



Fall of the Berlin Wall ... and Rise of the EU

This week, as almost everyone is aware, marks the 20th anniversary of the dramatic fall of the Berlin Wall, an event that set in motion the domino-like collapse of communist regimes across Eastern Europe behind the so-called “Iron Curtain.”

Those of us old enough to remember the events of fall 1989 will never forget the poignancy of that time. The bleak communist tyranny that had held half of Europe in thrall for several bleak generations was collapsing — apparently — without a shot being fired (except in unhappy Romania, whose vile dictator, Nicolae Ceaucescu, refused to step down without a brief but bloody struggle for power). Warranted or not, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the events that followed engendered a brief flowering of optimism in freedom ascendant, an optimism that appeared to receive a second vindication with the equally dramatic unraveling of the Soviet Union less than two years later. For a generation raised with the constant fear of nuclear war and of the triumph of global communist totalitarianism, the fall of the Berlin Wall was welcome tidings indeed.



To be sure, the lives of millions of people living in the former Warsaw Pact countries and across the former Soviet Union have improved significantly since 1989. No longer are the citizens of countries like Russia, Lithuania, Romania, and the former East Germany prisoners in their respective homelands, forbidden to travel abroad, much less emigrate. The gulags of yesteryear are museums, and freedoms that citizens of Western nations have become accustomed to take for granted, such as religious freedom, have become the norm from Budapest to Vladivostok.

None of which is to say that freedom is in full flower yet. Belarus, formerly the Soviet Republic of Byelorussia, is still a dictatorship and Russia itself, while a far cry from the grim poverty and oppression of Stalinism, is undeniably still an authoritarian state. The puissant Soviet military, with its tens of thousands of nuclear warheads, is history, but Russia is actively developing newer and far more sophisticated weapons of mass destruction and has recently resumed military activities reminiscent of the Cold War — probing U.S. air defenses with Soviet-era long-range bombers, for example.

Of much greater concern, however, is that the old communist bloc is being replaced by another, subtler attempt to achieve socialism on an international scale: the European Union. This fact is not lost on former Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev, who has approvingly described the EU as “the new European



Written by [Charles Scaliger](#) on November 11, 2009

Soviet.” Russian dissident Vladimir Bukovsky has observed that “having just buried one monster, the Soviet Union, another remarkably similar one, the European Union, is being built.... The EU is the old Soviet model, presented in Western guise.”

For the European Union is — at least for the present — socialism with a smile. Rather than razor wire and police checkpoints, the EU promises open borders. Instead of food rations and collective farms, the EU gives allegedly benign micromanagement of business and finance. And instead of occupying armies enforcing a military empire, the EU claims to have been forged by consent. Yet it is no less socialistic than the old Soviet Union, and, if allowed to continue, will eventually metastasize into full-blown totalitarianism *on both sides* of the former Berlin Wall and Iron Curtain. Yet many fail to perceive the threat posed by the European Union, because its façade is so benign and its ascendancy so gradual.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the attendant collapse of the Soviet bloc were certainly blessings. But their legacy will be muted if Europeans permit an even more efficient and formidable totalitarianism to take their place.

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