appealed to the United Nations to protect Hungary's neutral status, and many Hungarians expected help from the West, particularly the United States. Tough talk about "rolling back Communism" on Radio Free Europe created the impression that the United States would help anti-Communists in Eastern Europe once they started helping themselves, but this kind of American propaganda was as misleading as it was hypocritical.

The ultimate goal of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was to "reform the system, not to abolish it," and the sentiments of the insurgents, who numbered no more than 15,000 in arms, "were deeply nationalist, anti-Soviet, and anti-Russian—but not antisocialist."¹² Imre Nagy also did a poor job of managing the insurgents and the Soviet Union. As long as Moscow had faith in Nagy's ability to handle the crisis and to restore order, the Soviet Union was prepared to consider nonintervention. However, Nagy never gained sufficient control of the government or the situation on the streets. The Soviet decision to intervene was influenced not only by the impression that Hungary was in the process of breaking away from the Soviet bloc but also by news that Hungarian insurgents had stormed Communist Party headquarters in downtown Budapest and lynched two dozen functionaries.

The massive intervention of the Soviet Army on November 4 crushed the Hungarian Revolution, which, in subsequent Communist parlance, was called the "Counter-Revolution." János Kádár, a Communist who had been imprisoned under the old Stalinist regime and, like Nagy, made a political comeback during the first days of the revolution by becoming the first secretary of the Communist Party, conspired with the Soviets to form a new government. The proclamation of the new Kádár government coincided with an attack of Soviet tanks on Budapest. Fighting around the country continued for about another week, but the revolutionaries were hopelessly outnumbered and outgunned. Over 10,000 people died in the course of the uprising, and some 185,000 fled to Austria, where they received asylum.

Nagy and his associates sought asylum in the Yugoslav embassy. After Kádár and the Yugoslav ambassador guaranteed them safe conduct to leave, they were kidnapped by the Soviets, taken to Romania, and then eventually returned to Hungary. After a mock trial, they were executed on June 16, 1958, and buried in unmarked graves. (In 1989, Hungary's reform Communist regime rehabilitated Nagy by giving him a state funeral on the thirty-first anniversary of his execution on June 16. At the time, observers interpreted the reburial of Nagy as a funeral ceremony for Hungarian Communism.)

Nagy had envisioned some "third way" for Hungary: a combination of neutrality and socialism. However, in the eyes of the Soviets, he committed two crimes. By reintroducing a multiparty system, he abandoned one of the central precepts of Marxism-Leninism: the Communist Party's monopoly on political power; by withdrawing from the Warsaw Pact, he directly threatened the Soviet Union's national security interests. The "leading role" of the Communist Party and the unity of the Soviet bloc were not to be questioned.

Hungarians are prone to compare the Revolution of 1956 with the Revolution of 1848. (Incidentally, the dates upon which these revolutions began—March 15, 1848, and October 23, 1956—became Hungarian national holidays after 1989.) In both cases, they fought against imperial powers for national freedom and lost due to Russian intervention. However, they won the compromises that followed the defeats by regaining a considerable amount of national autonomy. After 1848, Hungary eventually negotiated the Compromise of 1867 with Austria. Although Kádár initially clamped down on "counterrevolutionary elements" after 1956, under his leadership Hungary eventually became the most liberal Communist regime in the Eastern bloc. It was characterized by a willingness to experiment

with economic decentralization or market elements, modest prosperity, and a relatively good human rights record. One general assumption is that the Hungarians showed the Soviets their teeth, and, as a result, the Soviets were prepared to give them an exceptional amount of leeway in the future. However, this is only half of the story. The West, always interested in promoting independence from Moscow, was more than willing to support Hungarian experimentation and rewarded Hungary for its initiative with generous financial support and favorable trade conditions.

Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic weathered the initial phase of de-Stalinization relatively well without de-Stalinizing, but this just postponed structural issues that needed to be addressed. In Czechoslovakia, Antonín Nowotný exercised a Stalinist monopoly on power from 1948 until 1968 as first secretary of the Communist Party and Czechoslovak president. However, the belated de-Stalinization of Czechoslovakia was not inspired by popular protest. It originated among the intellectual elites of the Communist Party itself who were concerned about the country's sluggish economic performance and general political malaise. At the beginning of 1968, a younger generation of reform-minded Communists maneuvered Nowotný and the other conservative representatives of the old guard out of power, and under the leadership of a new party secretary, the dynamic and liberal Slovak Alexander Dubček, they articulated an ambitious agenda of reform known as the "Prague Spring."

Czechoslovak reform Communists understood that participation was key to systemic reform and believed that it would be possible to develop a freer and more prosperous form of "socialism with a human face." The Prague Spring sought to change the relationship of the citizenry to the Communist Party and party-state by granting them more freedom to participate in the project of reforming the system. Zdeněk Mlynář, one of the chief architects of the Prague Spring (and former roommate of Mikhail Gorbachev when both of them studied in Moscow in the early 1950s) envisioned a system in which the Communist Party effectively would maintain control by becoming a forum for the competition of the best ideas "by means of freely expressed public opinion, including freedom of the press and via newly formed interest organizations."¹³ Genuine criticism, discussion, and freedom of association suddenly were not only permitted but also encouraged by the Communist Party itself, which ended political surveillance by the secret police, allowed censorship to fall by the wayside, and lifted restrictions on travel to the West. A new economic strategy based on the introduction of pricing instruments, market elements, and more enterprise autonomy was brought into position, too, and plans were vetted to turn Czechoslovakia into a federal state.

These brief observations do no justice to the complexity and the contradictions inherent in the action program the Czechoslovak Communist Party worked out during the Prague Spring and hoped to implement at a party congress in September 1968. However, the Czech and Slovak response to these innovations was enthusiastic, even euphoric, and "back to Europe" became a popular slogan. By sacrificing coercion and loosening up controls, Dubček gained a genuine amount of popular support. He and his associates never abandoned the idea of the political primacy of the Communist Party and insisted that it would continue to play

its leading role in the entire reform process as comprehensive umbrella organization and prudent guide. However, conservative Communists inside and outside of Czechoslovakia did not understand how it was possible to gain control by losing it, and they viewed the Czechoslovak experiment and the populace's enthusiasm for it with increasing suspicion and apprehension. The freedom of the press was being used to criticize the Soviet Union. Associations of dissident intellectuals and former political prisoners called for more sweeping and immediate reforms and an investigation of Stalinist transgressions in the past.

The Soviet Union and other members of the Warsaw Pact carefully monitored events in Czechoslovakia throughout the spring and summer of 1968. Dubček met Brezhnev and other Warsaw Pact leaders in March and met personally again with Brezhnev in July to defend the reform program, the leading role of the Communist Party therein, and Czechoslovak allegiance to the Warsaw Pact. Ultimately, "Dubček and his associates shared many of the Soviets' concerns..."¹⁴ and promised the Soviets to retighten some of the screws they had loosened. However, in early August Dubček failed to convince Brezhnev that he had the situation under control, and Moscow set a date to intervene. During the night of August 20–21, armies from four Warsaw Pact countries—the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria—invaded the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

There has been a lot of speculation about what could have happened if the invasion of Warsaw Pact troops had not ended the Prague Spring in August 1968. Whether Dubček and his compatriots went too far is a moot point. Communists inside and outside of Czechoslovakia, who were less inclined to reform, assumed that they had already gone too far or that they would soon. Unlike Hungary in 1956, there was neither armed resistance nor a popular revolution in Czechoslovakia in 1968. However, the invasion did set off a wave of popular protest that was carried well into autumn by students and trade unions, followed by the "Prague Winter" of clampdowns. Like Hungary in 1956, the reform Communists in power condemned the intervention, and conservative Communists loyal to the Soviet agenda negotiated behind their backs directly with Moscow to install a new regime with the help of Soviet tanks. Hundreds of thousands of Czechs and Slovaks took the opportunity to flee the country in the wake of the intervention.

Dubček was effectively deprived of power after the invasion but nominally left in office, only to be gradually eased out and replaced by Gustav Husák, a conservative Communist and fellow Slovak, in 1969. Husák then proceeded to purge the Communist Party of its reformers—one-third of its membership—and introduce a program of "normalization" that placed greater emphasis on the production of consumer goods coupled with the systematic prosecution of dissent and a debilitating maintenance of the status quo. Czechoslovak society atomized. Disillusioned with politics, Czechs and Slovaks withdrew into the privacy of their own homes to cultivate family life, small circles of friends, domestic pastimes, and hobbies. The more oppressive Communist regimes were, the more popular aquariums seemed to be. The modest economic prosperity that accompanied "normalization" increased automobile and television ownership, and cottages in the countryside (in Czech *chata*, in Russian *dacha*) were coveted possessions. "Escaping for the weekend" was more than a metaphor. Inner emigration became a way of life.

