Chapter 37

Western Society and Eastern Europe in the Decades of the Cold War

OUTLINE

I. Introduction

The rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States, while not all-encompassing, strongly shaped postwar history. The West saw economic growth based on new technology and increased democratization. In Eastern Europe, Stalinism eased, and some of the social changes of the West were present as well, with the Soviets emphasizing its new status. By the 1980s, the economies of Eastern Europe were in clear decline.

II. After World War II: International Setting for the West

A. Introduction

World War II devastated Europe in the same fashion as World War I. With the creation of a bipolar world divided between the United States and the Soviet Union, Europe seemed to diminish in power. Despite its decline, Europe was able to recover significantly in the decades after the war. Post war weakness led to independence movements in the colonies

B. Europe and Its Colonies

It became obvious to European powers after World War II that colonies could only be maintained at great expense. France attempted to hold its colonies in Vietnam and Algeria, but both were lost after prolonged struggles. In most cases, the European nations provided more peaceful transitions to colonial independence. Despite abandoning direct colonial control, Western economic influence in the former colonies of Africa and Asia remained strong. Europe’s direct power in the world, as demonstrated in the Suez crisis of 1956, was dramatically reduced.

C. The Cold War

The Cold War took shape between 1945 and 1947. The Soviet Union moved its own borders west and installed Communist governments in Eastern Europe. The United States and Britain attempted to respond vigorously to the expansion of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe. In 1947, the United States announced the Marshall Plan, a program of economic assistance to Europe. The Soviet Union viewed the plan as a means of extending U.S. influence in Europe. The major point of conflict was Germany. The United States intended to reconstruct Germany as a viable political unit and a barrier against further Russian expansion. When the Soviet Union attempted to blockade the free city of Berlin, the United States airlifted supplies to keep the city open. A series of alliances developed. The United States created the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for Western Europe and provided most of the military force for the alliance. The Soviet Union countered with the formation of the Warsaw Pact. Following the Soviet development of an
atomic bomb in 1949, the United States and the Soviets entered into a period typified by increasing atomic arsenals in each nation. The Cold War linked the United States with Western Europe and other allies against the Soviet Union and the Communist allies. The U.S. pushed for higher European military expenditures and German rearmament. The Soviet Union, through its support for European Communist movements and perceived aggressive position, also influenced European policy. The intensity of the Cold War in Europe diminished somewhat in the late 1950s and later. Europe’s role as a military power diminished, while that of the United States steadily increased.

III. The Resurgence of Western Europe

A. Introduction

New leaders in Western Europe helped to extend democratic governments, diminished nation-state rivalries, and committed their nations to economic growth.

B. The Spread of Liberal Democracy

World War II discredited most right-wing political movements. Left-wing political groups were committed to democracy. The new Christian Democratic movement that became popular in some European countries wedded democratic policies to moderate social reform. In a defeated Germany, the regions occupied by the Allies coalesced into the Federal Republic of Germany. A new republic emerged in France after the war. In most European countries, elected parliamentary regimes endured following the conclusion of World War II. Political crises in Western Europe were limited to France following the Algerian War. Greece, Spain, and Portugal also shifted to more democratic governments in the 1970s.

C. The Welfare State

Following World War II, Western nations moved to establish government programs for economic planning and social engineering. By 1948, the welfare state had been created. In the 1960s, the United States under Lyndon Johnson also created programs for social welfare as part of the Great Society. Medical care, unemployment insurance, public housing, and family assistance were all part of the welfare state. The welfare states continued to recognize and protect private investment and initiative. The new government programs were hybrids that cushioned citizens from catastrophes but did not attempt to overhaul the social structure. Welfare states remained popular, although they were expensive to maintain. Increased government economic planning resulted in some industrial nationalization and the public capitalization of some industries. After the 1940s, governments played a large role and spawned bureaucrats whose existence depended on the growing state structure required to manage welfare systems.

