

# Influence of Mikhail Gorbachev's Non-military-intervention Policy in the 1989 Liberation of Eastern Europe.

Gabriel Garcia

History

Faculty Sponsor: Jeffrey Robert Young, Ph.D., Senior Lecturer, Department of History.

1989 was a crucial year in the developments that brought the end of the Cold War. As 1989 began, nobody suspected that by year's end the socialist dictators of Eastern Europe would fall along with the Berlin Wall, the Cold War would be over, and within a couple of years the Soviet Union would cease to exist. The present essay examines the role Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of non-military intervention in the domestic affairs of Eastern European countries had in the events that took place in 1989. For forty years the Soviet Union had exerted a tight control over several countries in Eastern Europe. After World War II, Joseph Stalin used force and repression to install communist governments in Eastern Europe that would follow the Kremlin's directives without questions. During the following decades, the Kremlin continued to use military force to maintain the *status quo* in Eastern Europe. Gorbachev's policy represented a departure from previous Soviet policies. As events began to unfold in the summer of 1989, Gorbachev adhered to his non-military intervention policy giving additional stimulus to other uprisings throughout the region. Gorbachev's policy alone did not bring an end to Soviet domination; instead, it served as a catalyst for the liberation movements that brought the end of communism in Eastern Europe. The study of the influence Gorbachev's policy had in these historical events can bring light to one—often overlooked—aspect of the complex history of the Cold War.

Primary sources such as Gorbachev's writings—including his 1996 *Memoirs*—and memoirs by members of Gorbachev's inner circle during the period in question were used for this essay. Secondary sources included books and articles by historians and political scientists.