Leonid Brezhnev justified the Warsaw Pact occupation of Czechoslovakia in terms of the dangers associated with "deviation from socialism as such." Brezhnev called the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia "military assistance to a fraternal country" and noted that it is necessary "when external and internal forces hostile to socialism try to turn the development of a given socialist country in the direction of the restoration of the capitalist system" because this represents "a threat to the common interests of the socialist camp."¹⁵ The "Brezhnev doctrine" of limited sovereignty was a threat that made it clear that the Soviet Union would not tolerate domestic political experimentation among other "fraternal countries" in the Soviet bloc in the future, if they threatened vital ideological or strategic interests of the Soviet Union.

Finally, there are some interesting parallels between Imre Nagy and Alexander Dubček. Both were loyal Communists who initially enjoyed the confidence of Soviet leadership, and both believed in broader participation and liberalization as means of reforming the socialist system. Both failed to manage domestic crises in a manner that maintained Soviet confidence, and it was this failure that led to Soviet intervention. The biggest difference is in their fates. Nagy was tried and executed (but rehabilitated in 1989). Dubček was expelled from the Communist Party and worked unobtrusively as a minor bureaucrat in the department of forestry in Bratislava until he made a spectacular political comeback as a member of the first post-Communist government after the "Velvet Revolution" in Czechoslovakia in December 1989.

Nineteen sixty-eight was a turning point in East Central Europe in a number of respects. It led to a final rupture between the Soviet Union and Communist parties in Western Europe that started calling themselves "Eurocommunist." In the East, it marked the "culmination of the conflict between critical intellectuals and political power"¹⁶ that had started with de-Stalinization in 1956. Many intellectuals, who as party members, "revisionists," or Marxists previously had believed that the system could be reformed, now recognized that it could not. A new generation of Eastern European dissidents was born that abandoned Marxism as an intellectual program and "Communism with a human face" as a political one. In its place the dissidents adopted a political vocabulary that had a striking affinity to the one used in the West at the beginning of the Cold War. They were concerned about issues of principle, the moral dimension of politics, human rights, truth, and justice. But they also dismissed as cosmetic the changes that had been made in the system since de-Stalinization and started analyzing it in terms of the continuity between what Stalin had created and what Brezhnev and his comrades were maintaining. They began to talk about the "post-totalitarian system" or the "Stalinist-Brezhnevist system."

After the "Prague Spring," a number of developments in the West contributed to a Western inability to understand the East Central European experience with Communism. The student revolutions of 1968 went hand-in-hand with the rise of the "New Left," a renaissance of interest in Marxism and neo-Marxism, and protests against the American involvement in the Vietnam War. Many academics and intellectuals in the West considered the right-wing rhetoric of American Cold War anti-Communism ideological subterfuge for "American imperialism," and this

form of anti-anti-Communism was explicitly anti-American. In these circles, the American empire frequently was portrayed as a greater threat than the Soviet one. Some form of Marxism-Leninism appeared to be the only antidote for "American imperialism" in the developing world, and in many circles there was open admiration for the leaders of "struggles for national liberation," such as North Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh or Latin America's Che Guevara.

At the same time, the concept of "totalitarianism" went out of fashion among members of a younger generation of Western Sovietologists—many of the members of the elder generation in this field were émigrés from Russia or East Central Europe or veterans of World War II and the Cold War—because it was too ideological and methodologically unsophisticated for the theoretical and empirical purposes of social scientists. The Soviet Union had changed dramatically since Stalin, and Sovietology needed to take these changes into account. Certainly the Soviet Union had a political and economic system that was dramatically different from Western systems. However, the Soviet system was a system. Its behavior therefore could be explained in terms of system theory, and its performance could be measured using quantitative analysis. It also had a constitutional and an institutional framework, decision-making processes, social classes, interest groups, "lobbies" that bargained for resources, patterns of distribution, and so forth, and it was pursuing a program of economic and social modernization.

Furthermore, the interplay between the spirit of leftist protest in the West and methodological innovation in the social sciences inspired by neo-Marxist approaches contributed to increasing the amount of sympathy for socialism among members of a new generation of academics and intellectuals. In many cases, they sympathized with the ideals of socialism and preferred them to the materialistic and money-grubbing values of consumer capitalism. Based on the data available, which were scarce and in retrospect often inaccurate, the Soviet system seemed to be doing well. The big issue for Western social scientists was trying to anticipate where the Soviet system was going. Optimists believed in the potential for incremental political liberalization or autocratic modernization; pessimists anticipated stagnation or gradual deterioration. One way or the other, change would be a gradual process.

The optimistic scenario was one of the premises for the "convergence theory" of capitalism and Communism that enjoyed certain popularity in the West in the 1970s. Social democratic and labor parties were in power in many Western European states. These left-of-center governments adopted a series of policies based on state intervention, tax increases, increased public spending, and comprehensive as well as redistributive social welfare schemes, and they shared the conviction that shifting the public-private mix in the economy in favor of state expenditure, ownership, and control was the most desirable path of development. At the time, the general structural trend in Western Europe appeared to be away from capitalism and toward a social welfare system; "less free market" and "more state" were the ideas behind "capitalism with a human face."

Although the idea of "Communism with a human face" had failed dramatically in 1968, there also were a number of subsequent attempts to reform the Communist economies of Eastern Europe: strategies for *economic* change that left

intact the Communist monopoly on *political* power. For example, Hungary introduced a "New Economic Mechanism" in 1968 that decentralized the planning process, gave individual enterprises more autonomy, introduced a certain amount of competition between economic agents, and placed greater emphasis on the production of consumer goods. A new school of socialist reform economists developed a series of different "plan and market" schemes to improve the system's economic performance. Along with the relatively good human rights record of the Kádár regime, this appeared to be a promising development.

Poland launched an ambitious program of economic modernization or "second-wave industrialization." It purchased Western technology with Western credit with the intention of producing more and better commodities, part of which were to be sold in the West to generate the hard currency to pay the debt incurred, and the remainder would flow into the domestic or East bloc market. Grafting Western technology onto a fundamentally inefficiently organized Eastern European economy failed and left Poland with a massive foreign debt. (Hungary also borrowed heavily with fundamentally the same results.) There also were a number of other experiments along the lines of "consumer socialism" elsewhere. Incremental economic liberalization appeared to be the trend in Eastern Europe.

The proponents of the convergence theory thought that the structural evolution of Eastern European Communist states indicated that they were gradually moving in the same direction as Western European social welfare states, although from a completely inverted point of departure. If more state and less market was the Western European pattern of development, then less state (centralization) and more market (liberalization) appeared to be the Eastern European one. Furthermore, if both of these trends continued, the structural convergence of these divergent systems at some ideal midpoint in the future could be extrapolated. Both systems ultimately would evolve into Swedish-style social welfare states, and Eastern European Communists eventually would become Western European-style social democrats. The entire region would become ideologically equidistant from the Soviet Union and the United States, and Central Europe would become a neutral zone. The non-confrontational environment of détente, the aversion of many Western social scientists to Cold War terminology, and the European vision of a symmetrical withdrawal of the superpowers from Central Europe made this scenario popular at the time.

The intellectual worlds of East Central European and Western intellectuals drifted apart during the late 1960s and 1970s. The great majority of East Central European intellectuals abandoned Marxism, adopted the concept of totalitarianism to describe Communism, and rejected the idea of being able to reform the Communist system. However, at the same time, many Western academics and intellectuals abandoned totalitarian terminology and adopted ideas colored by Marxism or neo-Marxism. They displayed an increasing amount of sympathy for socialism and were convinced that the Communist system could be reformed. This was truly a peculiar situation. After 1968, leftist intellectuals in the West started using a political vocabulary similar to the one that East Central European intellectuals definitively abandoned in 1968, and East Central European intellectuals

adopted a political vocabulary that had a great affinity to the classical Cold War terminology that Western anti-Communists started using in 1948. In both cases the problem was to find a way to change the status quo. East Central Europeans looked wistfully to the West, and a fair share of Western intellectuals looked hopefully to the East. (The author vividly recalls the complaint of one Polish scholar from Kraków in the 1980s, who was exasperated by the kind of academic Marxism that was possible on U.S. college and university campuses. He said: "If you can live in a nice house with a white picket fence, drive a Volvo station wagon to work, and earn a handsome salary by teaching this kind of nonsense, then I want to be a Marxist, too.")

When the independent trade union movement Solidarity emerged in Poland in 1980, the prospects for change in East-West relations were not very promising. The strikes that started in the Gdańsk shipyards in the summer of 1980 were precipitated by increases in food prices, and they were similar in this respect to previous waves of protest that had erupted after price hikes in Poland in 1970 and 1976, both of which had been bloodily repressed. However, the movement for independent trade unions that emerged from this discontent went far beyond the traditional union concerns. A brief look at some of the distinctive features of the Polish situation is necessary for an understanding of the dynamism of the Solidarity phenomenon.