IV. Political Stability and Question Marks

A. Introduction

A decade of student protest movements beginning in the 1960s in both the United States and Europe disrupted political stability. Green political movements in the 1970s tended to replace student unrest. The economic setback of the oil crisis and terrorism produced a new conservatism in the later 1970s. In Britain and in the United States, more conservative political parties gained electoral victories. Despite some slight variations, the basic lines of postwar governments remained unchanged through the 1990s.
B. The Diplomatic Context

Both the United States and politicians within the Christian Democratic movement wanted to reduce national conflict within Western Europe. American economic aid through the Marshall Plan required international coordination, the reduction of tariffs, and the partial rearmament of Germany. European leaders contemplated linking German economic resuscitation to an international framework to prevent a recurrence of German aggression. In 1958, West Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands set up the European Economic Community, or Common Market. Free movement of goods, labor, and investment was encouraged. Continued disputes between member nations hindered the growth of the Common Market. By 2001, most of Western Europe had adopted a single currency and achieved nearly complete economic unity. Britain, Ireland, Denmark, Greece, Spain, and Portugal were induced to join, as were Finland, Sweden, and Austria later. Economic unification reduced tensions in Western Europe.

C. Economic Expansion

The Common Market and the welfare state contributed to economic recovery in postwar Europe. By the 1950s, agricultural production was sufficient to supply the Western European population with some surplus. Gross national product figures surpassed all previous levels, a remarkable recovery from the prewar economic malaise. Improved technology allowed economic expansion to take place using fewer workers. As in the United States, most new employment was in the service sector of the economy. Unemployment levels dropped to such an extent that some European countries began to import labor from southern Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Standards of living for most Europeans improved dramatically. Consumer goods rapidly made their way into households of an affluent society. Advertising and investment in leisure time through vacations were typical of the new economy. There were some disturbing developments. Inflation was a recurring problem. Immigrant workers did not share in the general affluence. A recession during the 1990s caused governments to cut back on welfare entitlements.

V. Cold War Allies: The United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand

A. Introduction

The ‘overseas West,” while not as disrupted by the war as Europe, underwent its own changes. The United States adapted to its role as a major power, while Canada, Australia, and New Zealand tied themselves closer to the United States and de-emphasized ties with Europe.

B. The Former Dominions

Canada forged ahead with welfare ties while deepening its economic integration with the United States, despite a nationalist backlash. Immigration changed Canada’s makeup, while a strong separatist movement developed in Quebec. After 1945, Australia and New Zealand focused more on the Pacific than Britain. Both fought alongside the United States in the Korean War, though they distanced themselves somewhat from the United State in the 1970s and 1980s. The United States and Japan became their main economic partners. Australia saw a large Asian immigration.

C. The “U.S. Century”?

After initial resistance, the United States took on the role of a superpower, particularly because of
fear of Communist power. Government spending was reoriented towards defense and espionage, while the United States challenged the Communists around the globe, particularly in the Korean War. The United States formed a permanent alliance with Western Europe with NATO while continuing its tradition of intervention in Latin America. The policy of containing Communism was seen most strongly in the long war in Vietnam, sparking social unrest at home and creating wariness about regional wars. In 1980, Ronald Reagan returned to a highly interventionist policy, which continued into the 1990s with first war against Iraq. The end of the Cold War left the United States as the lone superpower.

IV. Culture and Society in the West

A. Introduction

The West developed the first example of an advanced industrial society.

B. Social Structure

Social mobility and more general affluence blurred lines between classes in the West. Immigrants supplied much of the unskilled labor. There remained discrepancies in class wealth. Increased crime rates and racial disturbances reflected continued social tensions. An advanced industrial society began to develop a new social structure. Most people in the labor force were in the service sector, not industrial production.

