

Part I.

At the beginning of the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union asserted their influence and solidified alliances in Western Europe and Eastern Europe respectively. From the 1960s to the early 1980s countries in Eastern and Western Europe challenged superpower control to try to achieve some autonomy. In Western Europe, this was done through Ostpolitik in West Germany, French President De Gaulle's criticism of the United States, and the formation of supranational organizations that would eventually become the European Union. In Eastern Europe, this was done through Dubcek's reforms in Czechoslovakia and the Solidarity movement in Poland. However, despite these push backs, the alliances with the superpowers remained.

By the 1960s West Germany (FRG) had rebuilt its infrastructure and economy after the destruction caused by World War II and became a politically stable country with a thriving economy. They began to push back against the United States and form their own foreign policy with the East. In 1969, Willy Brandt became Chancellor of West Germany. He wanted to ease the tensions between the FRG and GDR (East Germany) as well as with the USSR, so he began to implement Ostpolitik (Gilbert, 181). Brandt's goal for Ostpolitik was to preserve unity between the GDR and FRG. He felt that, "even if two states exist in Germany, they are not foreign countries to each other; their relations with each other can only be of a special nature" (181). Brandt was on his way to achieving some of his goals by the end of 1970 when he had negotiated peace treaties with both the USSR and Poland. The Moscow Treaty stated that existing frontiers were to be considered "inviolable" if peace were to exist in Europe. The Warsaw Treaty had similar language

and agreements (182). The treaties were not universally embraced in the FRG. Many criticized Brandt because they saw the treaties as him abandoning the prospect of German unity (182).

As Brandt tried to work with the GDR he was met with resistance from Ulbricht, the leader of the GDR. The USSR, however, was ready to work with West Germany and ended up replacing Ulbricht with Honecker, in 1971 (183). By 1972 the FRG was ready to treat the GDR as a sovereign state within Germany and while that did not happen, the two Germanies signed a treaty that stated neither would try to claim to be the one true Germany (184). By 1973 Ostpolitik transformed the political scene in Europe because a country in Western Europe was making foreign policy with the East, independent of the US (184). The alliance between Western Europe and the US remained, evident through the creation of the Conference of the Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1973, which included the US. However, the US was also not thrilled at this détente. West Germany making its own foreign policy with the USSR and other Eastern bloc countries, with very little if any input from the US, meant that the United States was losing some influence in Western Europe.

West Germany was not the only country in Western Europe pushing back against the United States. President Charles De Gaulle of France had a specific vision for France and Western Europe to play in world affairs that involved a strong Europe with strong national governments, with France as the country to lead Europe with autonomy from the US. In his speech, "Europe and its Role in World Affairs" in 1964, De Gaulle acknowledged and thanked the United States for their help in rebuilding Europe after WWII, but he then made it clear that Western Europe was ready and should take its place in world affairs alongside the US as its ally, not as its subordinate (De Gaulle 1964).

A significant aspect of gaining autonomy was open criticism of the United States. De Gaulle did not like the global dominance of the US dollar and called for the end of the Bretton Wood

system, which ended in 1971, allowing Europe to have more control over their currency. He also criticized the US for their defense policy, particularly within NATO. He did not fully trust that the US would intervene if Western Europe was attacked. That led De Gaulle to pull France out of the NATO Military Command in 1966 (Gilbert, 166). As a result, the US could not force France to intervene either. De Gaulle also criticized US actions in the Vietnam War. In taking the moral high ground against the US he tried to gain more respect for France in light of their actions in Algeria. Finally, he openly disapproved of the United States' relationship with the USSR and the East and US resistance to détente (Class Lecture, 4 May 2017). These open criticisms showed the US and the rest of Europe that France was not afraid to try to take back some autonomy.