The Polish workers' movement was flanked on the one hand by the Catholic Church and on the other hand by a relatively large group of peasant-farmers who owned and tilled their own land. Both of these features of Polish society indicate to what extent Stalinization had failed in Poland. The Communists had failed to break the influence of the Church, which was especially strong in rural areas, and they never managed to collectivize agriculture, which meant that the Polish countryside never was sufficiently "Sovietized." Given the demographics of Polish industrialization and urbanization, the statistically average Polish worker's roots were those of a Catholic peasant-farmer, and this was not the stuff out of which good Communists (and in some cases, good workers) were made. (Peasants frequently did not have the skills required for industrial production, nor were they accustomed to industrial discipline. The initially poor performance of agricultural labor in an industrial setting is a problem all modernizing economies face.)

Two important "alliances" prefaced the rise of Solidarity. First of all, after the Polish workers' strikes in 1976, dissident intellectuals started showing explicit concern for the interests of the working class, and a series of initiatives helped bridge the traditional gap between intellectual dissent, as an act of relatively isolated individuals, and workers' protest with its mass potential. Second, Polish intellectuals, many of whom were profoundly anti-clerical (either as representatives of traditional, enlightened European liberalism or as former Marxists), reconciled themselves to working with the Catholic Church on practical issues instead of against it on principle ones. In other words, "Catholic and non-Catholic intellectuals found more and more common ground in the defence of common values, common sense and basic rights."¹⁷ The ideas of self-defense—defending the people against the violence and transgressions of the state—and nonviolence became the unifying principles of action. Last of all, although it would be false to overestimate how religious

the Poles were—Communism did succeed in creating a modern, secular society to a great extent—the Church was a strong and popular organization in Poland, and it always had provided the Polish nation with a haven during times of occupation and duress.

This triangular coalition of workers, intellectuals, and priests provided the potential for mass protest with intellectual direction and moral authority. Although the poor performance of the Polish economy and the ineptitude of the Communists who managed it were the immediate sources of popular discontent, there were a number of venerable Polish national traditions that aggravated it: anti-Russian sentiments, revolutionary romanticism, patriotism, and Roman Catholicism. All of these elements seemed to coalesce when Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, the archbishop of Kraków, was elected Pope John Paul II in 1978. The election of the first non-Italian pope in centuries not only was a spectacular confirmation of Poland's Western or "Roman" orientation but also evoked a feeling of national pride and acted as a catalyst in what can be described only as a spiritual or moral revolution.

The dynamics of the "Solidarity revolution" were exceptionally complicated. The Poles had learned from the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the Prague Spring of 1968. They dismissed the idea of violently overthrowing Communism because they considered violence an inappropriate means of change, and they no longer believed in the Polish Communist Party's ability to reform Communism. (Nor did Polish Communists. Their main interest was the maintenance of privilege and power.) What started out as a strike in Gdańsk in the summer of 1980 ended up less than 18 months later as an independent organization of 10 million members (almost one-third of the Polish population), and Solidarity's demands on the government grew as the movement did. The idea of self-defense made way for the concept of self-management, which implied self-government. If Poland was really a "workers' state," as the Communists always had maintained, then the workers started demanding real rights from the Communist Party in their own state.

Solidarity completely undermined the legitimacy of the Polish Communist Party-state, but it did not aspire to seize political power. This strategy was based on the insight that the party-state could not be reformed, but society could. The idea of a society that renewed and reorganized itself—a "civil society" that was independent from the state and whose interaction with the state was based on the rule of law and the observation of fundamental human rights—was one of the guiding principles of the movement. Solidarity was internationally recognized in the West from the far left to the far right because virtually all people could find something in its program with which they could identify.

Solidarity pursued a strategy of "self-limiting revolution," based on nonviolence and constraint, to wring concessions from the Communist party-state and managers of the state-run economy, and it progressively increased the scope of its autonomous activities. Pragmatists and fundamentalists within the movement argued about how far Solidarity could or should push its demands. As a precautionary measure, Solidarity explicitly stated that it had no intention of pulling Poland out of the Warsaw Pact. But it was perfectly clear to the Soviets and the conservative Communist regimes elsewhere that a peaceful, democratic, national, anti-Communist revolution was in progress, and they were afraid that it might be contagious.

The Solidarity movement exacerbated the economic crisis in Poland and created a political one. A vacuum developed in which the Polish Communist Party effectively had lost control, but Solidarity—for tactical reasons and reasons of principle—was not prepared to assume it. The Solidarity experiment ended on December 13, 1981, when the Communist General Wojciech Jaruzelski proclaimed a "national emergency" and martial law and assumed the positions of Communist Party secretary and prime minister. Due to the fact that there were no emergency powers provisions in the Polish constitution, which would have provided him with extraordinary powers, Jaruzelski had to declare a state of war.

The Brezhnev doctrine of limited sovereignty articulated after the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 evoked the worst possible fears. Some observers assumed that Jaruzelski's declaration of martial law prevented a Soviet intervention, the consequences of which, most Poles agree, would have been catastrophic, and as much as Poles despised Jaruzelski in 1981, he has been rehabilitated to a great extent in the Polish popular imagination since then for this allegedly preemptive measure. Although the Warsaw Pact had engaged in exercises in Poland on Polish borders—"a carbon copy of the Soviet actions in Czechoslovakia" in 1968—Brezhnev and his cohorts in Moscow made no plans for an invasion.¹⁸ The Soviet Union had neither the will nor the capacity to intervene. Looking back, the Brezhnev doctrine was already dead in 1981, but this was a well-kept secret. And after twenty-eight years as the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Brezhnev died in 1982 at the age of seventy-four.

Since Poland obviously was not at war with a foreign state, it was clear to the members of the Solidarity movement that the government had declared war on civil society. The Jaruzelski government rounded up thousands of activists and put them in interment camps and banned Solidarity and its various suborganizations. Unlike Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968, however, the Jaruzelski regime failed to isolate and disperse protest effectively or break the popular will to resist in Poland. It merely outlawed the former and contained the latter. Solidarity went underground as a resistance movement and continued its struggle against a government that most Poles regarded as illegitimate and foreign. International protest was loud but ineffectual, and Poles were exceptionally disappointed in those Western European heads of state, such as German Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, who criticized Solidarity for its recklessness and considered the Jaruzelski regime's restoration of order to be "necessary."

The initial level of demoralization and disillusionment was great after the declaration of martial law in Poland in December 1981, and everyone was prepared for a long political winter. The repertoire of East Central European options seemed to be exhausted: Violent revolution had failed in Hungary; "Communism with a human face" had failed in Czechoslovakia; and Solidarity's peaceful, negotiated transformation of the Communist system, "self-limiting revolution," had failed, too. In 1982, the Hungarian dissident György Konrád made the following observation:

The three medieval kingdoms of East Central Europe—Polish, Czech, and Hungarian—seem to have been the work of peoples who had great powers of

survival. In one way or another, they paid dearly for their independence. Even though the centuries-old experiment in independence has still not reached a successful conclusion, this continuing tenacity is proof that the struggle for self-determination will go on until self-determination has been achieved.

Konrád's prognosis for the chances of change within the Communist world at the time was pessimistic and long-term: "Three attempts have failed; the seventh will succeed."¹⁹ The Communist system may not have been robust, but it was intact. In a variation on the old phrase of "socialism with a human face," the Polish dissident Adam Michnik called it "Stalinism with its teeth knocked out." Under these discouraging circumstances, people started talking about Central Europe.

THE IDEA OF CENTRAL EUROPE

When the Cold War started, the concepts of East and West were more than sufficient for describing the political reality of a divided Europe, and this division appeared to be permanent. The Soviet version of Communism and the Soviet-Communist version of Eastern Europe seemed to be here to stay. The idea that the Soviet Union would let its empire go was simply unrealistic, according to the experts of that long-defunct discipline called "Sovietology," and the assumption that any attempt to change the political status quo in Eastern Europe would endanger peace not only in Europe but also on a global scale was one of the central premises of East-West relations: peaceful coexistence after the mid-1950s and détente in the 1970s. As hegemonic powers, the Soviet Union and the United States marshalled their respective friends and allies in two self-containing blocs. There was no room for unilateral experimentation or dramatic change. Stability was the key to maintaining peace in Europe and the world.

In the summer of August 1975, thirty-five signatory powers from East and West met in Helsinki to sign the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The signatories of the Final Act agreed to recognize the inviolability of existing frontiers and the territorial integrity of states, and they vowed to refrain from the threat or use of force. They agreed to settle disputes peacefully, agreed not to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries, and agreed on modalities for future cooperation. The participating states also agreed to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, the equal rights of peoples, and their right to self-determination. Soviet leader Leonoid Brezhnev considered the Final Act to be the culmination of his diplomatic career. It institutionalized the status quo of a divided Europe, legitimized Communism in its eastern half, and institutionalized détente. For the signatory powers, it established the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) as a forum for ongoing consultation, and for dissidents in Eastern Europe, it became a human rights manifesto.