C. The Women’s Revolution

One of the most significant postwar social changes was the change in women’s status and the nature of the family. The clearest change in family patterns was the increased entry of women into the work force. From the 1950s, the numbers of married women working constantly increased. The numbers of unmarried women in the work force dropped as younger women tended to stay in school. Women’s pay lagged behind that for males, and many jobs reserved for women were at the lower end of the pay and status scales. Women also achieved the right to vote in postwar Europe and also found greater access to European university systems. Family rights improved as women were able to divorce more easily and had access to a variety of birth control and abortion. As a result of the different position of women within families, birth rates fell. Collective child care often replaced maternal care in the household. Pressures on the new concept of family resulted in higher rates of divorce. Changed status for women also produced a new wave of feminism. Women demanded economic and social equality. The movement reflected attempts to redefine women in the new industrial society as earlier attempts had redefined male roles during the first stage of industrialization.

D. Western Culture

In many respects, Western culture developed along already established lines. Focus shifted on the United States, particularly in research, though European contributions were vital. In art, the ‘modern’ themes of the pre-World War I era continued. While the Europeans held an advantage in film, the United States took the lead in the increasingly fragmented social sciences.

E. A Lively Popular Culture

Popular culture seemed more lively than formal intellectual culture. U.S. consumer culture dominated the world. Still, European culture once again influenced the United States, particularly
in terms of music and fashion. Sexual culture became generally more pleasure oriented and less traditional in the West. Critics of Western culture worried about its superficiality.

V. Eastern Europe After World War II: A Soviet Empire

A. Introduction

While mirroring some of the changes in the West, Eastern Europe’s developed differently because of its isolation.

B. The Soviet Union as a Superpower

Following 1945, the Soviet Union wished to regain the tsarist boundaries and to continue playing a major role in European diplomacy. Industrialization and success in the war elevated the Soviet Union to the status of superpower along with its primary rival, the United States. Soviet participation at the very end of the war in campaigns against the Japanese also gave the Soviets a foothold in Asian islands and in North Korea. Soviet support for Communist movements in China and Southeast Asia also elevated their role in that part of the world. Alliance with Cuba in Latin America and with some nations in the Middle East helped to construct the bipolar world divided between superpowers.

C. The New Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe

The clearest extension of Soviet influence was in East Europe, a development that helped start the Cold War. Many of the East European nations were the creation of the negotiations that ended World War I. They were politically unstable and retained largely agricultural economies. Only in Czechoslovakia did industrialization and urbanization produce the basis for parliamentary democracy. Much of Eastern Europe fell to the Nazi advance after 1939. The Soviet army drove the Germans from Eastern Europe and became a new occupation force. Communist parties within the technically independent nations crushed opposition and became part of the Soviet bloc. Only three nations were able to escape dominance: Albania, Yugoslavia, and Greece. Soviet regimes removed possible rivals, established mass education and propaganda systems, collectivized agriculture, and began heavy industrialization. Nations of East Europe became part of the Warsaw Pact to counterbalance the U.S.-oriented NATO. There was some resistance to overt Soviet control. German workers rioted in 1953 but were quickly suppressed. To halt emigration, the Berlin Wall was constructed in 1961, and the border between Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe and the West was marked by barbed wire. After Stalin’s death, more liberal Communist leaders arose in Hungary and Poland. Soviet response varied. The Soviet Union supported new leadership in Poland and some relaxation of controls, but crushed the reform government of Hungary. In general, post-Stalin governments in Eastern Europe were granted greater freedom in economic planning and cultural development. Limits to liberalization were demonstrated in 1968, when the Soviet Union expelled a reform government in Czechoslovakia. The Polish army took over the state during the late 1970s to prevent the growing influence of Solidarity, an independent labor movement. As in Russia, Soviet domination in Eastern Europe removed the aristocracy and introduced an industrialized economy. Even as its domination of Eastern Europe gave the Soviet Union power in the world, unrest put a check on Soviet ambitions.

