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Period 1  
April 24, 2003

Describe and analyze the changing relationships between the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries from 1945 to 1970. (AP Question #7, 1991)

Describe and analyze the resistance to Soviet authority in the Eastern bloc from the end of the Second World War through 1989. Be sure to include examples from at least two Soviet satellite countries. (AP Question #4, 1997)

The relationships between the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries changed to a great extent. Near the end of the Second World War the U.S.S.R., during military operations, acquired Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Albania, and the Eastern zone of Germany. These countries came to be known as Soviet satellite countries, because they were controlled by Russia and run by Communist-dominated governments. At the Yalta Conference the U.S.S.R was given the right to liberate Eastern Europe, and Stalin pledged to hold free and unfettered elections in Eastern Europe. Instead of holding free elections there were purges and disenfranchisement during the first elections in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. Open revolt broke out in Poland and Hungary in 1956. Both wanted internal freedom and independence from Moscow. In 1968 a revolt broke out in Czechoslovakia. Brezhnev, the Soviet leader at the time, responded to the revolt by sending soviet tanks and troops into Prague. Brezhnev used the "Brezhnev Doctrine" to justify the invasion of Czechoslovakia and any future invasions of Soviet satellite countries. In 1970 massive unrest in Poland led to strikes. In the years following there was increasingly more vocal and organized political opposition. In 1975 all European states, except Albania, signed the Helsinki Accords. The countries that signed also pledged to respect human rights and to cooperate in economic and scientific matters. The problems between the satellite countries escalated until communism was finally crushed. In 1991, communism fell in the Soviet Union, ending the feuds between the satellite states and the U.S.S.R.

- I. Beginning of problems between Soviet Union and satellite countries
  - A. Yalta Conference
    - 1. Roosevelt and Churchill were able to extract a number of promises, from Stalin, about the areas he controlled.
      - a. The liberated states were to have provisional governments "broadly representative of all democratic elements in the population"
      - b. Stalin pledged the "earliest possible establishment through free elections."
    - 2. All the promises Stalin made were verbal
    - 3. Stalin would not allow international supervision over the "free elections."

- B. Churchill's "Iron Curtain Speech" March 5, 1946**
1. Churchill said, "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia; all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject, in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow."
  2. "I do not believe that Soviet Russia desires war. What they desire is the fruits of war and the indefinite expansion of their power and doctrines."
  3. Churchill goes on to say that Russia admires strength and has no respect for weakness.
- C. Berlin Blockade**
1. There were 4 zones in Berlin each controlled by 4 different countries.
  2. The Soviets were determined to use German resources for their reparations, so they removed large amounts of food and machinery in their zone.
  3. The Western Allies refused to permit the dismantling of the factories in their zones, and they insisted that the Soviets take their share of current production only from the Soviet zone.
    - a. This created strong Soviet resentment.
  4. The Western Allies encouraged the reconstruction of democratic governments in the individual states, while the Soviets, in their zone, established a Communist-dominated government.
  5. The Western powers realized the need for currency reform so they revoked the old currency and issued a new German mark, the Deutsche Mark.
  6. The Soviets objected to this as a violation of a wartime agreement, so, in June 1948, they cut off all road and rail access to Berlin.
    - a. The Allies responded with a massive airlift, which would fly in thousands of tons of food for the occupation forces and the inhabitants of West Berlin.
  7. In May 1949 the Soviet lifted the Blockade.
- D. The Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON)**
1. COMECON sought to coordinate economic planning.
  2. During COMECON industrial production rose most rapidly in Eastern Europe in the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia.
  3. Bulgaria, Romania, and Yugoslavia developed manufacturing bases.

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- E. Stalin died in 1953 and Nikita S. Khrushchev rose into power
  - 1. Khrushchev encouraged a greater measure of cultural and intellectual freedom.
  - 2. He put restraints on the political police, and made attacks on Stalin.
    - a. In one speech he revealed the “crimes of the Stalin era,” making startling statements of the Stalinist terror.