Détente ended with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, which demonstrated to the West that the Soviet Union was still intent upon aggressively expanding its empire. Ronald Reagan, elected to his first term as U.S. president in 1980, shocked friend and foe alike with his tough anti-Communist rhetoric when he came into office and referred to the Soviet Union as an "evil empire." He backed

the tough talk up with dramatic increases in American defense spending, including the so-called Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). With SDI, he abandoned the long-standing strategic doctrine that a nuclear war would lead to mutually assured destruction by proposing the development of high-tech ground- and space-based systems to protect the United States from attack. (The provisions for laser research and space-based interceptors gave SDI the nickname "Star Wars.") East-West relations deteriorated to such a great extent by the early 1980s that H. W. Brands has referred to this period as the "Cold War II."²⁰ The Cold War, East and West, was here to stay.

Under such conditions, it seemed unrealistic to talk about Europe in any other terms than East and West. However, an increasing number of intellectuals and dissidents in Eastern Europe, a handful of émigrés, academics, and journalists, and even a few politicians in the West started to use the concept of Central Europe—or East Central Europe—with increasing frequency in the early 1980s. There was no real consensus on where this region was, and there were a number of regional and ideological variations on the idea of Central Europe that had one common denominator: Central Europe was a means searching for alternatives to the Iron Curtain, the Cold War, and the partition of Europe. The political implications of the idea of Central Europe were so enormous that realists tended to dismiss the concept altogether.

In the West barely anybody knew where or what Central Europe was with the exception of one small group of people: the émigrés from the Nazi or the Soviet versions of Eastern Europe, who left either before or after World War II or during the initial period of Stalinization in the late 1940s and early 1950s. (The ranks of these expatriates were then refurbished by subsequent waves of émigrés that followed in each subsequent generation: Hungarians in 1956, Czechs and Slovaks in 1968, and Poles in 1981.) These Central Europeans suffered a fate common to all exiles. Very few people in the West showed even a remote understanding for the issues that concerned them, and no one seemed to know much about the idea or the region of Central Europe.

Being disappointed in the West was one of the characteristics of Central European émigrés in the West as well as Central European intellectuals in the East. Western ignorance or a combination of negligence and amnesia was the main problem. Most people in the West did not even know that the countries that formed the western provinces of the Soviet empire represented the eastern frontier of Western civilization, nor did they really fully understand the true nature of Communism or the implications of Russian-Soviet totalitarianism. The "attitude of the average person in the people's democracies" in the East toward the West, as Czesław Miłosz observed in the early 1950s in *The Captive Mind*, his analysis of the relationship of intellectuals to Communism, was "despair mixed with a residue of hope." He described the Eastern intellectual's attitude toward the West as "somewhat like disappointed love" that "often leaves a sediment of sarcasm."²¹

The career of the concept of Central Europe after 1945 was truly unusual. After World War II, people stopped using the term in the present tense for at least three decades. No one ever wanted Germans to talk about *Mitteleuropa* again, and "Central Europe" was a very nebulous concept when it began to come back into

circulation in the early 1980s. Its usage reflected different perceptions of the East-West problem on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Although an auspicious denouement of the East-West conflict was one of the premises of the idea of Central Europe, even those people who used the term could not agree on the causes or the nature of this conflict or on the most appropriate means for ending it. The regional dynamics of the East-West conflict and divergent attitudes toward the reform potential of the Communist system also influenced the evolution of different Central Europe ideas. Three versions of "Central Europe" emerged: in the Federal Republic of Germany in the West, in and around the frontiers of neutral Austria, and behind the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe.

In West Germany, Central Europe was a concept adopted by the left, ranging from the ecological-pacifist, "basis democracy" Green movement to the Social Democrats. They all were interested in reviving the process and practice of détente and believed in the central premise of Social Democratic *Ostpolitik*: that "change through rapprochement" or peaceful cooperation with the Communist system was the best means of transforming it. They also were opponents of the arms race and, in some cases, of the membership of the Federal Republic in NATO. (The deployment of a new generation of intermediate-range Pershing and cruise missiles under the auspices of NATO in the early 1980s to counterbalance the threat that a new generation of Soviet SS-20 missiles in Eastern Europe represented was exceptionally unpopular in Western Europe and increased anxiety in Moscow about NATO's first-strike capacity.) Troop reductions and disarmament, the creation of a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe, neutralism or neutrality for the Federal Republic of Germany, and a symmetrical withdrawal of the superpowers not only from Germany but also from the entire region were some of the key elements of this vision for Central Europe.²² After these preconditions were satisfied, German reunification was an issue that could be seriously addressed. Assumptions about the potential benefits of vigorously reintroducing détente, convergence theory, the democratic reform potential of Communism, and in some cases the possibility of a "third way" between (Soviet) Communism and (U.S.) capitalism all were operative here.

This version of Central Europe was most sensitive to the international and strategic dimensions of East-West conflict. The quality of the relations between the Soviet Union and the United States and their respective allies in Eastern and Western Europe determined the general international framework for the discussion of the idea of Central Europe, which was based on the premise that a fundamental change in the relationship between the superpowers—and hence their conduct and presence in Central Europe—was absolutely necessary to change the status quo. It was difficult to envision under which circumstances either the United States or the Soviet Union might withdraw from the region, but it was clear that both of them had to go. There naturally was a lot of disagreement on which of the superpowers represented the major threat and hence was the major obstacle. For example, for the West German peace movement, it was the United States and NATO.

The German-German frontier was the toughest line of European confrontation in the East-West conflict. In terms of troops and conventional and nuclear weapons, East and West Germany were the most highly militarized region in world history. Parity and deterrence—a "balance of terror"—were strategic doctrines in

East and West, but it was difficult for representatives of the respective military establishments to agree in quantitative and qualitative terms on who had what. The complicated tactical and strategic relationships between conventional and nuclear forces, combined with mutual suspicion and the assumption that the other side never admitted to having a critical advantage that was upsetting the balance of power, made troop and arms reduction talks between the superpowers relatively futile exercises. Mutual and Bilateral Force Reduction (MBFR) negotiations between the blocs started in Vienna in 1973 but produced negligible results. In the 1970s, the SALT I and II (Strategic Arms Limitations Talks) agreements merely sought to establish future ceilings for nuclear arsenals that already had phenomenal overkill capacities. The idea of START (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks) did not make progress until the mid-1980s.

Furthermore, Western security experts tended to agree that unilateral Western reduction was undesirable or even dangerous because it either would upset the balance of power or could be interpreted as a sign of weakness and thus encourage the Soviet Union as the benefiting power to take advantage of its position of superiority. During the renewed arms race of the 1980s, unilateral reduction and withdrawal were basically what the West German left demanded (and these ideas were lavishly praised as "progressive" by Soviet propaganda). The idea of getting the Americans out of West Germany, getting West Germany out of NATO, and promoting German neutralism or neutrality had a strong affinity to what Stalin wanted to achieve with his famous offer in 1952, when he vetted a proposal for a unified, neutral German state. The leftist West German scenario for Central Europe was based on the premise that if the United States were to go, then the Soviet Union would leave. Then after the Soviets left, not only would Central Europe come into its own. Reform Communism or real socialism would flourish, too. This was a worst-case scenario for conservatives: a "Finlandization" of West Germany.

Finns always were upset by the use of the term "Finlandization." After World War II, the Finnish government concluded a treaty of mutual cooperation and assistance with the Soviet Union that, under specific circumstances, took Soviet security interests into account. Finland was obligated, for example, to cooperate with the Soviet Union in case of another war with Germany. Otherwise, Finland pursued a judicious policy of neutrality after 1945 that ensured its independence.

With reference to Western European affairs, "Finlandization" was a pejorative and polemic term based on the fear that the Western European left might succeed in neutralizing Western Europe. However, in the Eastern European context, "Finlandization" or "self-Finlandization" was a best-case scenario for countries like Poland and Hungary after the mid-1980s right up until 1989. Dissidents and reformers speculated that the Soviet Union might let countries out of the Eastern bloc if they, like Finland after World War II, were prepared to make some concessions to the national security interests of the Soviet Union and as neutral states would refrain from joining Western military or economic alliances.

If the West German debate about Central Europe reflected the immediacy of the East-West conflict, then a second, different version of Central Europe evolved in and around Austria. The Iron Curtain may have been impenetrable between East and West Germany, but the contours of the East-West conflict softened along the

frontiers of neutral, nonaligned Austria. It was not a member of either of Europe's military and economic blocs—NATO and the European Economic Community or the Warsaw Pact and COMECON—and in this respect it was neither East nor West. In terms of its economic and political systems, Austria was a Western European state, but it jutted like a peninsula into Eastern Europe.

Austria's neighbors in Eastern Europe envied its neutrality that had allowed Austria to get out of the East–West conflict in 1955, and the Hungarian declaration of neutrality during the 1956 uprising illustrated to what extent neutrality was a desirable option to bloc politics. As a small and neutral state, Austria threatened virtually no one, and some political scientists speculated that Austrian-style neutrality could serve as a model for other small states in the region. No one really was sure how an incremental neutralization of the blocs, one state at a time, could be executed, but it seemed to be a good idea.

