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# Changes in Central and Eastern Europe

**MAIN IDEA**

**CULTURAL INTERACTION**  
Changes in the Soviet Union led to changes throughout Central and Eastern Europe.

**WHY IT MATTERS NOW**

Many Eastern European nations that overthrew Communist governments are still struggling with reform.

**TERMS & NAMES**

- Solidarity
- Lech Walesa
- reunification
- ethnic cleansing

**SETTING THE STAGE** The Soviet reforms of the late 1980s brought high hopes to the people of Central and Eastern Europe. For the first time in decades, they were free to make choices about the economic and political systems governing their lives. However, they soon discovered that increased freedom sometimes challenges the social order. Mikhail Gorbachev’s new thinking in the Soviet Union led him to urge Central and Eastern European leaders to open up their economic and political systems.

**TAKING NOTES**

**Analyzing Causes** Use a chart to record reasons that nations in Central and Eastern Europe broke apart.

Former nations	Reasons for breakup
Yugoslavia	
Czechoslovakia	

## Poland and Hungary Reform

The aging Communist rulers of Europe resisted reform. However, powerful forces for democracy were building in their countries. In the past, the threat of Soviet intervention had kept such forces in check. Now, Gorbachev was saying that the Soviet Union would not oppose reform.

Poland and Hungary were among the first countries in Eastern Europe to embrace the spirit of change. In 1980, Polish workers at the Gdansk shipyard went on strike, demanding government recognition of their union, **Solidarity**. When millions of Poles supported the action, the government gave in to the union’s demands. Union leader **Lech Walesa** (lehk vah•WEHN•sah) became a national hero.

**Solidarity Defeats Communists** The next year, however, the Polish government banned Solidarity again and declared martial law. The Communist Party discovered that military rule could not revive Poland’s failing economy. In the 1980s, industrial production declined, while foreign debt rose to more than \$40 billion.

Public discontent deepened as the economic crisis worsened. In August 1988, defiant workers walked off their jobs. They demanded raises and the legalization of Solidarity. The military leader, General Jaruzelski (yah•roo•ZEHL•skee), agreed to hold talks with Solidarity leaders. In April 1989, Jaruzelski legalized Solidarity and agreed to hold Poland’s first free election since the Communists took power.

In elections during 1989 and 1990, Polish voters voted against Communists and overwhelmingly chose Solidarity candidates. They elected Lech Walesa president.

**Poland Votes Out Walesa** After becoming president in 1990, Lech Walesa tried to revive Poland’s bankrupt economy. Like Boris Yeltsin, he adopted a strategy of shock therapy to move Poland toward a free-market economy. As in Russia, inflation and unemployment shot up. By the mid-1990s, the economy was improving.

Nevertheless, many Poles remained unhappy with the pace of economic progress. In the elections of 1995, they turned Walesa out of office in favor of a former Communist, Aleksander Kwasniewski (kfahs•N'YEHF•skee).

**Poland Under Kwasniewski** President Kwasniewski led Poland in its drive to become part of a broader European community. In 1999, Poland became a full member of NATO. As a NATO member, Poland provided strong support in the war against terrorism after the attack on the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001. In appreciation of Poland's support, President Bush invited Kwasniewski to Washington for a formal state visit in July 2002.

Kwasniewski continued the efforts of previous leaders to establish a strong market economy in Poland. Although unemployment and poverty continued to be deep-rooted problems, Kwasniewski pushed for democracy and free markets.

**Hungarian Communists Disband** Inspired by the changes in Poland, Hungarian leaders launched a sweeping reform program. To stimulate economic growth, reformers encouraged private enterprise and allowed a small stock market to operate. A new constitution permitted a multiparty system with free elections.

The pace of change grew faster when radical reformers took over a Communist Party congress in October 1989. The radicals deposed the party's leaders and then dissolved the party itself. Here was another first: a European Communist Party had voted itself out of existence. A year later, in national elections, the nation's voters put a non-Communist government in power.

