Paths to Change

How leaders and citizens weakened communist rule

MWH.C.7.6.F "Assess the role of Western leadership, diplomacy, and dissident movements in weakening Soviet power and encouraging democratic transitions, including figures such as Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, Pope John Paul II, Willy Brandt..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one action that pressured Soviet leaders, circle one diplomatic action, and number two examples of local dissent. Use your marks to trace how different forces contributed to change.

Pressure, Talks, and Protest

1. In the 1970s, West German chancellor Willy Brandt pursued Ostpolitik, a policy of talking and making agreements with communist governments in Eastern Europe. These contacts reduced isolation and opened paths for travel and exchange. In the 1980s, U.S. president Ronald Reagan increased pressure on the Soviet Union through military spending, but also negotiated arms cuts with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. British prime minister Margaret Thatcher backed a firm Western stance while urging talks with Gorbachev. Pressure and diplomacy worked differently, but both shaped Soviet leaders' choices.

2. In Poland, Pope John Paul II's 1979 visit drew huge crowds and strengthened people's sense that they could act together. In 1980, shipyard electrician Lech Wałęsa led strikes that helped create Solidarity, an independent trade union. The communist government tried to crush the movement and imposed martial law in 1981, but Solidarity survived underground. Negotiations in 1989 brought partly free elections, in which Solidarity won a sweeping victory. Foreign leaders could exert pressure, but Polish workers organized the movement that challenged communist rule at home.

3. In Czechoslovakia, playwright Václav Havel criticized censorship and signed Charter 77, a petition demanding that the government respect human rights. In 1989, he helped lead peaceful protests during the Velvet Revolution and became president after communist rule ended. Soviet power also weakened because of economic troubles and Gorbachev's decision not to use force to preserve communist governments in Eastern Europe. Together, outside pressure, diplomatic contact, and organized dissent created openings, but local people turned those openings into democratic transitions.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Brandt's and Reagan's approaches differ, and how could each affect Soviet leaders' choices?

2. How did Pope John Paul II and Lech Wałęsa each help challenge communist rule in Poland?

3. How did Havel's actions and Gorbachev's decision each contribute to change in Czechoslovakia?

4. Assess this claim: Western leaders alone ended communist rule in Eastern Europe. Use two pieces of evidence from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 60 to 80 word museum label titled “How Change Became Possible.” Connect one Western leader, one dissident, and Gorbachev's decision to a democratic transition, then explain why no single force was enough.

ANSWER KEY

Paths to Change

HIGH SCHOOL · MWH.C.7.6.F

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one action that pressured Soviet leaders, circle one diplomatic action, and number two examples of local dissent. Use your marks to trace how different forces contributed to change. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Brandt's and Reagan's approaches differ, and how could each affect Soviet leaders' choices?	**Brandt used agreements and contact to reduce isolation. Reagan used military spending to apply pressure and also negotiated arms cuts.**
2	How did Pope John Paul II and Lech Wałęsa each help challenge communist rule in Poland?	**The pope's visit strengthened people's sense that they could act together. Wałęsa led strikes that helped create Solidarity.**
3	How did Havel's actions and Gorbachev's decision each contribute to change in Czechoslovakia?	**Havel demanded human rights and helped lead peaceful protests. Gorbachev chose not to use Soviet force to preserve communist governments.**
4	Assess this claim: Western leaders alone ended communist rule in Eastern Europe. Use two pieces of evidence from the passage.	**The claim leaves out local action, such as Solidarity's organizing or Havel's protests. It also leaves out Gorbachev's decision not to use force.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

How Change Became Possible: Margaret Thatcher urged talks with Gorbachev while supporting a firm Western stance. This diplomacy kept communication open, but it did not organize protests in Czechoslovakia. Václav Havel helped lead peaceful demonstrations against communist rule. Gorbachev's refusal to use Soviet force gave protesters an opening. Without local action, that opening might have gone unused. Without the Soviet decision, protesters might have faced a harsher response.

Accept other passage-supported examples of pressure, diplomacy, and dissent. Strong responses distinguish outside influence from local action rather than crediting one person with ending communist rule.