Mediating between the two rival blocs, cultivating cordial relationships with its immediate neighbors despite ideological differences, and promoting regional cooperation across national frontiers were essential aspects of Austrian foreign policy. Austria's practice of neutrality also benefited tremendously from the admittedly nostalgic but nonetheless positive associations that the memories of "old" imperial Habsburg Austria evoked throughout the region. Despite the Iron Curtain, peoples of various states shared a history, and despite their differences, there were a number of common cultural traditions. In this part of the world, *Mitteleuropa* had nothing to do with Germany. It was Habsburg territory, and Vienna was the indisputable capital of this cultural empire and the historical hub of a cosmopolitan network of cities: Trieste in Italy, Ljubljana in Slovenia, Zagreb in Croatia, Cluj in Transylvanian Romania, Chernovtsy and L'viv in the Ukraine, Kraków in Poland, Prague and Bratislava in Czechoslovakia, and Budapest in Hungary.

The border between neutral and nonaligned Austria and nonaligned but Communist Yugoslavia was the least problematic seam between the Communist East and the democratic West in Europe. In the late 1970s the Austrian provinces of Upper Austria, Carinthia, and Styria; the Italian provinces of Friaul, Trentino-South Tyrol, and Venice; and the Yugoslav republics of Slovenia and Croatia established a regional "working group" for Alpine-Adriatic cooperation to discuss common problems and concerns and to promote transnational planning in the region despite the differences in political systems. There was a wide range of topics on the agenda, ranging from traffic and ecological issues to tourism, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange. The northern Italian interest in Central Europe is especially noteworthy. An Institute for the Central European Cultural Encounters (*Istituto per gli Incontri Culturali Mitteleuropei*)²³ was founded in Gorizia north of Trieste in 1966 at a time when the term was completely out of fashion.

This Alpine-Adriatic initiative was a modest attempt to emphasize things that people in the region had in common, not the national or ideological frontiers that separated them, and it was not only a unique experiment in transnational cooperation but also a great popular success. The idea of a common Central European past justified the logic of cooperation. The idea of being Central European also fed on the northern Italian provinces' discontent with Roman politics and the

fact that Italy's wealthier and economically advanced north was tired of financing the country's underdeveloped south. Likewise, the northern republics of Yugoslavia were more highly developed than the southern ones. (In early 1970s calls for more national autonomy in Croatia as well as economic reforms produced a brief "Croatian Spring.") Slovenes and Croats resented footing the bill for Balkan backwardness and Communist inefficiency in southern Yugoslavia just as much as northern Italians did for Mediterranean underdevelopment and Mafia corruption in southern Italy. In both the Italian and the Yugoslav cases, the concept of "Central Europe" was full of separatist potential. In Yugoslavia, too, it reminded Slovene and Croatian nationalists and anti-Communists that they had previously lived outside of a state that was dominated by Orthodox Serbs before 1918 or Serbian Communists before 1945. In this context, Central Europe was a Western European, Habsburg, and Roman Catholic idea.

A completely different axis of the Austrian version of Central Europe evolved between Vienna and Budapest. Austrian-Hungarian relations developed so auspiciously during the 1970s that they became a model of East–West cooperation. Austrian investments in Hungary, joint ventures, and the judicious foreign policy of Austrian Federal Chancellor Bruno Kreisky led to a level of cooperation reminiscent of the good old days of the Habsburg Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary, and the countries eventually lifted their bilateral visa requirements in the mid-1980s. Hundreds of thousands of Hungarians went to Austria for a taste of the West, and just as many Austrians went to Hungary to shop cheaply in the East.

Austrian neutrality combined with its good-neighbor policies helped create a nonconfrontational environment that promoted liberalization in its historical hinterland behind the Iron Curtain. Extrapolated onto the level of European politics, the Austrian-Hungarian microcosmic model of neutrality and social democracy in the West plus economic and political liberalization in the East seemed to have some promise in the future.

Austrian Social Democrats shied away from using the term "Central Europe" because of the negative and imperial connotations the term *Mitteleuropa* had in German, but more conservative Austrian Christian Democrats, above all the Austrian politician Erhard Busek, did not because they were more comfortable with Roman Catholicism and the cultural traditions of the Habsburg empire—*Mitteleuropa* without the Germans—as unifying elements of the region. In the mid-1980s, Busek brought new impetus into the Central European debate by combining the idea of common cultural traditions with demands for more human rights and Helsinki cooperation in the region. He considered Central Europe to be a "project" in which Austria could play an important role, and he was one of the few Western European politicians who actively sought and cultivated contacts with East European intellectuals and dissidents in the early 1980s, in Poland and Hungary in particular.

The last and ultimately most important version of the idea of Central Europe was the product of Eastern European intellectuals: dissidents at home and émigrés abroad. It was anti-Soviet and anti-Russian on the one hand and "remarkable for its omission of Germany and 'the German question'"²⁴ on the other hand. The idea of a confederation of states that was situated between the Soviet or Russian

East and the German West and that stretched from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Adriatic Ocean in the south played a considerable role in many of the versions or visions of Central Europe that these intellectuals articulated. The historical precedents for Central Europe were nostalgically transfigured multinational empires—the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in the north and the Habsburg Empire in the south—whose parameters could be defined not only historically but also in traditional religious and enlightened philosophical terms. Central Europe was Roman Catholic and “westward-looking, cosmopolitan, secular-humanist, and rationalist.”²⁵

Proponents of this idea of Central Europe shared many of the sentiments of the Western European peace movements. Although they—like most intellectuals on both sides of the Iron Curtain—were critical of the American presence in Europe and consequences of American “cultural imperialism” and consumerism, Eastern European dissidents and intellectuals recognized the Soviet Union and Communism to be greater threats, and consequently they had a rather reticent relationship to the Western European peace movements because many of the advocates of peace and disarmament in the West failed to understand how dangerous the Soviet Union and Communism really were, or they failed to understand that the absence of human rights and democracy in the East bloc were peace issues as well.²⁶ This version of the Central European idea appealed to the human rights guaranteed to all peoples of Europe in the Helsinki Accords of 1975, and it identified a fundamental change in the Eastern European political system as the prerequisite for real peace in Europe. This insight made it anti-Communist.

The Czech novelist and essayist Milan Kundera provided a classic definition of Central Europe in an article published in November 1983 in Paris (and subsequently translated into English and German). He described the “three fundamental situations” that developed in Europe after World War II as “that of Western Europe, that of Eastern Europe, and, most complicated, that of the part of Europe situated geographically in the center, culturally in the West, and politically in the East.” He also was specific about where Central Europe was. It consisted of “an uncertain zone of small nations between Russia and Germany” historically coextensive with the Habsburg Empire and Poland.

The “tragedy of Central Europe,” with the exception of “little Austria,” was that it had been “kidnapped” by the Soviet Union after World War II. The Western European inability to distinguish between Central and Eastern Europe also was indicative of a larger and more profound crisis. Kundera accused the West of not even noticing that part of the European West had disappeared into the Soviet East and of accepting the logic of a divided Europe. His diagnosis of the fact that “Europe no longer perceives its unity as a cultural unity...” was that “Europe itself is in the process of losing its own cultural identity...”²⁷

Kundera did not offer a concrete political program, but he did have a political claim shared by many other representatives of the Central European idea: The division of Central Europe into an East and a West after World War II was illegitimate. Advocates of the idea of Central Europe may not have agreed about where Central Europe was or which strategies should be pursued or could be used to turn the idea of Central Europe into reality, but they shared “the experience of small

nations subjected to large empires” and the “unique experience of living under Soviet-type Communist systems since Yalta.”²⁸ The histories of these small nations and their respective encounters with Communism provided them with different perspectives, too, but the Eastern European proponents of the idea of Central Europe shared a number of attitudes and convictions.

If politics meant violently wresting power from the Communists or attempting to exert influence on the existing state or governmental policy, dissident intellectuals were for the most part “anti-political.” One of the problems of the totalitarian or post-totalitarian systems in the Eastern bloc was the omnipresence of politics—the state, the party, the police. Therefore, the anti-political idea was not to take the power from “them” but rather to destroy the system by redefining the relationship of the state to society. The idea of a “civil society” that was independent from the institutions of the centrally administered and bureaucratic party-state and whose relationship to it was regulated by certain principles and game rules was shared by many advocates of the idea of Central Europe. They believed in the tenets of political liberalism, not necessarily economic liberalism, and this made human rights and the rule of law core Central European issues. It was society’s task to control the state, not vice versa.