D. Evolution of Domestic Policies

The Stalinist sense of nationalism continued into the Cold War in opposition to the United States. Fear of U.S. aggression led many to consent to continued autocracy. Support for the government
permitted relatively rapid recovery from the devastation of World War II and facilitated Stalin’s attempts to retain isolation from the West. The party bureaucracy continued to direct the economy, systems of education, welfare, and the secret police from Moscow. Party membership was kept intentionally low to ensure loyalty and dedication.

E. Soviet Culture: Promoting New Beliefs

The Communist party also had a cultural agenda. The basis of Soviet culture was a pervasive secularism designed to glorify the functions of the state. The Orthodox Church was forbidden to offer instruction to the young, restricting active Church membership to the elderly. The Jewish minority was also discriminated against. The state criticized the emulation of Western artistic styles. Soviet literary forms remained more diverse and often earned censorship from the government. The Soviet academy also emphasized the sciences and social sciences. Urged to reject Western theories, Soviet scientists who served government ideology were rewarded through state funding. Ambivalence towards the West and state control created a culture neither Western nor traditional.

F. Economy and Society

Manufacturing and industrialization increased rapidly after 1920. There were some features of Soviet industrialization that differed from the West. In the Soviet Union, the government controlled all aspects of the economy. There was virtually no emphasis on the production of consumer goods. Despite the absence of consumer products, standards of living did improve. The Communist system also failed to develop a thriving agricultural sector. In other ways, the Soviet economy was similar to the West. Work rhythms and leisure practices tended to be similar. Soviet industrialization did serious environmental damage while never fully resolving basic agricultural problems. Eastern European social structures also began to more closely resemble those of the West. Urban society was divided between workers and managers. The nuclear family became the primary social unit within the Soviet Union. Birth rates dropped until they approximated those of the West. Most Soviet women worked, and remaining in the home was less common in the East. Family expectations with respect to education and the acquisition of goods shared some common goals with Western counterparts.

G. De-Stalinization

The rigid government system began to loosen after Stalin’s death in 1953. It was not until 1956 that a new leader, Nikita Khrushchev, emerged. Khrushchev attacked Stalin for his autocracy, theoretical dogma, brutality, and arbitrary government. While few institutional changes were made, more political opposition was visible. Party control and centralized economic planning continued to be features of the Soviet government. Agricultural failures in Siberia led to Khrushchev’s political demise. Following de-Stalinization and Khrushchev’s fall, little innovation appeared in the Soviet economy or government. The intensity of the Cold War, which reached its peak during the Cuban missile crisis under Khrushchev, lessened under subsequent Soviet leaders. Soviet technological advances were reflected in the launch of the first space satellite, Sputnik. In both the space and the arms race, the Soviet Union remained competitive with the United States. Foreign policy rifts with China after 1950 and growing dissidence among minorities within the Soviet Union foretold serious problems. The invasion of Afghanistan during the 1970s proved a costly disaster. Social problems and the continued lack of consumer products began to seriously handicap the economy of the Soviet Union, and industrial production began to lag behind the West. The collapse of the Soviet Union surprised almost everyone.
VI. Global Connections: The Cold War and the World

While the U.S.-Soviet rivalry dominate the world from 1945 to 1992, this rivalry also created opportunities for smaller nations. Not all of their influence contradicted each other—both were secular and scientifically oriented, for example.

**TIMEline**

Insert the following events into the timeline. This should help you to compare important historical events chronologically.

- construction of Berlin Wall
- Khrushchev attacks Stalinism
- formation of NATO
- creation of Common Market
- introduction of the Euro
- election of Ronald Reagan

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1949
1956
1958
1961
1980
2001

**TERMS, PEOPLE, EVENTS**

The following terms, people, and events are important to your understanding of the chapter. Define each one.

