**Soviet Containment 1946-1980**



Please read pages 185-198 (chapter 13).

**Challenges to Soviet Control in Eastern Europe**

1. Explain how Stalin, between 1944 and 1948, established control over the countries on its borders in Eastern Europe.

2. Explain the challenge of Yugoslavia to Soviet control. Why was Tito able to survive? What was Stalin’s reaction to Tito?

3. Explain the challenge in East Germany in 1953. Examine the strike demands of the East Berlin Strike Committee (document on page 187). What do these demands reveal about the actions and policies of the East German government?

4. Examine the challenges to Soviet control under Khrushchev:

“De-Stalinization”



* Review the significance of his “de-Stalinization speech” in 1956.

Cold War Crisis: Hungarian Uprising

* Hungarian Uprising – review earlier notes. Actions of the US? Why did the Soviets act differently in Hungary than in Poland?
* Read Sources A and B – how do each contribute to your understanding of the Hungarian Crisis?
* Results for Khrushchev and the Soviet Union?
* According to the historian Anne Applebaum in Source B on page 191, what were the key effects of the Hungarian Uprising for the USSR?



5 Explain the challenges to Soviet control under Brezhnev:

Cold War Crisis: Prague, 1968

* Explain the changes introduced by First Secretary Alexander Dubcek after coming to power in 1968.
* What actions did the Soviets take?
* Explain the results and significance of the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Include the Brezhnev Doctrine and the international reputation of Communism and the SU. Make specific reference to the assessment by historian Ouimet on page 192.
* \*\*Please read the attached article, *The Prague Spring* and add important information to your notes.

Alexander Dubcek, *Hope Dies Last* (1992)

“The main door flew open again and in walked some higher officers of the KGB, including a highly decorated, very short colonel and a Soviet interpreter I had met before somewhere; I think he had been in Prague a few weeks earlier with Marshal Yakubovsky. The little colonel quickly reeled off a list of all Czechoslovak Communist Party officials present and told us that he was taking us "under his protection." Indeed, we were protected, sitting around that table - each of us had a tommy gun pointed at the back of his head. I was delivered to the Kremlin around 11:00 p.m. Moscow time, on Friday, August 23… In the Kremlin, they gave me no time to wash away the dust and dirt of the previous three days. They led me directly to "a meeting," as one of the KGB men called it. I remember a tall door, an antechamber behind it, another door, and then a large office with a rectangular table. There I saw the four men most responsible for the criminal invasion of my country: Brezhnev, Kosygin, Podgorny, and Voronov.

Mikhail Gorbachev, Memoirs (1995)

“How did the Soviet leaders justify their action on 21 August 1968? First of all, they argued that there was an external threat to the Warsaw Pact countries; and, secondly, they claimed that internal counter-revolution with Western backing was seeking to trample the socialist achievements of the workers.”

Challenge from Poland



* Explain the challenge of Poland to Soviet control.
* How did the USSR respond? Significance of this event?
* Explain the unique position and significance of the Catholic Church in Poland.
* What does Anne Applebaum, on page 194, suggest about the ability of the SU to contain dissent and challenges in Eastern Europe in the 1980s? Be specific.
* To what extent were Soviet leaders following Stalin’s structural legacy in Eastern Europe?

**The Soviet Union Invasion of Afghanistan**

Cold War Crisis: Afghanistan

* Why did the Soviets invade Afghanistan? Consider the official and unofficial reasons.
* Explain the American response to the invasion.
* Costs of the war in Afghanistan? Significance with respect to the Cold War? Impact on the SU?
* Explain the impact of Afghanistan on Détente.
* \*\* Please read the attached article, *Soviets in Afghanistan* and add key information to your notes.

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**Article 1: *The Prague Spring 1968***

The Prague Spring was a term coined by the Western media to describe attempts to reform communism in Czechoslovakia during the mid-1960s. Czechoslovakia was a relatively young nation, formed after the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1919. It was invaded by the Nazis at the start of World War II, then liberated by the Soviet Red Army in 1945. But as in other eastern European nations, the Soviet liberation soon turned into an occupation – and Czechoslovakia was transformed into a Soviet satellite state, ruled by a loyal Stalinist and saddled with a one-party state and socialist economic planning. The Prague Spring was an attempt by the Czechoslovakian people to moderate and soften socialism, to bring an end to political oppression and economic austerity. For a short time, democracy appeared to take root and blossom behind the Iron Curtain, as the government of Alexander Dubcek sought to create “socialism with a human face”. But the experiment was short-lived, with the Soviet Union leading other Warsaw Pact nations into an invasion of Czechoslovakia. When the Red Army rolled into Prague it encountered not violent opposition, but a people united in support of their government and against the iron-fisted rule of Soviet communism. The Czechoslovakian reforms were eventually quashed and the reformist government replaced – but the Prague Spring captured the attention of the world.

