

Collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe: Sourcework Tips

- To comment on the reliability of the sources in the exam, or to explain why their viewpoints might differ, you need to know specific details about when, where and by whom each one was written.
- The following information gives you some clues about what you can **EXPECT** each source to say. If it says something different, you have to decide for yourself whether this makes it more or less reliable as evidence!
- This information about the **PROVENANCE** of the sources should be supplemented by references to the **CONTENT** of the sources (e.g. does your background knowledge suggest that this source is perhaps giving us the truth, but not the whole truth? Is the tone of the source detached and objective, or emotional and subjective?).

1. When was the source written?

Period	East / West Relations	Details
1989-91	☹️	Collapse of Communism: Gorbachev and Sheverdnaze refused to offer military help to the communist dictatorships in the satellite states, which rapidly collapsed as a result. The West feared the speed with which all of this took place.
1985-89	😊	The Gorbachev Era: The emergence of Gorbachev as General Secretary of the USSR led to a revolution in relations: Perestroika, Glasnost in the USSR; Washington Conference > INF Treaty with USA; end of war in Afghanistan.
1980-85	☹️	Second Cold War: The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the crushing of Solidarity in Poland, the election of Reagan as President of the USA, the Korean Airliner Crisis.
1970-80	😊	Détente: (a period characterised by a brief thaw in relations). The SALT talks makes some progress on the issue of arms limitation; President Nixon meets with the communist leader of China, Chairman Mao.
1945-70	☹️	First Cold War: <u>Europe:</u> The Berlin Blockade, The Berlin Wall, Revolutions in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland., the Brezhnev Doctrine. <u>Elsewhere:</u> The Korean War, The Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam War.

2. Where and by whom was the source written?

Country	General Points	15 Key Figures
USSR	<p>Before 1985, Soviet sources (e.g. <u>Pravda</u>, the official newspaper) were heavily censored – this was a dictatorship with a secret police (the <u>KGB</u>) – so they will likely provide only the official government view on conditions within the Eastern Bloc.</p> <p>After 1985, Soviet sources were freed from censorship under Gorbachev's policy of Glasnost (openness) and are therefore much more reliable and varied: as well as criticising communism, they also criticised Gorbachev for destabilising the USSR.</p>	<p>Brezhnev: Hardline communist dicator.</p> <p>Gorbachev: Reforming communist: wanted to save the USSR by timely reforms.</p> <p>Sheverdnaze: Gorbachev's foreign minister.</p> <p>Yeltsin: Revolutionary democrat: wanted to destroy the USSR by banning communism.</p>
USA	<p>Before 1985, American sources were generally very anti-Soviet due to the sorts of factors outlined in the timeline. Reagan described the USSR as an "evil empire". However, this was a country with a free press so the Left-wing opposition (<u>Democratic Party</u>) often opposed the government.</p> <p>After 1985, the warm relationship between Reagan and Gorbachev meant American sources were more balanced. In 1988 Reagan withdrew his "evil empire" accusation.</p>	<p>Reagan: Republican President to 1989.</p> <p>Weinberger: Secretary of State (ie Foreign Secretary).</p> <p>Bush: President after 1989.</p>
Britain	<p>Britain was the USA's firmest ally throughout this period and so you can expect <i>official</i> sources from this country to match those of the Americans. However, this was a country with a free press so the Left-wing opposition (<u>Labour Party</u>) often opposed the government.</p>	<p>Thatcher: Conservative Prime Minister of Britain. Nicknamed the "Iron Lady" by the USSR for her firm support of Reagan.</p>
Germany	<p>Sources from communist East Germany (DDR) were heavily censored – this was a dictatorship with a secret police (the <u>STASI</u>) – so they will likely provide only the official government view on conditions within the Eastern Bloc.</p> <p>Sources from democratic West Germany (GDR) were free from censorship and were much more critical of communism.</p>	<p>Honecker: Communist leader of DDR. Thoroughly opposed Gorbachev's reforms.</p> <p>Kohl: Democratic leader of GDR. Supported Gorbachev but feared speed of his reforms.</p>
Poland	<p>Before 1980, Polish sources were heavily censored (esp. after the Poznan Uprising of 1956) and are therefore likely to provide only the official government view on conditions within the Eastern Bloc.</p> <p>After 1980, the <u>Solidarity</u> Movement unleashed a demand for free speech and democracy which was never completely crushed.</p>	<p>Pope John Paul II: Spiritual leader of democratic opposition movement in Poland</p> <p>Walesa: Political leader of democratic opposition movement in Poland</p> <p>Jaruzelski: Political leader of communist government in Poland</p>
Hungary / Czechosllovakia	<p>Up to 1989, Sources from communist Hungary and Czechoslovakia were heavily censored (esp. after the revolutions of 1956, 1968) and are therefore likely to provide only the official government view on conditions within the Eastern Bloc.</p> <p>After 1989, revolution in Hungary and the "Velvet Revolution" in Czechoslovakia meant that sources were freed from censorship under Gorbachev's policy of Glasnost (openness) and are therefore much more reliable.</p>	<p>Havel: Leader of democratic opposition movement in Czechoslovakia. Became its first democratic leader in 1990.</p> <p>Antall: Leader of democratic opposition movement in Hungary. Became its first democratic leader in 1990.</p>