The Hungarian uprising, 1956

By the end of this spread you should be able to describe and explain: 1 the causes of the events, 2 the consequences of the Hungarian uprising. 2 Western reactions to it.

Why Hungarians opposed Soviet control

- Patriotism: Hungarians were proud and patriotic, aware of their traditions and long history.
- Censorship: There was no freedom of expression. The government controlled the press, theatre, art, and music.
- Secret police: The hated State Protection Group (AVO) used terror and torture to suppress criticism of the government, communism, or the USSR.
- Soviet troops: Hungarians objected to the continued presence of Soviet troops, a reminder of Soviet control.
- Religion: Hungarians were strongly Christian but communists discouraged religious belief and penalized the Catholic Church, its leader, Cardinal Mindszenty, was imprisoned.
- Standard of living: There were food shortages which many blamed on the new collective farming. Industrial workers were poorly paid and saw many goods shipped off to the USSR.

Revolt and repression, 1956

October 23
1 Popular demonstrations in Budapest lead to fighting with AVO.
2 Demonstrators want the reforming politician, Imre Nagy, to become Prime Minister.

October 24
1 Nagy named as Prime Minister.
2 Soviet tanks and troops enter Budapest. Fought by freedom fighters and most of Hungarian Army.

October 27
1 Nagy announces a new government which includes members of non-Communist parties.
2 Cardinal Mindszenty freed from prison.

October 29-31
Soviet forces withdraw from Budapest.

October 29-November 1
Nagy announces
1 The end of one-party rule
2 The complete evacuation of Soviet troops from Hungary
3 Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact.

November 4
1 Red Army invades Budapest killing 27,000 Hungarians.
2 Janos Kadar becomes the new Prime Minister.

Why did Khrushchev take such harsh action against Hungary?
1 Although Nagy intended Hungary to remain Communist and friendly with the USSR, on October 29-November 1 he went too far for Soviet leaders. If they were to allow Hungary to become more independent, other Eastern European countries might want to do the same.
2 China strongly advised Khrushchev to deal firmly with Hungary.
3 The Western powers were distracted by the Suez crisis. They were unlikely to oppose Soviet action.
4 Khrushchev's own position in the Soviet leadership was uncertain. He could not afford to show any weakness.

The results of the uprising

- Hungary
1 About 200,000 refugees fled to the West.
2 Nagy was tricked into leaving his refuge in the Yugoslav embassy. In 1958 he was hanged in Moscow.
3 Kadar ruled until 1988. He was loyal to Moscow but eventually allowed some freedom of discussion.

- East-West relations
1 For a time these were very bitter. The USSR accused the West of supporting Nagy.
2 The Western powers realized that a) despite Stalin's death Soviet leaders were determined to keep control of Eastern Europe.
b) They prepared to be very brutal.
c) They were powerless to influence Soviet actions behind the Iron Curtain.
3 They became more determined to resist any Soviet expansion in Europe.

- The Western response
1 Public opinion supported the Hungarians and was horrified by Soviet actions in Budapest.
2 Western Governments were distracted by the Suez crisis and could only protest at Soviet actions.
3 The UN had no impact on events:
a) Members of the Security Council wanted to call for a withdrawal of Soviet troops but the USSR used its veto to block the resolution.
b) The General Assembly set up a Committee of Investigation but the USSR refused to co-operate with it. It also refused to allow the UN Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjold, to visit Budapest.

- Eastern Europe
Governments realized that the USSR would not allow them
1 any independence even if they stayed Communist
2 the freedom to follow policies different to Moscow's own.

1 a Why did Hungarians oppose Soviet rule?
2 What factors caused Khrushchev to deal with the 1956 uprising so harshly?
3 What lessons could a Eastern European countries
b) The West learn about the USSR from its reaction to the Hungarian uprising?
Czechoslovakia, 1968

By the end of this spread you should be able to describe and explain:
1. the causes of Czech dissatisfaction in 1968
2. the policies of Alexander Dubcek
3. the consequences of Soviet reactions to events in Czechoslovakia.

Freedom of expression
People wanted to be free to discuss ideas openly and to express their opinions in the press and on the radio.

Political parties
People wanted the freedom to set up political parties and to vote freely in elections.

Worker democracy
Many workers wanted to have more say in the way their factories were run.

Secret police
People wanted an end to their powers to suppress criticism and to rule their lives by terror.

Why did the Czechs oppose Soviet control?
1. Since 1948 Czechoslovakia had been run as a Communist police state loyal to Moscow.
2. Although little opposition ever showed itself, many Czechs wanted changes.

The economy
The USSR forced Czech industry to produce materials such as steel which it needed.
Its policies prevented factories from producing consumer goods for sale at home and abroad. As a result:
1. the Czechs had a low standard of living.
2. many people, including some members of the Government, wanted to change the way industry was run.

Reforms
Dubcek's government:
1. removed some State controls over industry
2. allowed public meetings and discussion
3. relaxed press censorship
4. also proposed to:
   a. allow political parties to be formed
   b. revive parliament
   c. abolish press censorship.

The Soviet response
1968

June
Soviet tanks remain in Czechoslovakia after Warsaw Pact military exercises.

July
The 'Group of Five' Warsaw Pact members (USSR, Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Bulgaria) warn Dubcek that his planned reforms will remove power from the Communist Party.

August
1. Group of Five invade Czechoslovakia (August 20) and take control.
2. Dubcek arrested and taken to Moscow.

September
-October
1. to reverse most of the reforms
2. to allow Soviet troops to be stationed in Czechoslovakia

1969
1. USSR works with hardliners in the Czechoslovak Communist Party to remove Dubcek and his supporters from power.

East-West relations
1. Western powers protested at the Soviet actions.
2. Moves towards détente between the USA and the USSR (page 80) continued after only a slight break.

The Brezhnev Doctrine
1. The Soviet leader, Brezhnev, announced that if forces 'hostile to Socialism' tried to turn a Communist country towards Capitalism it was the duty of other Communist countries to intervene.
2. This idea caused a split in the Communist world. It angered:
   a. countries such as Yugoslavia, Romania, and China
   b. Communist parties in the West

Why did the USSR decide to invade?
Soviet leaders believed Dubcek's reforms threatened their control of Eastern Europe in two ways:
1. Individual freedoms
   They thought a Dubcek would be unable to control demands for even more freedom of expression and political freedom.

b. If these were granted in Czechoslovakia, people in other Eastern European states would demand them too.

c. If granted, these freedoms would eventually destroy the authority of Communist parties in these countries.

2. New alliances
   a. Yugoslavia was already an independent Communist state (page 56). Romania was refusing to attend Warsaw Pact meetings. Both countries were offering support to Dubcek.
   b. If Czechoslovakia formed an alliance with Yugoslavia and Romania the unity of the Communist bloc behind the Iron Curtain would be broken.

Czechoslovakia
1. The country returned to strict Communist rule.
2. Many people continued to believe in the changes Dubcek had tried to introduce.

Eastern Europe
People in Eastern European countries were
1. reminded that the USSR would allow no variation from strict Communist rule
2. concerned that the Warsaw Pact forces could be used against one of its own members
3. disliked the Brezhnev Doctrine.

What were the results of Soviet intervention?
1. What were the reasons for Czech opposition to Soviet control in 1968?
2. What were Dubcek's aims?
3. Explain why the USSR decided to invade Czechoslovakia.
4. What do the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 tell you about the nature of Soviet control there?