Many dissidents and intellectuals resorted to fundamental philosophical issues and moral discourse. It really did not make that much difference whether their critique of Communism was based on the terminology of modern existentialism, traditional Catholic moral theology, or common sense. For example, Václav Havel’s famous *samizdat* essay, *Living in the Truth*, was inspired by the work of the Czech philosopher and fellow dissident Jan Patočka, one of the co-founders of Charta ’77 who, in turn, had been influenced by German phenomenology and existentialism.

Pope John Paul II stood firmly in the tradition of Roman Catholic theology and social doctrine, and it would be difficult to overestimate his role as a moral authority and harbinger of hope in Poland. Many of the proponents of the idea of Central Europe did not hesitate to talk about the differences between good and evil, truth and lies, or human dignity and moral depravity. Many dissidents believed that there were certain ideas worth suffering for, and the absence of basic rights and freedoms gave them a profound appreciation for things that are frequently taken for granted in functioning democracies in the West, like the rule of law or the freedoms of speech, the press, and assembly. Individual existential rectitude and the ethics of solidarity coalesced into one set of convictions: “our” truth versus “their” lies.

As part of the modest domestic liberalization of the regimes in East Central Europe during the 1970s and 1980s, Communist authorities incrementally stopped jamming Western broadcast media. This undermined the credibility of the regimes by giving many East Germans, Czechs, Slovaks, and Hungarians access to impartial and independent information. People in the East bloc now had an increasing amount of opportunity to compare the East and the West, and the facts spoke for themselves. A peculiar division of labor developed in Germany, for example, where East and West German television stations discreetly coordinated their scheduling to give viewers from the GDR an opportunity to see both versions of the evening

news. The inhabitants of Dresden were not as well informed as others in the GDR because mountain ranges surrounding the Elbe River Valley blocked the reception of Western television stations. They lived in *dem Tal der Ahnungslosen*: "the valley of the clueless." American television series from the 1980s that showed the greed and intrigue of modern capitalism at its very best, like *Dallas* and *Dynasty*, were popular in the East. School children in Bratislava studied Russian at school during the day and watched U.S. programs dubbed into German on Austrian television at night. It would be difficult to overestimate the impact of Western popular culture on Eastern Europe. Mickey Mouse, Marilyn Monroe, John Wayne, Mick Jagger, and Frank Zappa contributed to the demise of Communism, too.²⁹

Finally, one must be very cautious when making generalizations about the dimensions and the consequences of Central European dissidence in the Soviet bloc. Both ideas and popular protest played important roles in the revolutions of 1989, but we should not assume that the majority of people were inspired by the dissidents' ideas for a long time before 1989. Communist regimes in the region had liberalized to varying degrees, but they had not become uniformly soft. Czechoslovak dissidents in Charta '77, for example, were relatively isolated from the population at large and systematically prosecuted, regularly imprisoned, or forced to do menial labor. Therefore, they had a different experience with protest than did their Polish counterparts in Solidarity, who not only were more numerous but also did not suffer being ostracized from society to the same extent. They could rely on the networks and social support systems typical of a nascent "civil society."

Furthermore, at a time when Czechoslovak and Polish dissidents were going in and out of jail in the early and mid-1980s, some Hungarian dissidents started to enjoy the fruits of the Kádár regime's liberality and began traveling between Eastern Europe and the West. Many Yugoslav intellectuals enjoyed similar freedoms, but there was very little organized dissent in East Germany. The East German secret police, the so-called STASI, was very effective. Although the German Democratic Republic spectacularly expelled a few prominent dissidents, the Federal Republic of Germany paid ransom for the others. Between 1963 and 1989, the Federal Republic of Germany "bought free" around 34,000 political prisoners from the German Democratic Republic. After the late 1970s, the going rate for a political prisoner was DM 95,847 per head, around \$40,000.³⁰ Under these circumstances, it was odd that after 1989 some West Germans had the audacity to criticize East Germany for the absence of dissidents.

THE GORBACHEV FACTOR

In the early 1980s, virtually no one anticipated the revolutions of 1989, not to mention the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Political scientists, economists, and historians have had twenty years to sort out why the revolutions of 1989 happened when they did, how they were related to the ultimate collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union in 1991, and what role the Cold War played in both of these dramas. Western experts on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe always had a difficult job because the Communist system was closed and secretive, and the paucity of information and data was a chronic problem for Western analysts. Since 1989,

the opening of archives in Eastern Europe and the work of scholars in gigantic collaborative research efforts such as the Cold War International History Project have provided the basis for a broad and source-based comparative analysis of the Cold War, and this is an ambitious, ongoing project. The access to Communist archives and the collaboration of scholars from the former Soviet bloc have provided Western experts with unprecedented insights into the inner workings of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc.

First of all, it is important to emphasize in retrospect to what extent Western experts on Communism and the Soviet Union failed to see what was coming in the late 1980s.³¹ Civilian and military intelligence agencies were caught off guard by the speed and the trajectory of developments. Since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, or the United States' invasion of Iraq on March 20, 2003, the term "intelligence failure" has had a high profile. As far as 9/11 goes, U.S. intelligence agencies have been criticized for not connecting all of the dots that were available to identify the al-Qaeda threat, and in Iraq there was a lot of guessing (or lying) about the alleged presence of weapons of mass destruction. However, these intelligence failures pale in comparison with the results of Sovietology.

In the course of over forty years, the West spent billions of dollars on the observation, study, and analysis of Communism, and some of the West's best minds were engaged in this enterprise. All leading universities in the West had sophisticated Soviet and East European Studies programs. Information gathering ranged from classical espionage to satellite surveillance. Private think tanks and foundations invested tremendous resources in the analysis of East-West relations. As things turned out, the sophisticated instruments of Western Sovietology did not have much predictive power, nor, for that matter, did the crystal balls of East Central European dissidents and intellectuals. The winners of the revolutions of 1989 (in East Central Europe) and the Cold War (in the West) were just as surprised about their victories as the Communist losers were by their defeats in 1989 (in East Central Europe) and in the Soviet Union in 1991.

Furthermore, Western policymakers had no real scenarios for an end of the Cold War or, more appropriately, none of the Cold War scenarios sufficiently took into account those variables that co-determined what actually happened: the peaceful and relatively orderly collapse of the Soviet empire managed by Soviet elites themselves. Among the axiomatic assumptions about the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were that dramatic change was impossible and that the Soviet Union would hold on to its hard-won Eastern European empire at all costs. Many experts also considered dramatic change undesirable because stability had been the highest priority in East-West relations for decades and Western policymakers assumed that change could be (and should be) negotiated in a gradual manner. The big surprises that went along with the *constructive* Soviet unilateralism did not fit into the established models used to interpret and to anticipate Soviet behavior.

The historical fact of the failure of Communism in Europe makes it important to avoid the temptations of fallacious reasoning and hindsight bias. The *post hoc ergo proper hoc* fallacy—literally "after this, therefore because of this"—can lead us to confuse chronology with causation. Anti-Communists have made a wide variety

of claims about the causes for the collapse of Communism, and not all of them are equally credible. Hindsight bias is the inclination all people have to see events that have occurred in the past as having been more predictable than they were. A combination of fallacious reasoning and hindsight bias can obscure how unanticipated the end of the Cold War was and, along with it, the sense of wonder that accompanied 1989. Even worse, fallacious reasoning and hindsight bias can seduce people to make foolish claims about how we should or could have seen things coming. The supreme foolish claim is to say that 1989 was inevitable. For all intelligent observers—and there were many—the revolutions of 1989 were not apparent beforehand, and it would be equally false to consider them inevitable after the fact. In 1989, Central Europeans were amazed by what was happening, and this amazement was accompanied by the recognition of how lucky they were. The fortuitous confluence of a wide variety of circumstances produced a completely unanticipated outcome called “freedom.”

This is not the place to attempt to address the vast body of scholarship that has been produced on the Cold War since it ended, but a few observations on the different schools of thought regarding its conclusion can serve as points of orientation. As far as the global research agenda goes, the Cold War is far from being over, and it may never end for a number of reasons.

It is natural for people with heart-felt convictions to want reality to vindicate their beliefs. Scholars are just like everybody else in this respect, but their need for vindication is more sophisticated because it relies on models of explanation that are politically and methodologically complex. Liberals seek liberal explanations for phenomena just as conservatives seek conservative ones; economists prefer economic explanations, while political scientists want to talk about choice theory. The kind of Cold War you get depends a lot on the political convictions and methodological biases that are informing the agendas of individual researchers. Historians have argued about the origins of World War I since it began without reaching a consensus on the causes of that conflict, and since 1989 social scientists have been engaged in a similar debate on the end of the Cold War with comparable results.

There are a number of schools of thought regarding the most important events leading up to the transformational year of 1989 in Central Europe as well as which dates or events should be used as the definitive turning points in the denouement thereof.³² The prospects for change in Central Europe were determined by the complex interaction of different fields of forces operating on international, regional, and national levels. The development of a qualitatively new relationship between the superpowers after Mikhail Gorbachev's rise to power in the mid-1980s, the Soviet Union's dramatic change of policy in its own sphere of influence thereafter, and the dynamics of protest throughout East Central Europe each played indisputably important roles on these respective levels. These issues need to be addressed in terms of the possible answers to three big questions: Did the West (or the United States or Ronald Reagan) win the Cold War? Did Mikhail Gorbachev's attempts to reform Communism end it in a manner that opened a series of new perspectives for Central Europe? Did East Central Europeans liberate themselves?

