

8.04 The Iron Curtain Comes Down

Romanian Revolution

The Romanian Revolution one of the many revolutions that occurred in 1989, in this instance occurring in Romania, December 16th - 25th. It was sparked when people started speaking out against regime policies. This eventually led into a huge rally, which occurred at the same time in which Nicolae Ceaușescu was giving a speech. Within 9 days he would have been shot dead, along with his wife, and the fall of the Romanian Communist Party.

This event was important to the world because it drew in attention from all over the world, and it also was exposing the fact that the Soviet Union was failing.



Velvet Revolution

The Velvet Revolution was another revolution against the Communist Party that occurred in 1989, however not as violent as what occurred during the Romanian Revolution. This revolution happened in Czechoslovakia. In this instance, numerous demonstrations occurred between November 17th and December 29th, with their Communist Party resigning in the end. The demonstrations gathered hundreds of thousands of people, in total over 500,000 in one day. In 1993, Czechoslovakia split into two countries known as the Czech Republic and Slovakia. This event was important because, just like the Romanian Revolution, got rid of the communist rule. It also added on another instance to show the world that the Soviet Union was in serious trouble.



Solidarity

In Poland in 1980, an organized group of united workers, that all shared common beliefs, was established in order to seek political reforms. This group is known as Solidarity. They did things such as going on strike, to demand better working conditions, and to also go after Communism. This organization was important during the time because it helped to spread anti-Communism to other people, which eventually led to the fall of Communism.



Fall of the Berlin Wall

The one event that any person knows from the Fall of Communism is the Fall of the Berlin Wall. The wall was originally put up to seal off East Germany from West Germany. Throughout the end of 1989, there was a lot of political unrest going on in Germany. Protests were going on left and right, so leaders in East Germany loosened the borders, allowing for much easier travel from East to West, however this was going to have a much more massive outcome than what they had thought. People got word of this, and soon after nearly half a million people showed up. Eventually through many protests the wall came down. This was a huge event, as it marked the fall of the "Iron Curtain", which divided Communism from the West (which did not follow Communism).



Prague Spring

The Prague Spring was a time in Czechoslovakia in 1968, between January and August, in which there was an attempt, headed by Alexander Dubcek, to democratize the nation and weaken the effect the Soviets had on them. He tried to grant additional rights to the citizens in terms of speech, media, travel, etc. This did not go as planned, as the Soviets launched an invasion, succeeded, and Dubcek was removed from power. This put an end to reform within Czechoslovakia. This was a big deal as it showed that the Soviet Union was not budging with anyone. Anybody apart of the Warsaw Pact was not going to leave it on their watch.



Why Did I Choose These Events?

By the end of 1991, the Soviet Union had collapsed. There were many factors that contributed to this, such as the ones that I provided above. The Romanian and Velvet Revolutions were among the revolutions that had a big impact on the downfall. I think these should be at the top because they are some of what started the downfall, in a serious way. Each revolution was another stab to the Soviets, and eventually they had so many that they could not recover. Solidarity also contributed to that as well, bringing in more people from the jobs side of it. Then

came along the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Think of how a balloon can only take in so much air before it pops.

Everything before was the air, and the Berlin Wall falling was the popping point. I put this lower because the previous events helped the world get to this point, as important as the event was. The Soviets just could not recover from all of this, and they collapsed by the end of 1991. I put the Plague Spring at the end because it did have influence, but not as much as everything else I discussed here.