## II. Problems between the Soviet Union and satellite countries

### A. Poland and Hungary revolt

- 1. In 1956, open revolt broke out in Poland.
  - a. It was led by the East European Communist party leaders.
  - b. In Poland there were pressures for internal freedom and for independence from Moscow, which led to riots and demonstrations.
  - c. This brought the Communist leader, Wladyslaw Gomulka, into power.
    - i. He relaxed political and economic controls, halted collectivization of the farms, took steps to loosen the bonds to Moscow, and improved relations with the Catholic Church.
    - ii. He was seen as an alternative to direct Soviet control.
    - iii. Gomulka lowered police terror and created a freer atmosphere, but this era of reforms didn't last long.
  - d. Khrushchev threatened to take military action, but later backed down.
- 2. The revolt in Hungary, in 1956
  - a. Demonstrations broke out when the news of Gomulka's success of Poland reached Budapest.
  - b. The Communist leader Imre Nagy returned to power.
    - i. He had reform programs and released political prisoners, which brought forth pressures for democratization, parliamentary government, and the severance of ties to Moscow.
  - c. The Soviets forced the party leadership to remove Nagy from power and replaced him with Janos Kadar.
    - i. He was more subservient to Moscow, and he accepted Soviet intervention.
  - d. Khrushchev dispatched troops, tanks, and artillery to suppress the “counterrevolution,” and to forcefully reestablish Communist rule.
  - e. Nagy was then imprisoned, tried, and then hanged.
  - f. Because of the repression, many Hungarians fled in exile.

### B. The “Prague Spring”

1. In Hungary, Kadar created a freer cultural and intellectual atmosphere and loosened economic controls.
2. In Czechoslovakia, during the 1960's, the internal reforms went the furthest and posed the most direct threat to the Soviets.
  - a. The reform grew to its strongest when Alexander Dubcek emerged as a party and government leader.
    - i. He curbed police repression, permitted freedom of the press, democratized the government, and legalized non-Communist political organizations.
3. To Brezhnev, who came into power in 1964, and the Soviet leadership, these reforms posed too much of a threat to the Soviet grip on Eastern Europe.
  - a. In August 1968 "Prague Spring" ended when Brezhnev dispatched 250,000 troops, to crush the revolution.
  - b. The revolutionists were forced to restore Communist party control, remove Dubcek, reimpose censorship, and end the democratization.
4. The "Brezhnev Doctrine" was written.
  - a. It stated that the Soviets reserved the right to intervene if a socialist regime was threatened anywhere.
  - b. It also stated the limits to which the Soviets would tolerate freedom and independence in central and Eastern Europe.

### III. The Fall of Communism

#### A. Opposition to the Soviet Union and Communism

1. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia dealt another blow to the Soviet-Western relations.
  - a. The Communist parties of Italy and France criticized the invasion, and many people abandoned communism after that.
2. The opposition to Soviet influence and Communist rule kept on rising.
  - a. The economic failures of the Communist regimes grew even more apparent in contrast to the standard of living in the West.
  - b. The conclusion was made that well-developed social services could not account for economic inefficiency and massive demoralization.
3. In 1975, the leaders of European countries met in Helsinki to sign the Helsinki Accords.
  - a. All European States, with the exception of the small Communist State of Albania, signed the accords, which recognized the national borders drawn up after World War II.
  - b. The thirty-five people that signed also pledged to respect human rights and to cooperate in economic and scientific matters.

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B. The Fall of Communism in Poland

1. In 1970 there was more unrest in Poland, which led to strikes.
  - a. In the following years there was increasingly more vocal and organized political opposition.
2. In Poland, Solidarity, an independent, illegal organization of trade unions, gained ten million industrial and agricultural workers.
  - a. Its leader was Lech Walesa, an electrician from Gdansk.
  - b. In November 1980, the government officially recognized the existence of Solidarity.
  - c. The church backed it up, and its leaders called for free elections and a role for it in the central government.
  - d. Once again the Soviets saw the socialist regime threatened and they put pressure on the Polish government to curb Solidarity.
  - e. Jaruzelski, the leader of Poland, in 1981 imposed martial law, imprisoned Walesa and other labor leaders, and banned Solidarity.
3. After the Soviet threat of intervention was minimized he released Walesa and the other labor leaders, lifted martial law, and initiated a reform program of his own.
4. John Paul II inspired huge demonstrations for freedom during his visits to Poland.
5. In 1989 Jaruzelski and the party leadership promised contested parliamentary elections, in which Solidarity and other groups were free to put forward candidates, even though the Communist party was to be guaranteed a fixed number of seats.
6. In 1989 Poland had its first open elections in over forty years.
  - i. Solidarity had a huge victory in all the contested seats.
  - ii. A coalition cabinet was formed in which the Communists were a minority.
  - iii. Before long a Solidarity leader was prime minister.
  - iv. The Communist party was eager to discard the past and transform itself into a Western-type socialist party, but its members drifted away.
  - v. The party-state dictatorship had ended without bloodshed.

