

EUROPE

A continent set in motion, Where more than 2000 SSNDs live and work

In recent months the dramatic changes happening in Europe have kept the world in suspense. While faltering economies forecast a hard winter, hungry and oppressed nations stood up against their ruling party, and seemingly invincible government structures suddenly began to shake. The Iron Curtain was cut through, the Wall opened; relatives from East and West could visit, and many people – for the first time in their lives – experienced a touch of FREEDOM. Although the hardship is not yet over, HOPE has come to most East European countries.

When visitation was planned, there was no indication that the General Council would experience together with our own sisters and their people the breathtaking changes in the political structures which have shaped the life and work of nations over the past 40 years

- Following are some of the events that happened in the countries visited during the visitation from September 10 to December 1, 1989:
- 09.10: HUNGARY suspends a twenty year agreement with EAST GERMANY;
 - in the ensuing days more that 57,000 DDR citizens depart via HUNGARY,
 - through AUSTRIA and on to WEST GERMANY.
- 09.12: The new, non-communistic government in POLAND takes office
- 09.27: SLOVENIAN Communist Party changes its Constitution and accepts
 - amendments which provide greater religious and political freedom
- 10.07: HUNGARY's ruling party sheds communism and initiates a multi-party system
- 10.23: HUNGARY declares itself an independent republic
- 11.09: The BERLIN WALL is opened. Five million people make the journey from

- East to West in little more than a week
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- 11.15: CZECHOSLOVAKIA opens its borders to the West
- 12.01: CZECHOSLOVAKIA's hard line Communist regime resigns
- 12.01: Pope John Paul II and Mikhail Gorbachev meet in the Vatican, ITALY

Thus far the drastic changes had happened peacefully, but December 17th marked the beginning of the bloody revolution in Romania that led to the downfall of its tyrannical dictator and opened up the possibility of a democratic government with its promise of political, economic and religious freedom.