Another way France tried to gain independence and autonomy from the United States was by signing the Franco-German Treaty. The Treaty intended to create a tighter and more cooperative relationship between West Germany and France by ensuring officials met regularly and they would consult on issues regarding the EEC and NATO (Gilbert, 164). While the Treaty did end decades of Franco-German conflict, when Erhard became chancellor of West Germany in 1963, the FRG worked to keep a strong alliance with the US (164). The treaty did not give France autonomy from the United States by forming a closer relationship with another European country like De Gaulle had wanted.

In calling for countries of Western Europe to be united through supranational organizations led by France, open criticism of the US, and treaty with West Germany, De Gaulle tried to gain autonomy for France and Europe from the United States. To some degree, he was able to by causing a stir in relations between the US and Europe. However, his actions were seen by the US government as provocative gestures that could do and did little to change the influence the US had in Western Europe (165). The Western alliance held strong even if it was somewhat shaken.

A substantial factor in Western Europe gaining some autonomy was the formation of supranational Western European organizations where the United States had little influence. The first was the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) which was created by the Treaty of Paris in the early 1950s. The goal of the ECSC was to make another war impossible by removing French and German coal, iron, and steel industries from national authority and creating rules for a common market (Egenhofer, 5). The original six members were France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Luxemburg and the Netherlands. The ECSC was the first step in the process of integrating Europe politically and economically; with the Treaty of Rome in 1957, it evolved into the European Economic Community (EEC) (5). The goal of the EEC was to create a common market for all economic sectors, not just the coal, iron and steel industries (6). Britain applied for membership in 1963 and again in 1967 but De Gaulle vetoed and blocked their entry both times. De Gaulle explained his reasons for the veto on May 16, 1967. One was Britain would not fit in with the common agricultural market the EEC had adopted in 1962. Another was that Britain was “tied to the United States by all kinds of special agreements-[and] did not merge into a Community with set dimensions and strict rules” (Britain’s Proposed Entry, 1). He felt that allowing Britain with their special relationship to the US into the EEC would give the US more influence in the EEC and Europe - the opposite of what De Gaulle wanted. For De Gaulle, blocking Britain’s entry to the EEC was a perfect way of asserting France’s independence from Washington (Gilbert, 159). It showed that in the evolving supranational governments of Europe, France had the power, not the United States. In 1973, after De Gaulle’s presidency, Britain was admitted to the EEC (Class Lecture, 16 May 2017). The alliance in the West still held, especially in the 1980s because of the close relationship between President Reagan and Prime Minister Thatcher, which allowed the US to continue to have significant influence.

The USSR controlled the Eastern European Alliance, despite Dubcek's attempts to reform in Czechoslovakia, to gain some autonomy. Alexander Dubcek was a radical communist reformer who became party secretary of Czechoslovakia in January 1968 (Gilbert, 146). By the time Dubcek came to power, Czechoslovakia needed reform. They had been in a recession since 1960, there were few consumer goods, and the collective farms did not supply adequate food (Class Lecture, 4 May 2017). Dubcek was a believer in Communist reform and wanted to strengthen democratic participation, improve human rights conditions, modernize the economy, and raise the standard of living all while keeping close ties with the USSR. He called his reform "socialism with a human face" (Gilbert, 146). One of his first actions was to abolish censorship of the press and allow for meaningful debates about the future (146). Dubcek's reforms, even though he wanted to keep close ties with the USSR, would have given Czechoslovakia some autonomy over its economy and media.

Dubcek was pushing back against the USSR, but the Russian Premier Brezhnev still held the power. This is clear in the phone conversation between them. Brezhnev had the upper hand and demonstrated that by wearing down Dubcek by repeatedly telling Dubcek that he needed to restore government control of the media in Czechoslovakia despite Dubcek continually saying they he would get it done. There just had not yet been enough time to make the necessary changes. By the end Dubcek ceded to Brezhnev, saying, "I promise you... I will do everything necessary to fulfill our agreement" (Phone Conversation). However, Dubcek was also testing and pushing back against Brezhnev. Dubcek said several times that Brezhnev should do what he must do. It was almost though he was saying to Brezhnev, "send in troops" because he did not believe Brezhnev would (phone conversation). Dubcek was wrong. On August 21-22, 1968 the Warsaw Pact launched an invasion of Czechoslovakia. 80,000 troops from Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, the GDR,

