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
- Pope John Paul II
- reunification
- ethnic cleansing

SETTING THE STAGE
The Soviet reforms of the late 1980s brought high hopes to the people of Central and Eastern Europe. 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.

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 (leh-k-vah-WEH-sah) became a national hero. Walesa credited Pope John Paul II, who was also Polish and a fierce critic of communism, with giving the Polish people the courage to fight.

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-zoo-ZAY-lee-skay), 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.

Pictured Above: (L) A man chisels a piece of the Berlin Wall for a souvenir just after the fall of communism in East Germany; (R) Soldiers of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army in Hong Kong, 1998.

SECTION 4 PROGRAM RESOURCES

ALL STUDENTS
In-Depth Resources: Unit 8
• Guided Reading, p. 53
Formal Assessment
• Section Quiz, p. 578

ENGLISH LEARNERS
In-Depth Resources in Spanish
• Guided Reading, p. 251
Spanish/English Guided Reading Workbook
• Section 4

STRUGGLING READERS
In-Depth Resources: Unit 8
• Guided Reading, p. 53
• Building Vocabulary, p. 55
• Reteaching Activity, p. 72
Guided Reading Workbook
• Section 4

GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS
In-Depth Resources: Unit 8
• Primary Source: from The Tenth Circle of Hell, p. 62
• Connections Across Time and Cultures, p. 68

INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY
Power Presentations
Geography Transparencies
• GT5 Germany, Post World War I–Present
World Art and Cultures Transparencies
• AT78 Burning Rods

TEKS 13D explain the roles of modern world leaders, including . . . Lech Walesa, and Pope John Paul II, in the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe; 22D identify examples of genocide, including . . . genocide in the Balkans.
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 (fahks-NEEF-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 2005 Lech Kaczynski of the conservative Law and Justice Party won the presidency. The following year Kaczynski’s twin brother Jaroslaw became prime minister. The Kaczynskis have fought Poland’s pervasive corruption, opposed rapid reforms of the free market, and supported the American-led campaign in Iraq.

**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 downtown in Hungary. This was due to weak exports, decline in foreign investment, and excessive spending on state pensions and increased minimum wages.

**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.

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

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**Vocabulary**

- _deposed:_ removed from power

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**Main Idea**

- **Analyzing Causes**
  - How did the fall of communism in Hungary contribute to reunification in Poland?

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**Writing Mini-Biographies**

**ELPs 1A**

**Class Time** 15 minutes

**Task** Writing short biographies

**Purpose** To familiarize students with important individuals from the recent history of Poland

**Instructions** First, ask students to recall experiences they have had with biographies from books, movies, or TV shows. Point out that biographies tell the histories of important people. Then ask students to read “Poland and Hungary Reform,” listing the people mentioned in the text as they read. Then have students describe that person’s significance. Provide this format for beginning and intermediate ELLs: “___ who ___.”

**Mikhail Gorbachev** Soviet reformer who encouraged Central and Eastern Europe to change economic and political systems

**Lech Walesa** A leader of Poland’s Solidarity union who became president of Poland in 1990

**General Jaruzelski** Poland’s military leader who agreed to hold free elections

**Boris Yeltsin** Russian president who introduced economic “shock therapy”

**Aleksander Kwasniewski** Former communist who became president of Poland in 1995

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**Germany Reunifies**

**Critical Thinking**

- Why did Hungary and Austria allow East Germans to cross their borders? (to pressure East German leaders into initiating reforms)
- How might West Germans’ views about reunification have changed over time? (Possible Answer: At first, they were overjoyed to be reunited. Later, they worried about economic sacrifices.)
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 Germanies. 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.

**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.

**Economic Challenges**

In 1998, voters turned Kohl out of office and elected a new chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, of the Socialist Democratic Party (SDP). Schroeder started out as a market reformer, but slow economic growth made the task of reform difficult. Although Germany had the world’s third largest economy, it had sunk to fifth by 2005. Germany’s unemployment rate was among the highest in Europe, and rising inflation was a problem. However, in 2006, a year after Angela Merkel of the Christian Democrats (CDU) was elected chancellor, unemployment fell below 4 million, and Germany’s budget deficit was kept to within EU limits.