Sandwiched between East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania, Czechoslovakia was another eastern European country swallowed by the Soviet bloc in the late 1940s. In 1946 the Communist Party took power in Czechoslovakia, after an election in which it won 38 percent of the votes and 31 percent of the parliamentary seats. Over the next two years, communist policies proved unpopular with many Czechoslovakians. Misuse of the police and armed forces, the nationalisation of industry, plans to collectivise farms and Soviet interference in Czechoslovakian domestic politics all eroded support for the Communist Party. The communists were expected to lose power in elections scheduled for mid-1948 – but these elections were never held. In 1948, with Soviet tanks massed threateningly on the border, Czechoslovakian communists seized complete control of the nation in a bloodless coup. Klement Gottwald, a former cabinet-maker, loyal to Moscow and the policies of Stalin, became the new president. All other political parties were banned; censorship of the media was introduced; fourteen former political leaders were given show trials, most of them executed.

‘Socialism with a human face’

As in other Soviet satellite states, industrialisation was the main aim of the new regime. But by the early 1960s, Czechoslovakia’s economy had begun to stagnate. The country was reliant on food imports but its industries had not progressed sufficiently to match these with exports. The standard of living deteriorated; food and consumer goods were both difficult to obtain and very expensive. Intellectuals criticised the centralised economic planning of the communist government – and the government began to listen. In 1965 it accepted a package of proposed reforms called the New Economic Model, which suggested the re-introduction of capitalist features, like the removal of price and wage controls. Factory managers and bureaucrats were to be given greater freedom in decision-making, so they could respond to resource availability and the needs of the market. This reformist push matured in the spring of 1968, when the local Communist Party issued another manifesto, the Action Plan, calling for Czechoslovakia to follow its own form of socialism – “socialism with a human face” – instead of blindly following the Soviet Union. It would be fundamentally democratic, tolerant of debate and different opinions; individual rights and freedoms, such as freedom of speech and the ability to travel abroad, would be protected by law.

“Ironically, the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia stabilised the region where the Cold War had begun, and provided a solid basis for detente. After 1968, neither side seriously contemplated going to war in Europe, let alone nuclear war. During the Czechoslovak crisis both sides ‘showed a prudent disposition to underestimate their own strength and over-estimate the strength of the adversary’, concludes one scholar. [Lyndon] Johnson’s inaction and marked aloofness during the Prague Spring, and in response to the Warsaw Pact invasion, also spelled the beginning of the end of US hegemony in the global arena.” Gunter Bischof, historian

The impact of the Czechoslovakian reforms rippled through the Soviet bloc. In July 1968, Warsaw Pact nations drafted an ultimatum to the Prague government, demanding it wind back its reforms, re-impose censorship and one-party control, and deal with the “counter-revolutionaries” responsible for these deviations from Soviet-style socialism. The Czechoslovakian government ignored this ultimatum, prompting the Warsaw Pact delegates to meet again in August to decide on a course of action. They deemed Czechoslovakia to be a rogue state and authorised an invasion. On August 21st 1968, around 200,000 Warsaw Pact troops rolled across the borders into Czechoslovakia. The government in Prague, led by Alexander Dubcek, decided not to resist the invasion; Czechoslovak armed forces were ordered to remain in their barracks.

The people’s resistance

The absence of military opposition surprised the invading Warsaw Pact troops, who had anticipated strong resistance. But what alarmed them even more was the response of Czechoslovakian citizens. The invading troops were met in the streets by civilians, armed not with weapons but with words, placards and protest. They tore down and replaced street signs so invading tanks could not locate important buildings. They gathered in throngs in main streets, outside public buildings and infrastructure, blocking the way and harassing the Warsaw Pact soldiers. Posters and graffiti reading “Russians go home!” were plastered all over Prague; locals engaged the invaders in debate, asking why they were in Czechoslovakia and inviting them to join with the rebellion. A group of rebels barricaded themselves inside Prague’s main radio station, broadcasting inspiring messages and criticisms of the Soviet Union. More than 100,000 people filled the street outside the radio station, an attempt to protect it from troops sent to close it down. The radio station was eventually overrun and turned off – but the broadcasters simply went underground and kept transmitting from there.

