



AP[®] European History 2003 Sample Student Responses

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Soviet domination over Eastern Europe ended due to the overall failure of communism in the USSR to provide ^{the} adequate money + resources needed to support the satellite nations, the coming of Gorbachev as a Soviet leader, and the oppressive governments of the satellite nations and the revolts in the nations which ensued.

From 1950 on, the Soviet Union was spending its money on weapons + its army. This left little to no money left to make critical internal reforms; already devastated by WWII, the USSR could ill afford to be spending astronomical amounts of money on defense. Throughout the years, the USSR either fought in conflicts or supported communism in many nations such as Afghanistan, Cuba, and Vietnam only to name a few. In addition, with the "detente" status agreed upon by Brezhnev + Kissinger, the SALT treaties at meetings at places like Helsinki, there seemed to be no need for these weapons, the money went to waste. Thus, since the Soviet Union spent all its

time and money on defense, there was simply no time and especially no money to reform Russia; and due to this lack of reform, the Russian people were suffering. With all of the internal troubles, ~~the~~ the USSR could seldom afford to support their satellite nations - which was a major reason why Soviet dominion over E. Europe ended.

Gorbachev played an integral role in ending Soviet rule in eastern Europe. With his policy policies of glasnost and perestroika, eastern Europe became the most open it had been since before WWII. Gorbachev visited the satellite nations, and served as catalyst for the end of Soviet rule. He opened lines of communication with the west and told the Soviet govts. of the satellite nations that should there be a revolt, it wasn't the Soviet's responsibility to provide arms. He let alone know that in the satellite nations, it was possible that Communism was not the best way to rule. He

played a huge role in the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, though he fervently believed that communism was the best policy for ^{the} USSR itself. Thus, Gorbachev served as a catalyst for the end of the "Iron Curtain" over eastern Europe, without his policies, the satellite nations would have had to wait much longer for their freedom.

Even from very early on, revolts occurred in the satellite nations (though they were speedily crushed). But, the state of the people in E. Europe, their readiness for freedom, helped to end Soviet domination over eastern Europe. Poland was the first country to revolt in the later years, with Solidarity leading the way. The Polish were ready to throw off the communist chains; Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, soon followed. They were later joined by East Germany & finally Czechoslovakia. The catalyst to these revolutions was not only Gorbachev's policies, but also the will of the people. Had the

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people been compliant, as they were much earlier, the revolutions never would have succeeded; ~~thus~~, but once Poland started there really was a "domino effect" in which all of Europe threw off communism. Thus, the revolts in satellite nations combined with the people's readiness for change ended Soviet dominion in Eastern Europe.

In all, Soviet influence ended in E. Europe due to the combination of the lack of ^{soviet} money to support the ~~many~~ satellite nations, Gorbachev's policies + encouragement, and the individual revolutions in each country.

The Soviet Union was one of the most powerful institutions in Europe throughout the twentieth century. By the late 1980's, however, the power started to decline. One of the reasons for this is that Mikhail Gorbachev started to loosen many of the harsh controls. Coupled with economic insecurity, and political instability, the great power house declined and fell in 1991. The end of Soviet domination over Eastern Europe was caused by the policies of Gorbachev, failing economies, and revolts against the political structure.

Gorbachev's attempts to bring prosperity to the Eastern Bloc, ultimately resulted in the downfall of it. He instituted two things: Glasnost, and Perestroika. These were designed to let people have more freedom of speech and more voting rights. However, with this freedom, there came a lot of criticism towards the way the U.S.S.R. was running. Also, Gorbachev wanted peace with the West, a new détente. This forced him not to interfere with the politics of other Eastern Bloc nations. Ultimately, these policies resulted in disaster for Gorbachev and the Soviet Union.

Economically, many communist countries were falling behind. The reason for this is a critical flaw in the Marxist plan. Many people simply stopped working hard, because they would be benefited either way. Another reason is the Cold War arms race with Western Europe. Both sides stockpiled weapons and grew larger. This was a severe money drain to both sides. These two reasons led to the Eastern Bloc's economic troubles.

Finally, political revolt destroyed the Soviet Union. In Poland, a group of dock workers named Solidarity protested against the communist regime. They were led by Lech Wałęsa. The government allowed an election in which 1/3 of the seats could be given to a non-communist party. Solidarity won every single seat allowed, and became the first eastern bloc country not to be communist. Other eastern European countries like East Germany, and Hungary, ~~also~~ overthrew the communists and opened borders to the west. In Romania, after some violence, the government also stepped down. In the Soviet Union itself, there was a split. Some people, the hard-liners, believed Gorbachev had reformed

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Part C Choice #5

B-3

too much and kidnapped him. Led by Boris Yeltsin, reformers defeated the hard-liners, and the communist regime fell in 1991. Political revolt had toppled the communist power-house.

The end of the Soviet domination over Eastern Europe was due to political revolt, economic troubles, and many policies of Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev loosened many freedoms, allowing people to protest without Soviet retaliation. The economies of many of the Eastern European nations had been weakening due to the Cold War and the lack of hard work. This ended in revolution in all countries and communism was dethroned. These are the reasons for the Soviet's downfall.