- eastern bloc
- Marshall Plan
- Federal Republic of Germany
- Green movement
- Central Intelligence Agency
- new feminism
- Coca-cola-nization
- Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

- Harry Truman
- NATO
- welfare state
- European Union
- Ronald Reagan
- Betty Friedan
- Berlin Wall
- Nikita Khrushchev

- iron curtain
- Warsaw Pact
- technocrat
- guest workers
- Granada
- brain drain
- Solidarity
- Sputnik
MAP EXERCISE

The following exercise is intended to clarify the geophysical environment and the spatial relationships among the important objects and places mentioned in the chapter. Locate the following places on the map.

Mark the Warsaw Pact nations with a W. Mark the NATO nations with an N.

To what extent did the diplomatic alliances of postwar Europe reflect a new economic cooperation? What nations remained outside the economic union? How do you account for those who joined the Common Market earlier and those who joined later?
MAKING CONNECTIONS

The following questions are intended to emphasize important ideas within the chapter.

1. How did the Cold War affect Western Europe?
2. Characterize the internal politics of Western Europe after World War II.
3. What was the ‘welfare state’?
4. How did the social structure of the West change in the period after World War II?
5. Describe Western science and culture in the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century.
6. How did Soviet foreign policy change after 1941?
7. What was the cultural policy of the Stalinist state?
8. How was the Soviet economy and society similar to that of the West? How was it different?

PUTTING LARGER CONCEPTS TOGETHER

The following questions test your ability to summarize the major conclusions of the chapter.

1. How accurate would it be to refer to late-20\textsuperscript{th}-century politics and culture in Europe as American rather than Western? In other words, to what extent has recent 20\textsuperscript{th}-century history in the West been defined by the United States?
2. How does the development of the Soviet Union during the 20\textsuperscript{th} century compare to that of the West? Consider industrial development, political development, and imperialism.
SELF-TEST OF FACTUAL INFORMATION

1. What American plan for economic aid to Europe after World War II helped initiate the Cold War?
   a. the Schlieffen Plan
   b. the Marshall Plan
   c. the Truman decree
   d. NATO

2. Which of the following was a military alliance under U.S. leadership against the Soviet Union?
   a. the Warsaw Pact
   b. the E.E.C.
   c. NATO
   d. Unicef

3. In the later 20th century, who emerged as Australia and New Zealand’s main economic partners?
   a. France and Britain
   b. China
   c. India and the Middle East
   d. Japan and the United States

4. Which of the following statements concerning the European welfare state is most accurate?
   a. The imposition of the welfare state was accompanied by the elimination of the private sector in most European nations.
   b. Middle-class people failed to realize any benefits from the welfare state.
   c. Although some aspects of the welfare state redistributed income, it did not make a huge dent in Western Europe’s unequal class system.
   d. All of the tax schemes introduced by the welfare state were intended to redistribute income from the wealthy to the poor.

5. The welfare state
   a. rearranged the social structure of Western Europe.
   b. failed to insulate the very poor from catastrophe.
   c. decreased contacts between the government and the average citizen.
   d. initially won wide acceptance from all political factions.

6. The majority of the labor force in the West after World War II was engaged in
   a. services and management hierarchies.
   b. factory production.
   c. agricultural production.
   d. craft production.
7. Which of the following nations remained independent of direct Soviet control after 1948?
   a. Poland
   b. Hungary
   c. Czechoslovakia
   d. Albania

8. Which of the following statements concerning the status of women in the Soviet Union is most accurate?
   a. Women in the Soviet Union remained employed almost entirely in domestic services.
   b. Soviet women were idealized according to the cult of domesticity popular in the West.
   c. Soviet women dominated some professions, such as medicine, although they received less pay than men.
   d. Soviet women continued to be denied the right to vote long after suffrage was granted in the West.

9. What leader emerged to take primary power in the Soviet Union in 1956?
   a. Joseph Stalin
   b. Mikhail Gorbachev
   c. Yuri Andropov
   d. Nikita Khrushchev

10. In the 1970s, the rising awareness of what ethnic group created problems for the Soviet Union?
    a. Muslims
    b. Ukrainians
    c. Siberians
    d. Byelorussians