Which strategy contributed most to the demise of Communism? Idealists and realists, people “hard” and “soft” on Communism, and advocates of détente

and deterrence all want credit for making the greatest contribution toward ending Communism in Europe and the Cold War. One consensual argument is all of these factors contributed to the demise of Communism. Although the United States was indisputably the hegemonic power in the West, there never was a coherent, long-term strategy in the West for addressing the challenges of the Communist East but rather a number of different policies that shifted from one U.S. presidential administration to the next, from “soft” to “hard,” from left to right, and from country to country contingent upon their immediate regional interests. The plurality of opinions and policies in the West kept a fundamentally rigid Communist system off balance and ultimately contributed to its demise.³³ However, one can identify two extreme positions: the détente policies or the German Social Democratic version of *Ostpolitik* up until the early 1980s versus the get-tough policies of the Reagan administration as of the early 1980s. The policy of détente was to use carrots to coax the Soviet mule into cooperation; Ronald Reagan used a stick to try to bring the Soviet mule around.

The various representatives of German Social Democratic *Ostpolitik*, the protagonists of détente, and the left in general have a difficult time making a case for their contributions to ending the Cold War. Many of them believed that the Communist system somehow could be reformed. The strategy of this kind of détente was to cooperate with those in power in Moscow, East Berlin, Warsaw, and elsewhere in a manner that would contribute to the system's liberalization and thus improve the conditions of those who had the misfortune of living under it. The objective was to work with the powers-that-be in a manner that would make Communism more tolerable for all parties involved, not to win the Cold War.

According to this view, dissidents actually obstructed the process of systemic transformation via rapprochement. Therefore they did not really fit into the strategy of détente but were, on the contrary, sometimes a wrench in the works because their demands were unrealistic. From the European détente or Social Democratic perspective of *Ostpolitik*, tougher anti-Communists always used Eastern European dissidence as leverage on the Communists, forcing them into defensive positions that prevented further reform. Since 1989, the representatives of the tough-on-Communism stance conversely have accused the proponents of détente of directly contributing to the maintenance of the Communist system by working with it. For example, the DM 3.5 billion that the Federal Republic of Germany paid to the GRD for humanitarian purposes between 1963 and 1989—for the release of political prisoners and the reunification of separated families—certainly did not contribute to the demise of the Communist system and was but a fraction of the monies, credits, and goods East Germany received from West Germany over the years.

Proponents of détente have developed their own version of the story based on the deficiencies of the Communist system, and they attempt to explain how détente, not deterrence, contributed to its demise. Détente always attempted to promote more openness within the Communist system itself. The Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and the beginning of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) process, especially with its emphasis on human rights, multilateral diplomacy, and confidence-building measures, were a turning point in East-West

relations. The principles of the Helsinki process, one may argue, informed the "new thinking" of Mikhail Gorbachev in terms of foreign policy.

Because the Communist system collapsed *after* a new phase of East-West détente in the mid-1980s, one may argue that détente, and not deterrence, was the key to the demise of the Communist system. According to this view, the *external* pressure of vitriolic Western anti-Communism helped sustain a system that was terminally ill. Furthermore, it contributed to keeping in power conservative, anti-reform-minded Communists, who helped maintain the system. The denouement of East-West tensions after Gorbachev's rise to power in the mid-1980s, which created an atmosphere in which the Soviet Union felt it could address domestic reform, therefore is comparable with removing the buttresses from a dilapidated building that, in this case, collapsed once it was not held up by external means. The central premise of this theory is that Soviet Communism would have failed *sooner* had Western, and in particular American, anti-Communism not exerted the external pressures necessary to hold it together.

Advocates of the get-tough-on-Communism school of thought see things completely differently, of course, and maintain that Communism would have failed sooner had the West been tougher at an earlier date. The superstructure of the Soviet Union was dilapidated; it just needed a good push to collapse. From this perspective, the restraint of détente was responsible for helping maintain the Communist system, which Ronald Reagan and rearmament started to bring down with resolve in the early 1980s. This version of the story is based on the assumption that the West, and in particular the United States, recognized that a renewed arms race could be used as an instrument to challenge and to change the Soviet system, and it was based on the simple insight that the American economy was much more efficient than the Soviet one. Therefore, each incremental increase in defense expenditures ultimately cost the Soviet Union much more than the United States. The arms race drew a disproportionate amount of resources in the Soviet Union and the East bloc away from other economic sectors in a manner that prevented investments in other spheres, such as modernization, infrastructure, or consumer goods.

In other words, the United States' strategy for the arms race was to systematically exploit the inherent deficiencies of Soviet-style planned economies and to drive them to the brink of economic disaster. For many years, American policymakers assumed that the Soviet Union spent about twice as much of its gross domestic product on defense as the United States: 12 percent to the United States' 6 percent. In the course of the 1970s and 1980s, the figures for the Soviet Union were revised upward to 16 or even 20 percent and increased proportionately once again, if one takes into account that the gross domestic product of the Soviet Union was substantially smaller than that of the United States. Making the Soviets compete in a race not exclusively based on arms but rather on the overall allocation of economic resources drove the Soviet economy into a structural crisis that, in turn, forced it to reform.

One of the shortest versions of this story is that Ronald Reagan won the Cold War. The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) was not the straw but rather the two-by-four that broke the proverbial camel's back. The Soviets *reacted* to American

policy by putting Mikhail Gorbachev into power. Therefore, the billions and billions of dollars spent on defense paid off in the long run and demonstrated the systemic superiority of market economies over planned economies in terms of efficient resource allocation. The system that could produce guns and butter and computers—strategic and consumer goods—won over the one that had to make a structural choice between guns or butter. Cruise missiles and Coca-Cola could not be beat.

The fact that the proponents of détente and deterrence both have cogent arguments for being responsible for the end of the Cold War is a good indication that both of these approaches may tend to overestimate the direct consequences of Western European and American policies on the development of Soviet foreign and domestic policies. The Soviet Union responded to tough Western posturing with its own stubbornness and intransigence. The Soviet Union believed in the early 1980s, for example, that the United States was preparing a nuclear first strike, and in the course of Able Archer 83—a ten-day NATO exercise in November 1983 that simulated a conflict escalating to a nuclear war—the Soviets readied their own nuclear forces. Many historians consider this incident to be the closest the world had come to a nuclear war since the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. Confrontation was a high-risk game.

There also was an important shift in the posture of Reagan between his first term in office, which was confrontational, and his second term, during which he developed a good personal working relationship with Gorbachev. Indeed, only a U.S. president with an impeccable record for being tough on Communism had the kind of domestic political credibility that was necessary in the United States to start negotiating with the Soviets about potential reductions of U.S. defense capacities. He could not be undercut politically from the right for being "soft" on Communism, and his good, personal working relationship produced substantial results. "The 'Reagan factor' contributed, then to the end of the Cold war, but was much less decisive than the role of the Soviet leader [Gorbachev]." ³⁴

The most important impulses for reform in the Soviet Union were not the result of external pressures but rather came from within the Soviet Union itself. Conjectural and counterfactual arguments are admittedly of questionable value; however, had Andropov or Chernenko lived longer after coming into office or had a younger-generation "Brezhnevist" primarily interested in maintaining the status quo assumed the leadership of the Soviet Union instead of Gorbachev, the revolutions of 1989 in East Central Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 most likely would not have happened when they did and the way they did. It is perfectly reasonable to assume that a more conservative and ideologically orthodox Soviet leader could have maintained the Soviet system much longer—at great cost, of course—but he could have maintained it nonetheless. After all, the Communist Party is still in power in the People's Republic of China some twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and Cuba and North Korea are still holding out, too. It also was obvious to all observers that the Soviet economy had severe problems and that the Soviet empire was overextended, but the assumption that the Soviet Union would follow the path of all other great empires by deteriorating soon was not widespread. Different Soviet politics could have led to different economic trajectories.

This raises another problematic issue: the role of leadership and "great men in history." Gorbachev undoubtedly deserves to be placed in this category, although he failed to set out what he wanted to accomplish—that is, reform the Communist system—but he failed grandly. He can be compared with other central figures in the history of the Communist system, who also attempted to reform it and failed: Nikita Khrushchev, Imre Nagy, and Alexander Dubček.