C. The Fall of Communism in Czechoslovakia

1. In 1989 revolution erupted in Czechoslovakia.
  - a. The hard-liners, who had taken over after the "Prague Spring" had been crushed, disapproved of Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union and stifled dissent at home.
  - b. Charter '77, an organization of intellectuals formed after the Helsinki accords, became a rallying point for the struggle against the dictatorship.

- c. The country, with very strong interest, followed the disintegration of Communism in Poland, Hungary, and East Germany.
- d. Demonstrations broke out in autumn of 1989, and the government arrested the dissident leaders.
  - i. Thousands of demonstrators gathered in Wenceslas Square in Prague and called for the release of the imprisoned dissidents, and for the resignation of government.
- e. 350,000 demonstrators in Prague on November 24 demanded an end to the party-state dictatorship. Also a general strike threatened to bring the country to a standstill.
  - i. When this happened the government and party leaders resigned.
- f. Dubcek appeared on a balcony next to a reform-minded Communist prime minister, who appointed opposition leaders to his cabinet, pledged a free press and free elections, dissolved the secret police, and abolished the compulsory teaching of Marxism-Leninism in the universities.
- g. Gorbachev withdrew the 75,000 Soviet troops stationed in the country since 1968.
- h. Later in January of 1993 the country divided peacefully into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, two independent and sovereign nations.

**D. The Fall of Communism in the Soviet Union**

- 1. Gorbachev called for *perestroika*, which meant a drastic modification of the centrally planned command economy inherited by Stalin and carried forward with only minor changes since.
  - a. Gorbachev proposed decentralization, self-management for industry and agriculture, an end to the rigidities imposed by the *apparat*, or party and government bureaucracy, and incentives for productivity.
- 2. Gorbachev also called for *glasnost*, or “openness,” which was closely linked to economic reform.
  - a. *Glasnost* meant the right to voice the need for change, the freedom to criticize the existing system, the willingness even to reexamine past mistakes and wrongdoings.
  - b. It led to an unprecedented liberalization of Soviet society, a freer press, and an end to the decades of totalitarian control over political, cultural, and intellectual life.
  - c. Through *glasnost* Gorbachev opened up as to no time before the press, publications, theater, and political discourse.



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- d. People were freer and less fearful, and the legal codes were revised to encompass civil liberties, allow freedom of expression, and reduce police abuses.
  - e. The KGB came under public and legislative scrutiny.
  - f. Gorbachev spoke of freedom of conscience and tolerance for religion.
  - g. He endorsed freedom for the arts, which had been stifled by years of uniformity and conformity.
3. *Perestroika* and *glasnost* led to more openness within the Communist countries in Eastern Europe, which produced the fall of Communism.
  4. In the autumn of 1990 Gorbachev was turning for support to the hard-liners.
  5. He replaced reform-minded ministers, including his own Prime Minister, and other key officials with old-guard appointees openly unsympathetic to his reform program.
  6. He abandoned an important "500-Day" economic plan that would have freed prices and helped the market economy.
  7. Gorbachev kept on making decisions that were angering the democratic reformers, so they turned to a man named Boris N. Yeltsin.
    - a. Yeltsin was blunt and outspoken, and was not an intellectual, but he knew the party well and all of its secrets.
    - b. He had held many high positions in the government.
    - c. In 1990 he was elected to the Russian legislature as chairman, and he used this to increase his attacks on Gorbachev and the party.
    - d. He benefited from a Gorbachev concession permitting the constituent republics to choose their presidents in direct popular elections, by being elected president of the Russian republic in June 1991.
    - e. He had an overwhelming victory over his Communist opponents, and was the first president to be elected by popular vote in Russian history.
    - f. From his new position he pressed for self-government for Russia and the other Soviet constituent republics.

The Soviet Union did not have good relations with the rest of Europe until Communism had fallen. It was constantly trying to control all of its satellite countries and it did not want to release its grip on them. Over and over the countries tried to liberate themselves from Communism and the Soviets, but the U.S.S.R. kept on stifling any opposition. If the leaders of the satellite countries were giving the people too much freedom, the Soviet Union would just send in someone else to take that leader's place. Finally, after forty years, the Soviet Union, with the leadership of President Gorbachev in

1985 and his policies of glasnost and perestroika, started loosening their grip on their satellite states. This eventually led to the fall of Communism in the Soviet Union and the rise of the Russian republic in 1991.

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