Though there was little fighting and fewer than 80 people were killed, the Prague Spring was always destined to fail. Members of the Czechoslovakian government, including their leader Dubcek, were located, arrested and removed to Moscow. Though they were not harmed, they were subjected to intense pressure, intimidation and probably threats, before being returned to Prague a week later. Dubcek told his people that Moscow had authorised him to continue with a program of “moderate reforms” – but within months he had been replaced by Gustav Husak, a communist more loyal to Moscow. Between 1969 and 1971, Husak’s regime embarked on what it called ‘normalisation’: essentially a ‘winding back’ of the reforms begun by the Dubcek government. Reformist politicians, bureaucrats and academics were removed from positions of influence; police powers and censorship were reinstalled; centralised economic controls were restored. Husak would remain in power in Czechoslovakia for the duration of the Cold War.

There was widespread international criticism of Moscow’s incursion into Czechoslovakia. In the United Nations, a number of countries voted for a resolution condemning the Soviet intervention, though the resolution failed because of the USSR’s veto. The American reaction was comparatively mild, chiefly because the US and its leadership were more focused on the worsening quagmire of the Vietnam War; also, US-Soviet relations had been easing and president Lyndon Johnson did not want to antagonise Moscow. Europe’s non-Soviet communists condemned the invasion of Czechoslovakia as an act of imperialism. The leaders of Finland, Romania and Albania all criticised Moscow’s treatment of Prague. There was even a small but visible protest in Moscow itself, though this was quickly suppressed.

1. The Prague Spring was a peaceful but unsuccessful attempt to liberalise and reform socialist Czechoslovakia.

2. Economic stagnation in the early 1960s prompted the Czech government to introduce ‘socialism with a human face’.

3. Warsaw Pact nations responded in 1968 with an ultimatum to wind back liberal and democratic reforms.

4. Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia when this ultimatum was ignored, however there was little fighting.

5. Despite peaceful but widespread popular resistance, Czech political leaders were replaced by Moscow and its reforms were wound back under a new pro-Soviet government. The Soviet response to the Prague Spring attracted much criticism but no direct action from the US and its allies.

**Article 2: *Soviets in Afghanistan***

Afghanistan is a small landlocked country in central Asia, wedged between Russia in the north, Iran to the west and Pakistan in the south. Remote and possessing a mountainous terrain and harsh climate, Afghanistan has been viewed in the West as both a mysterious place and a politically unstable location. But as a crossroads nation between east and west, Afghanistan has always had been of strategic importance. For most of the Cold War, Afghanistan was ruled by Mohammed Zahir, an educated and somewhat enlightened shah (king) who made sincere attempts to modernise his country. By the mid-1960s, Afghanistan seemed to have most of the trappings of a modern democratic state: free elections, a representative parliament and reforms improving the rights of women. Zahir and his government refused to align with either the US or USSR, though both Washington and Moscow courted him by funding roads and other infrastructure projects.

In 1973, while Mohammed Zahir was abroad having surgery, he was deposed by a bloodless coup led by Mohammed Daoud Khan, his cousin and the prime minister. Daoud immediately abolished the monarchy and assumed the presidency of the newly-formed republic. He summoned a loyal jirga (‘grand council of tribes’) to approve a new constitution, which transformed Afghanistan into a one-party state. Daoud sought to undermine communist opposition to his government by reducing Afghanistan’s reliance on the USSR. Instead, he sought to forge ties with oil-rich Muslim nations like Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Fearful that Daoud would eventually align with the West, Soviet agents and local communists began to plot his downfall. In 1978 Daoud was removed in a coup – the so-called Saur Revolution – organised by Afghanistan’s Communist People’s Democratic Party (PDPA) and conducted by sympathetic army officers. The PDPA proclaimed victory on April 28th by announcing that Daoud had “resigned due to poor health” (which was partly true: he had been shot).

The Soviets invade

“Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, particularly since World War II, had been clearly designed to bring Afghanistan under Soviet hegemony. The USSR had used several methods interactively. Prior to World War II the focus was on purely diplomatic initiatives and economic aid, but after the war the Soviets expanded their approach to include military assistance and political manipulation. By 1978 these methods had succeeded: the USSR was Afghanistan’s biggest trade partner and source of economic aid, it had modernised Afghanistan’s armed forces, and with its support Afghanistan’s nascent communist party was running the country. But one of the bloodiest and most destructive wars in Afghanistan’s history was yet to come.” Larry P. Goodson, historian

By 1979, the instability in Afghanistan had increased markedly and the government was on the brink of collapse. Confronted with anarchy and imminent revolution, the communist regime in Kabul made frequent pleas to Moscow, requesting military intervention. In December 1979, the Kremlin acted, sending more than 100,000 Red Army troops into Afghanistan to prop up the government. This move was portrayed internationally as an aggressive, imperialist Soviet action; in reality it was approved by the dominant faction in the Afghanistan government. The United Nations moved to condemn the Soviet action, while 34 Muslim nations issued a communique calling for all Soviet troops to be withdrawn unconditionally. A protest movement formed to push for a boycott of the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow. US president Jimmy Carter warned US athletes would not attend the Moscow games if Soviet troops did not withdraw from Afghanistan by February 20th 1980. Carter’s ultimatum was ignored and 65 nations – including the US, Japan, Israel and Canada – did not attend the Moscow Olympics.