Reunification has also forced Germany—as Central Europe’s largest country—to rethink its role in international 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 Vaclav Havel (Vah•tlahh• HAH•vuhl), a popular critic of the government.

On October 28, 1989, about 10,000 people gathered at 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 Vaclav 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 Vaclav 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 has steadily improved in the face of some serious problems, aided by its becoming a full member of the European Union (EU) in 2004.

Slovakia, too, proceeded on a reformist, pro-Western path. It experienced one of the highest economic growth rates in the region in 2002. In 2004 it elected Ivan Gasparovic president and joined both NATO and the EU.

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.
The Breakup of Yugoslavia

Critical Thinking
- Why might it have been easier for Slovenia and Croatia to win independence than Bosnia and Herzegovina? (Possible Answers: stronger militarily; ethnically more homogeneous)
- Why might Muslims make up a large percentage of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s and Kosovo’s populations? (These regions were once part of the Muslim Ottoman Empire.)
- Why was Milosevic extradited instead of being tried in Serbia? (Possible Answer: Many Serbians continued to support him.)

More About...

Ethnic Differences
Most Serbs are Orthodox Christians, unlike Croats, who are primarily Roman Catholic, and Muslims, who follow Islam. In the past, Croats and Muslims have dominated Serbs. Muslim Turks ruled Serbia for 400 years. During World War II, Croats joined forces with the Nazis in persecuting Serbs.

Tip for English Learners
Explain to students that a broker is somebody who acts as an intermediary, or go-between. A broker negotiates agreements between different people or groups.

International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia

Class Time 20 minutes
Task Delivering a speech summarizing the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
Purpose To familiarize students with efforts to bring war criminals to justice
Instructions Ask students to use the library or the Internet to learn about the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTFY). Explain that the ICTFY was established by a May 1993 UN Security Council resolution for the prosecution of war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia. Tell students that they will be using their research to prepare an oral report summarizing the work of the tribunal, which they will deliver to the class. Encourage students to include information about the location and structure of the tribunal, along with important indictments, trials, and appeals. (See also the Connect to Today feature on page 950.)
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**

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

* 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**
1. **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?
2. **Contrasting** Kosovo was a province within Serbia. What group was in the majority there, and how did it differ from Serbs?

**SKILLBUILDER: ANSWERS**

1. **Analyzing Issues**
   There were three major religions practiced there (Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, and Islam); three different dialects were spoken.

2. **Contrasting**
   The Albanians were the majority; they were not Slavic, and they were Muslim, not Christian.

**OBJECTION**

- Identify linguistic, ethnic, and religious differences in the former Yugoslavia.

**INSTRUCT**

Explain that the map shows ethnic groups in the former Yugoslavia and the chart identifies linguistic and religious differences. Point out that the distinction between ethnic and religious identity is complex and that the two sometimes overlap. Have students identify evidence of this overlap in the feature. (Muslim is listed as an ethnic group in the map key.)

**In-Depth Resources: Unit 8**

- Primary Source: from The Tenth Circle of Hell, p. 62

**More About . . .**

**Serbo-Croatian**

Vocabulary and pronunciation differences exist among the Croatian, Bosnian, and Serbian dialects, but these differences are no real obstacle to verbal communication. The Croats and Bosnians use the Roman, or Latin, alphabet. The Serbs and Montenegrins use the Cyrillic alphabet.
Macedonia
Macedonia escaped much of the ethnic violence that plagued Yugoslavia after it began to disintegrate in the early 1990s. Even so, it came close to civil war a decade after declaring independence. In early 2001, ethnic Albanian rebels staged an uprising. After months of skirmishes, the EU and NATO were able to broker a peace deal under which Albanian fighters laid down their arms in return for greater recognition of their rights. In late 2001, this agreement was formalized in a new constitution.

2001, Bosnia and Herzegovina began to stand on its own without as much need for supervision by the international community.

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. 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. In 2007, talks continued over the status of 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 but died in 2006, while his trial was continuing. 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.

In Montenegro (which together with Serbia made up Yugoslavia), an independence referendum in May 2006 revealed that most voters wanted to separate from Serbia. As the Montenegrins declared independence in 2006, Serbia accepted the new situation peacefully. In 2007 Serbia held a parliamentary election in which the ultra-nationalist Radical Party made some gains, but could not win enough seats to form a new government.

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.