and 400,000 Soviet troops marched into Prague to end reforms and force Dubcek out of power (Class Lecture, 4 May 2017). As a result, the USSR regained tight control over Czechoslovakia and the Eastern Bloc. Brezhnev put into place the Brezhnev Doctrine which declared that hostile forces to socialism are a concern of all socialist countries (Gilbert 150-51). The alliance in the East was strengthened.

Several years after the Prague Spring, the Solidarity movement in Poland formed to try to gain autonomy from the USSR. By the end of the 1970s, communist Poland was ripe for revolt. One reason was in the 1950s rural communities had resisted collectivization and were thriving. Another extremely important factor was the Catholic Church (192). Catholicism was important in Poland by the late 1970s. The most widely read publications were Catholic, there were more than 1,400 churches, and Pope John Paul II was Polish and had been an important figure in Poland when he was a Cardinal. In June of 1979, the Pope visited Poland for the first time and more than 12 million people came to his mass (195). This visit was the spark of the Solidarity movement.

Solidarity was a non-violent, anti-communist movement that started as a labor union. The first signs of this movement rising to importance came on August 9, 1980, when a worker was fired for misconduct and lost her pension right before she was due to retire. The firing happened as the communist regime in Poland was raising prices and economic conditions were getting worse (195). As a result of the sacking, on August 14th the workers in Gdansk protested. By the 18th an inter-enterprise strike committee had been formed and four days later they put out a 21-point set of demands. The demands included recognition of the right of trade unions, right to strike, freedom of expression, freedom of political prisoners, members of the party hierarchy, military, and police losing their privileges, and for improved working conditions (196). Attempted negotiations failed, and by 1981 the Solidarity movement had branches in every factory and union and 9.5 million

members (197). Solidarity enraged East Germany and Czech leaders and they wanted the USSR to invade and put down the movement. Brezhnev almost invaded but ended up calling the invasion off (197). Without an invasion from the USSR, it looked like Solidarity might have been able to gain autonomy for Poland.

The Solidarity movement and their strikes brought the country to a standstill in 1981. Jaruzelski, the communist party leader in Poland at the time, made concessions to Walesa, the leader of the Solidarity movement, and Walesa called off the strike (198). Solidarity did achieve some autonomy from the USSR for a while, however, on December 13th they were surprised by the military who had come in to end the movement. There was violence but bloodshed was limited. Martial law was imposed in Poland until July of 1983, Solidarity was made illegal, and many leaders of Solidarity were imprisoned (199). The movement made some gains in autonomy but by 1982 those gains had been lost and Eastern alliance remained intact.

The Cold War alliances of the United States and Western Europe and the USSR and Eastern Europe were challenged by the European sides in the 1960s through the early 1980s as they attempt to gain some autonomy from the two superpowers. The West, even though the alliance remained, was able to push back against the United States through Ostpolitik in West Germany, De Gaulle's actions and criticism against the US, and through the formation of a supranational European community. The East attempted to gain autonomy from the USSR and their communist system through Dubcek's reforms in Czechoslovakia and the Solidarity movement in Poland.

Part II

A Reuters correspondent in Berlin once said, “Nothing would have happened in Eastern Europe if it weren’t for the arrival of one man, and that was Gorbachev” (Rise and Fall of the Berlin Wall). In 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He was a Communist who believed in reform. Once in power, he implemented the reforms of Perestroika, “restructuring,” economic reforms to improve the standard of living in the USSR and Glasnost which was “openness,” in political and social realms in the USSR (Class Lecture, 18 May 2017). Other countries in the Eastern Bloc saw these reforms and wanted change in their own countries as well, and because it was Gorbachev in power they decided to fight for it. The end of the Cold War began when Gorbachev said he would not send troops into Eastern Europe, allowing countries to rebel against the Communist system without fear of a harsh Soviet crackdown. Then the Baltic States witnessed that change and wanted it as well, and when they got independence it led to the end USSR and the Cold War.