In private, however, policy planners in the US were delighted with the events in Afghanistan. Not only did the Soviet intervention provide propaganda opportunities, but the Soviets were confronted with what one American politician called “their own Vietnam”. Washington sought to make the Soviet task more difficult by destabilising the communist regime and arming and training its enemies. Working mostly through Pakistan, US operatives began providing military equipment and funds to local Muslim fundamentalists, collectively known as the mujahedeen (‘freedom fighters’). CIA agents worked underground in Afghanistan training the mujahedeen and recruiting new members; as much as $US20 billion was smuggled into the country for this purpose. Many who benefited from this American assistance later joined the Taliban, an Islamic group that seized control of Afghanistan in 1996. Another beneficiary of American aid during the Soviet occupation was a young Saudi-born volunteer named Osama bin Laden. American assistance increased under the presidency of Ronald Reagan; the US government set aside more than $US600 million a year to arm, train and support the Afghan resistance.

Russia’s own ‘Vietnam’

Meanwhile, the Soviet Red Army was finding the occupation and stabilisation of Afghanistan a difficult task. Soviet forces controlled many of Afghanistan’s cities, main roads and infrastructure locations by early 1980. But more than four-fifths of the country remained under the control of local tribes and Islamic groups. The Soviets launched a series of offensives to capture Afghan-controlled provinces, but were frustrated by local resistance. The mujahedeen employed sabotage, terrorism and guerrilla tactics against both the Soviets and forces loyal to the civilian government. Electricity in the cities was regularly knocked out by attacks on power stations; government buildings were routinely bombed; while politicians and public servants were assassinated. Mujahedeen attacks on the powerful Soviet military were much less frequent, although small patrols and individual soldiers were often ambushed and murdered.

The Soviet-Afghan war continued until the mid-1980s, when Moscow decided to gradually withdraw its forces from Afghanistan. Local forces were built up and the Soviet presence was phased out; there was little fighting and only a couple of offensive campaigns after 1987. Almost 15,000 Soviet soldiers and personnel died during the USSR’s eight-year occupation of Afghanistan; in contrast, more than a half-million mujahedeen and one million Afghani civilians were killed. There was enormous damage to the nation’s cities, infrastructure, farmland and livestock, in what had been one of the world’s poorest countries even before 1979.

While the Soviet withdrawal represented a Cold War victory for the United States, there would be long term ramifications for the US. Without the backing of Soviet troops, the Afghanistan government collapsed, and the nation disintegrated into years of civil war. In 1996 a group of fundamentalist Sunni Muslims, the Taliban (or “students”), captured control of the capital city, Kabul. For the next five years, the Taliban ruled Afghanistan with religious zeal and remorselessness, banning television and radio, outlawing Western dress and imposing Sharia law and brutal punishments. The worst victims of Taliban rule were Afghanistan’s women, who were banned from employment, education, even from leaving their homes without a male chaperone. The Taliban also gave safe harbour to a small group of Islamic terrorists calling themselves Al-Qaeda, or “the base”. It was in their Afghanistan training camps that members of Al-Qaeda plotted the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks in the US.

1. Afghanistan, a landlocked nation in Asia, was until 1973 a relatively democratic and progressive state.

2. Two coups in the 1970s saw the rise of a communist government, led by the PDPA and backed by the USSR.

3. Anti-communist insurgency quickly increased and in late 1979 Soviet troops invaded, at the request of the PDPA.

4. The insurgents, called mujahedeen, were local tribesmen backed and supplied by the US, mostly through the CIA.

5. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan lasted almost a decade and was very costly, with almost 15,000 Russians dying there. The Soviet withdrawal of the late 1980s led to the rise of Islamic fundamentalists called the Taliban.

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**Essay Questions**

1. To what extent was the USSR successful in containing challenges to Soviet control over the satellite states between 1945 and 1980?

\*\*You will also use information in this chapter to answer questions on CW crises, failure of Détente and Soviet-American relations, and role of leaders in the Cold War.