In 1994, a socialist party—largely made up of former Communists—won a majority of seats in Hungary's parliament. The socialist party and a democratic party formed a coalition, or alliance, to rule.

In parliamentary elections in 1998, a liberal party won the most seats in the National Assembly. In 1999, Hungary joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as a full member. In the year 2001, there was a general economic downturn in Hungary. This was due to weak exports, decline in foreign investment, and excessive spending on state pensions and increased minimum wages.

▼ The fall of the Berlin Wall, November 10, 1989

#### Vocabulary

*deposed:* removed from power

## Germany Reunifies

While Poland and Hungary were moving toward reform, East Germany's 77-year-old party boss, Erich Honecker, dismissed reforms as unnecessary. Then, in 1989, Hungary allowed vacationing East German tourists to cross the border into Austria. From there they could travel to West Germany. Thousands of East Germans took this new escape route to the west. **A**

**Fall of the Berlin Wall** In response, the East German government closed its borders entirely. By October 1989, huge demonstrations had broken out



#### MAIN IDEA

#### Analyzing Causes

**A** How did the fall of communism in Hungary contribute to turmoil in East Germany?

in cities across East Germany. The protesters demanded the right to travel freely, and later added the demand for free elections. Honecker lost his authority with the party and resigned on October 18.

In June 1987, President Reagan had stood before the Berlin Wall and demanded: “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” Two years later, the wall was indeed about to come down. The new East German leader, Egon Krenz, boldly gambled that he could restore stability by allowing people to leave East Germany. On November 9, 1989, he opened the Berlin Wall. The long-divided city of Berlin erupted in joyous celebration. Krenz’s dramatic gamble to save communism did not work. By the end of 1989, the East German Communist Party had ceased to exist.

**Reunification** With the fall of Communism in East Germany, many Germans began to speak of **reunification**—the merging of the two Germanys. However, the movement for reunification worried many people, who feared a united Germany.

The West German chancellor, Helmut Kohl, assured world leaders that Germans had learned from the past. They were now committed to democracy and human rights. Kohl’s assurances helped persuade other European nations to accept German reunification. Germany was officially reunited on October 3, 1990. **B**

**Germany’s Challenges** The newly united Germany faced serious problems. More than 40 years of Communist rule had left eastern Germany in ruins. Its railroads, highways, and telephone system had not been modernized since World War II. East German industries produced goods that could not compete in the global market.

Rebuilding eastern Germany’s bankrupt economy was going to be a difficult, costly process. To pay these costs, Kohl raised taxes. As taxpayers tightened their belts, workers in eastern Germany faced a second problem—unemployment. Inefficient factories closed, depriving millions of workers of their jobs.

**MAIN IDEA**

**Clarifying**

**B** Why would Europeans fear the reunification of Germany?



**A New Chancellor** In 1998, voters turned Kohl out of office and elected a new chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, of the Socialist Democratic Party. Schroeder started out as a market reformer, but the slow growth of the German economy made the task of reform difficult. Although Germany had the world’s third largest economy, it was the slowest-growing economy in Europe in the early years of the 21st century. Germany’s unemployment rate was among the highest in Europe, and rising inflation was also a continuing problem. Nonetheless, Schroeder won reelection in 2002.

Reunification forced Germany to rethink its role in international affairs. As Central Europe’s largest country, Germany gained global responsibilities. Schroeder and his foreign minister took an active role in European affairs.

## Democracy Spreads in Czechoslovakia

Changes in East Germany affected other European countries, including Czechoslovakia and Romania.

**Czechoslovakia Reforms** While huge crowds were demanding democracy in East Germany, neighboring Czechoslovakia remained quiet. A conservative government led by Milos Jakes resisted all change. In 1989, the police arrested several dissidents. Among these was the Czech playwright Václav Havel (VAH•tslahv HAH•vehl), a popular critic of the government.