In the case of the comparison with Nagy and Dubček, the question that must be asked is how a system so thoroughly based on stability, conformity, control, loyalty, and ultimately a certain lack of ingenuity could have let someone like Gorbachev—daring, prepared to experiment, and innovative—get so far? Did all of the filtering mechanisms of the Communist Party fail? Was Gorbachev an accident, a fluke, or up until his rise to power a brilliant impostor? Comparisons with Khrushchev are less speculative. Gorbachev embodied the necessity of systemic change; he personified historical powers at work. Like Khrushchev, he had to dislodge entrenched interest groups in the system in order to change the system, and this involved criticizing the representatives and benefactors of his predecessor, Brezhnev. Glasnost and perestroika—"de-Brezhnevization"—were a form of belated de-Stalinization, or even a continuation of the process Khrushchev had begun and Brezhnev had interrupted for twenty long years: "Gorbachev took it as his mission to pick up where Khrushchev had failed."³⁵ Some observers even felt he was bringing the Russian Revolution back to a point where the historical record might be rectified by a new start. In theoretical terms, he harkened back to the mid-1920s, a period after Lenin but before Stalin. Another gigantic "New Economic Policy" might belatedly set the Soviet experiment aright.³⁶

Mikhail Gorbachev was an unusual Soviet leader in a number of respects. Given the geriatric status of the leadership cadre of the Brezhnev era, he was a young man. He was the first Soviet leader who was not a veteran of World War II. These factors undoubtedly played an important role in his psychological make-up and had consequences for his perceptions of the West in general and Germany in particular. He was not a warrior. He sincerely believed in the principles of the socialist system, was a genuine idealist, and sought inspiration and guidance in the writings of Lenin. Gorbachev was not a Soviet ideologue. As a realist he realized that propaganda about the alleged "superiority" of the Soviet system was silly. ("We can't go on living like this," he told his wife, Raisa, hours before he was named Soviet leader.)

Gorbachev also took advantage of Soviet political culture. As the general secretary of the Communist Party he had a tremendous amount of power, and he wielded it liberally to promote his reform agenda while keeping the old guard out of the policymaking loop. In order to gain the political leverage he needed to reform the Soviet system, he also violated one of the fundamental rules of Communist government. Instead of beating the people over the head with the Communist Party, he began beating the party over the head with the people. He recognized that his reforms could be a success only if the people helped to initiate and to carry them. All of the well-worn metaphors used to describe the consequences of these measures are accurate. He let the genie out of the bottle or opened Pandora's box.

In order to pursue his project of sweeping domestic reform in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev called for "new thinking" in Soviet policy, too. He was prepared to abandon the rigid and dark bipolar worldview that had guided the deliberations of Soviet leaders since Stalin, and he was ready to reevaluate the relationship of the Soviet Union to its own empire and to the West. First of all, he sought to orchestrate a Soviet withdrawal from the political and military quagmire of Afghanistan, where the United States was providing millions of dollars of support to native Afghan and foreign mujahadeen fighters, who killed over 13,000 and wounded over 50,000 Soviet soldiers in less than a decade. (Osama bin Laden and his consorts were among the mujahadeen.)

Second, he rethought the relationship of the Soviet Union to its own empire, and he came to the conclusion that East Central Europe was by no means as important to the Soviet Union's national security as it once had been. When Gorbachev met with the heads of other "fraternal states" from Eastern Europe at the funeral of Chernenko in 1985, the Brezhnev doctrine was already defunct. Gorbachev told them that they were on their own, and he was prepared to let the states of the Soviet bloc go their own way, which he hoped would be his way. Gorbachev's reform program undermined the legitimacy of the old Brezhnev-style regimes and their aging leaders: Todor Zhivkov had been in power in Bulgaria since 1954, János Kádár in Hungary since 1956, Nicolae Ceaușescu in Romania since 1965, Gustáv Husák in Czechoslovakia since 1969, and Erich Honecker in the GDR since 1970.

Maintaining the Soviet empire also was an expensive operation, and Gorbachev wanted to reallocate some of the resources that were being expended abroad for his reform projects at home. States that went their own way also could pay their own way in the future by, for example, purchasing Soviet oil or gas in hard currency at world prices instead of at the artificially low levels institutionalized by the "socialist division of labor" in COMECON. Economists argue about the total price tag of the Soviet empire, but it is clear that the states of Eastern Europe received billions and billions of dollars of support annually from the Soviet Union (while simultaneously amassing a gigantic foreign debt by borrowing in the West, too).

Third, Gorbachev stopped seeing the Western system of military and economic alliances as an active threat, and he also began perceiving Western Europe, in particular, as a potential partner. Gorbachev recognized that Soviet spending for defense and the arms race were phenomenal wastes of resources. He announced a unilateral Soviet moratorium on nuclear testing in 1985, agreed to a substantial reduction of nuclear weapons in 1987, and began a unilateral reduction of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe in 1988. Certainly one of the motives for Gorbachev's initiatives was to divert the tremendous economic resources the Soviet Union expended on defense from military to civilian economic sectors; otherwise he would not have the resources he needed to execute his ambitious program of restructuring the Soviet economy. However, Gorbachev had a genuine and sincere interest in the denouement of the East-West conflict, too.

It is important to emphasize in this context that Gorbachev made *political* decisions based on the *economics* of the Cold War. Proponents of the resource allocation theory of the arms race are correct in pointing out that it cost the Soviet Union much more than it cost the United States and that it brought out all of the

deficiencies inherent in the Soviet economy to the detriment of the system as a whole. However, the economics of the Cold War did not "force" Gorbachev, as some advocates of the arms race assume, to take this decision. Gorbachev's grand plan was to end the Cold War and jettison the ballast of the Soviet empire in a manner that would provide him with the resources so direly needed for large-scale reform in the Soviet Union. In the process, he created a revolutionary situation not only in East Central Europe but also within the Soviet Union itself.

Gorbachev was much more popular in the West than he ever was in the Soviet Union. His reform programs produced more confusion than progress in the Soviet Union, and the conditions of day-to-day life for the vast majority of Soviet citizens deteriorated. He also was unpopular among orthodox Communists as well as anti-Communists in East Central Europe. Gorbachev undermined the legitimacy and threatened the interests of the Communists in power, especially the old hard-liners from the Brezhnev era in Czechoslovakia and East Germany. Most Eastern European dissidents and intellectuals disapproved of him for completely different reasons. First of all, he was trying to reform a system that was not only incapable of reform but also undesirable in principle. Second, they were dismayed that Gorbachev was so popular in the West because it indicated to what extent people in the West had an insufficient understanding of Communism.

Gorbachev's conduct of Soviet foreign policy opened up a series of new perspectives for the states in the region in the course of 1989. At an address to the United Nations on December 7, 1988, Gorbachev announced unilateral Soviet troop reductions in Eastern Europe and renounced the use of military force, and when he spoke to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on July 6, 1989, he explicitly renounced the Brezhnev doctrine: "Any interference in internal affairs, any attempts to limit the sovereignty of states—whether friends and allies or anybody else—are inadmissible." The specter of East Central European revolutions ending with Soviet military interventions—as they did in Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968—disappeared. In Poland and Hungary, this gave the Communists in power and dissidents in the opposition room to maneuver and negotiate. Gorbachev also began to criticize the most orthodox Communist regimes in the Eastern bloc—East Germany and Czechoslovakia, in particular—for their rigidity and anti-reform postures, and he warned them that they were unwise not to follow his lead. At the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the German Democratic Republic in East Berlin in early October 1989, Gorbachev pointed out to Erich Honnecker: "Life punishes those who come too late."³⁷



The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Aftermaths

During the last six months of 1989 the Communist regimes in the Eastern bloc came down one by one: in Poland in July, in Hungary in September, in East Germany in November, and in Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria in December. The histories and conditions of each of these revolutions were different, insofar as the individual national experiences with Communism in each of these countries were different, but the objectives of these revolutions were all the same. And one thing they had in common was the displacement of the old Communist order.

The coincidence of 1989 with the bicentennial celebration of the French Revolution in 1789 was an appropriate historical accident. François Furet, one of the premier French historians of the French Revolution, drew parallels between 1989 and "the ideas of 1789 or the American Revolution: human rights, the sovereignty of peoples, free elections, markets" and compared the Communist regimes with the *ancien régime* of late-eighteenth-century France: hated, immobile, and incompetent.

Furet also took this opportunity to criticize the European left, which traditionally interpreted the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 as a legitimate expression of French revolutionary ideals. The revolutions of 1989 represented the belated victory of "old ideas"—the moderate, late-eighteenth-century principles of liberal-democratic revolutions—over the radically modern ones of early-twentieth-century "Bolshevik-Jacobinism":

We are witnesses to revolutions, which are simultaneously counter-revolutions: uprisings by the people in the name of the establishment or reestablishment of liberal democracy; we are seeing the end of the revolutionary idea that has determined the horizons of the Left, far beyond strictly Marxist-Leninist circles, for two hundred years.

According to Furet, in 1989 the future of Communism and socialist planned economies ironically became democracy and capitalist market economies. The driving forces behind the revolutions of 1989 were "the contradictory but inseparably related virtues of market economics and human rights."³⁸ The revolutions of 1989