In June of 1989, Poland was the first country in the Eastern Bloc to see if Gorbachev would keep to his word. On June 4, there was an election in Poland, an election that the Communist Party lost and a loss that Gorbachev did not do anything to prevent. There were three remarkable things about this election; “the Communist Party lost, Solidarity won, and the communists acknowledged that Solidarity won” (Garton Ash, 29). This was significant because it was the first time since World War II that the communist party had lost an election in Eastern Europe and the first time that there was no intervention from the USSR to ensure that the Communist Party won; it was a

turning point in Eastern Europe. After the election, Solidarity leaders decided to keep Jaruzelski, the current Communist president. However, Jaruzelski had to choose a member from the Solidarity majority to create a coalition government. His first choice, a member of the Communist Party could not form a coalition because they were now a minority (40). Solidarity leaders were uncertain if Gorbachev would accept a Polish government without a Communist coalition, however, Gorbachev did accept their government (41), marking the success of the Polish election and the end of communist Poland.

People all over Europe, including in East Germany, had watched Solidarity win in Poland and take the control of the government without Soviet intervention. While Gorbachev was in East Germany for the 40th anniversary of the GRD, he let it leak that he told the East German leader, Honecker, that Soviet troops would not be used to solve internal problems (65). That prompted opposition leaders in the GDR to depose Honecker. Honecker's replacement, was not much better because he shared the same ideals (66). Without the fear of Soviet intervention, people took to the streets in protest. A month after the 40th anniversary, the Berlin Wall fell and Gorbachev, true to his word, did not take action to protect East Germany (Rise and Fall of the Berlin Wall). By this point the calls for German unification were strong. In 1990 Gorbachev realized the unification of Germany was going to happen and believed that the Germans should make their own choice in that regard (Gilbert, 276). These actions allowed Germany to unify under the Western model and end communism in East Germany.

Czechoslovakia had also been watching the events in Poland and Germany unfold and watched as the Communist Party had lost power in both countries without Soviet intervention. In November of 1989, the leaders of the Civic Forum, the anti-Communist movement in Prague, launched the Velvet Revolution without fear of Soviet tanks coming in and repeating 1968. 1968 was a rallying

point in the Velvet Revolution and Gorbachev only helped the revolution along when he condemned the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia (Ash, 114). With little violence, the anti-Communist movement won the Velvet Revolution in December 1989 when the Civic Forum leader, Havel, was elected president of Czechoslovakia. Gorbachev did not send troops in to intervene and allowed Havel and a democratic government to come to power.

As the dominoes fell in Eastern Europe, with the fall of communism in Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia, the dominoes began to fall within states in the USSR. Gorbachev had not sent troops into Eastern Europe, and places within the USSR, such as the Baltic States, wanted autonomy as well. They thought they would now have a chance to achieve independence as well. However, since the Baltics were part of the USSR, Gorbachev did not want to let them go and did resist their autonomy. Despite his resistance, the damage had already been done and on December 8th, 1991 Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus seceded from the USSR, followed by other former Soviet Republics to form a commonwealth of independence states. Then, on the 25th, Gorbachev resigned and the Soviet Union dissolved (Class 1 June 2017).

The end of the Cold War began when Gorbachev said he would not send troops into Eastern Europe, even to stop the fall of communism in Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia. By the summer and fall of 1991, the dominoes that began to fall in Poland reached the USSR and the Baltic states who also wanted autonomy. Even though Gorbachev did fight back against the Soviet States independence, the damage had been done. The USSR fell, and the world entered a new era; an era that began when Gorbachev did not send troops into Eastern Europe.