On October 28, 1989, about 10,000 people gathered in Wenceslas Square in the center of Prague. They demanded democracy and freedom. Hundreds were arrested. Three weeks later, about 25,000 students inspired by the fall of the Berlin Wall gathered in Prague to demand reform. Following orders from the government, the police brutally attacked the demonstrators and injured hundreds.

The government crackdown angered the Czech people. Huge crowds gathered in Wenceslas Square. They demanded an end to Communist rule. On November 25, about 500,000 protesters crowded into downtown Prague. Within hours, Milos Jakes and his entire Politburo resigned. One month later, a new parliament elected Václav Havel president of Czechoslovakia.

**Czechoslovakia Breaks Up** In Czechoslovakia, reformers also launched an economic program based on shock therapy. The program caused a sharp rise in unemployment. It especially hurt Slovakia, the republic occupying the eastern third of Czechoslovakia.

Unable to agree on economic policy, the country's two parts—Slovakia and the Czech Republic—drifted apart. In spite of President Václav Havel's pleas for unity, a movement to split the nation gained support among the people. Havel resigned because of this. Czechoslovakia split into two countries on January 1, 1993.

Havel was elected president of the Czech Republic. He won reelection in 1998. Then, in 2003, Havel stepped down as president, in part because of ill health. The Czech parliament chose Vaclav Klaus, a right-wing economist and former prime minister, to succeed him. The economy of the Czech Republic slowly improved in the face of some serious problems. The Czech Republic pushed to become a full member of the European Union (EU) by 2004.

Slovakia, too, proceeded on a reformist, pro-Western path. It experienced one of the highest economic growth rates in the region in 2002. It hoped to join both NATO and the EU in the near future.

## Overthrow in Romania

By late 1989, only Romania seemed unmoved by the calls for reform. Romania's ruthless Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu (chow•SHES•koo) maintained a firm grip on power. His secret police enforced his orders brutally. Nevertheless, Romanians were aware of the reforms in other countries. They began a protest movement of their own.

**A Popular Uprising** In December, Ceausescu ordered the army to fire on demonstrators in the city of Timisoara

### Social History

#### The Romanian Language

The Romanians are the only people in Eastern Europe whose ancestry and language go back to the ancient Romans. Romanian is the only Eastern European language that developed from Latin. For this reason, Romanian is very different from the other languages spoken in the region.

Today's Romanians are descended from the Dacians (the original people in the region), the Romans, and tribes that arrived later, such as the Goths, Huns, and Slavs.

Romanian remains the official language today. Minority groups within Romania (such as Hungarians, Germans, Gypsies, Jews, Turks, and Ukrainians) sometimes speak their own ethnic languages among themselves. Nonetheless, almost all the people speak Romanian as well.

#### INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY

**INTERNET ACTIVITY** Create a poster on all the Romance languages, which developed from Latin. Go to [classzone.com](http://classzone.com) for your research.

(tee•mee•SHWAH•rah). The army killed and wounded hundreds of people. The massacre in Timisoara ignited a popular uprising against Ceausescu. Within days, the army joined the people. Shocked by the collapse of his power, Ceausescu and his wife attempted to flee. They were captured, however, and then tried and executed on Christmas Day, 1989. Romania held general elections in 1990, 1992, and 1996. In the 2000 elections, Ion Iliescu was elected to a third term as president. **C**

**MAIN IDEA**

**Contrasting**

**C** Contrast the democratic revolutions in Czechoslovakia and Romania.

**The Romanian Economy** Throughout the 1990s, Romania struggled with corruption and crime as it tried to salvage its economy. In 2001, overall production was still only 75 percent of what it had been in 1989, the year of Ceausescu's overthrow. In the first years of the 21st century, two-thirds of the economy was still state owned.

However, the government made economic reforms to introduce elements of capitalism. The government also began to reduce the layers of bureaucracy in order to encourage foreign investors. Furthermore, in order to achieve membership in the European Union, the Romanian government began to move away from a state-controlled economy.

## The Breakup of Yugoslavia

Ethnic conflict plagued Yugoslavia. This country, formed after World War I, had eight major ethnic groups—Serbs, Croats, Muslims, Slovenes, Macedonians, Albanians, Hungarians, and Montenegrins. Ethnic and religious differences dating back centuries caused these groups to view one another with suspicion. After World War II, Yugoslavia became a federation of six republics. Each republic had a mixed population.

**A Bloody Breakup** Josip Tito, who led Yugoslavia from 1945 to 1980, held the country together. After Tito's death, ethnic resentments boiled over. Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic (mee•LOH•sheh•vihch) asserted leadership over Yugoslavia. Many Serbs opposed Milosevic and his policies and fled the country.

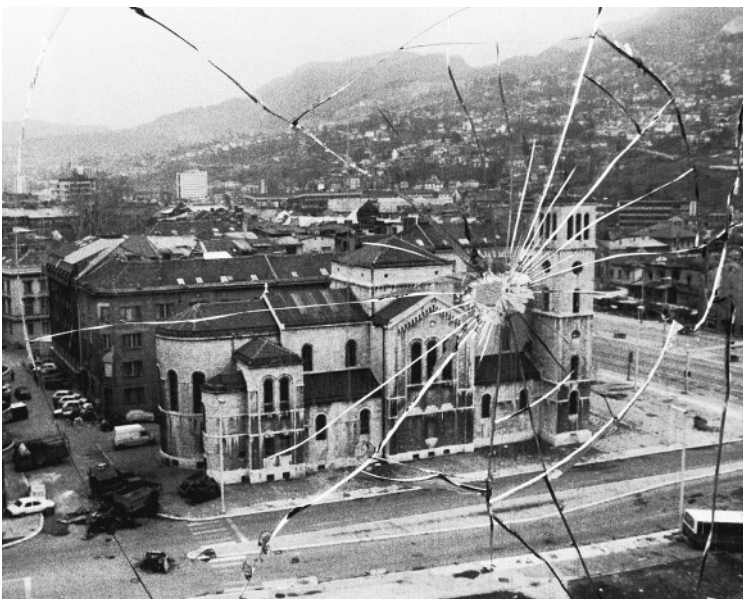
Two republics, Slovenia and Croatia, declared independence. In June 1991, the

Serbian-led Yugoslav army invaded both republics. After months of bloody fighting, both republics freed themselves from Serbian rule. Early in 1992, Bosnia-Herzegovina joined Slovenia and Croatia in declaring independence. (In April, Serbia and Montenegro formed a new Yugoslavia.) Bosnia's population included Muslims (44 percent), Serbs (31 percent), and Croats (17 percent). While Bosnia's Muslims and Croats backed independence, Bosnian Serbs strongly opposed it. Supported by Serbia, the Bosnian Serbs launched a war in March 1992.

During the war, Serbian military forces used violence and forced emigration against Bosnian Muslims living

in Serb-held lands. Called **ethnic cleansing**, this policy was intended to rid Bosnia of its Muslim population. By 1995, the Serbian military controlled 70 percent of Bosnia. In December of that year, leaders of the three factions involved in the war signed a UN- and U.S.-brokered peace treaty. In September 1996, Bosnians elected a three-person presidency, one leader from each ethnic group. By 2001, Bosnia and

▼ A view of downtown Sarajevo through a bullet-shattered window



## Ethnic Groups in the Former Yugoslavia

Many ethnic and religious groups lived within Yugoslavia, which was a federation of six republics. The map shows how the ethnic groups were distributed. Some of those groups held ancient grudges against one another. The chart summarizes some of the cultural differences among the groups.



### Differences Among the Ethnic Groups

Group	Language (slavic unless noted)	Religion
Albanians	Albanian (not Slavic)	mostly Muslim
Croats	dialect of Serbo-Croatian*	mostly Roman Catholic
Hungarians	Magyar (not Slavic)	many types of Christians
Macedonians	Macedonian	mostly Eastern Orthodox
Montenegrins	dialect of Serbo-Croatian*	mostly Eastern Orthodox
Muslims	dialect of Serbo-Croatian*	Muslim (converted under Ottoman rule)
Serbs	dialect of Serbo-Croatian*	mostly Eastern Orthodox
Slovenes	Slovenian	mostly Roman Catholic

\* Since Yugoslavia broke apart, many residents of the former republics have started to refer to their dialects as separate languages: Croatian for Croats, Bosnian for Muslims, Serbian for Serbs and Montenegrins.

### SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Visuals

- Analyzing Issues** Use the chart to find out information about the various groups that lived in Bosnia and Herzegovina (as shown on the map). What were some of the differences among those groups?
- Contrasting** Kosovo was a province within Serbia. What group was in the majority there, and how did it differ from Serbs?

Herzegovina began to stand on its own without as much need for supervision by the international community. **D**

**Rebellion in Kosovo** The Balkan region descended into violence and bloodshed again in 1998, this time in Kosovo, a province in southern Serbia made up almost entirely of ethnic Albanians. As an independence movement in Kosovo grew increasingly violent, Serbian military forces invaded the province and fought back with a harsh hand. In response to growing reports of atrocities—and the failure of diplomacy to bring peace—NATO began a bombing campaign against Yugoslavia in the spring of 1999. After enduring more than two months of sustained bombing, Yugoslav leaders finally withdrew their troops from Kosovo.

**The Region Faces Its Problems** In the early years of the 21st century, there were conflicting signs in Yugoslavia. Slobodan Milosevic was extradited to stand trial for war crimes. A large portion of the country’s foreign debt was erased. Despite an independence movement in Kosovo, parliamentary elections under UN supervision took place in November 2001 without violence.

And in Montenegro (which together with Serbia made up Yugoslavia), an independence movement seemed to lack support from the people as well as from the international community. Nonetheless, in February 2003, Yugoslavia’s parliament voted to replace what remained of the federation with a loose union of Serbia and Montenegro. Outright independence for each could come as early as 2006. However, problems remained, as indicated by the assassination of the Serbian prime minister, Zoran Djindjic, in March 2003.

The nations of Central and Eastern Europe made many gains in the early years of the 21st century. Even so, they continued to face serious obstacles to democracy. Resolving ethnic conflicts remained crucial, as did economic progress. If the nations of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union can improve their standard of living, democracy may have a better chance to grow. Meanwhile, economic reforms in Communist China sparked demands for political reforms, as you will read in the next section.

**MAIN IDEA**

**Identifying Problems**

**D** Why did Bosnia’s mixed population cause a problem after Bosnia declared independence?

**SECTION 4 ASSESSMENT**

**TERMS & NAMES** 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Solidarity
- Lech Walesa
- reunification
- ethnic cleansing

**USING YOUR NOTES**

2. Which nation seems to have done best since the breakup? Explain.

Former nations	Reasons for breakup
Yugoslavia	
Czechoslovakia	

**MAIN IDEAS**

3. How did Solidarity affect Communist rule in Poland?
4. What effect did reunification have on Germany’s international role?
5. What was the main cause of the breakup of Czechoslovakia?

**CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING**

6. **ANALYZING CAUSES** Why did ethnic tension become such a severe problem in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia?
7. **DRAWING CONCLUSIONS** What are some of the problems faced in Central and Eastern Europe in the 21st century?
8. **RECOGNIZING EFFECTS** What effect did economic reform have on Slovakia?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **CULTURAL INTERACTION** With a partner, create a **cause-and-effect diagram** to show how democratic reform spread through Central and Eastern Europe. The diagram should show the order in which reform happened and which countries influenced others.

**CONNECT TO TODAY MAKING A PIE GRAPH**

Research the size of the populations of Central and Eastern Europe countries mentioned in this section. Construct a **pie graph** showing the comparative sizes of the populations.