

THE FALL OF THE SOVIET UNION



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From Brinkmanship to Détente

- Cold war superpowers moved to lower tensions
- Nixon's policy was to avoid direct confrontation with the Soviets
- Under Reagan, Détente broke down
 - Increased defense spending
 - Put economic and military pressure on the Soviets

Gorbachev Moves Towards Democracy

- Supporters praised his youth, energy, and political skills
- Gorbachev decided to pursue different ideas
- *Glasnost* was a new idea that promoted openness
 - Ex. Allowed churches to open, banned books could now be published, etc.

Mikhail Gorbachev



Reforming the Economy and Politics

- Gorbachev blamed problems on the inefficient government system
- Introduced *Perestroika* or economic reconstruction
 - Managers gained more authority
 - People were able to open small businesses
- *Democratization* was a policy with a goal of opening up the political system

The Soviet Union Faces Turmoil

- The reforms were what ultimately led to its decline
- Nationalist groups in Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldavia wanted self rule
- The first nation to defy the Soviet Union was Lithuania
 - Declared independence in March 1990
 - In Jan. 1991, Soviet troops attacked civilians in Lithuania's capital, killing 14.

Yeltsin Denounces Gorbachev

- No economic progress and the attack on Lithuania damaged Gorbachev's popularity
- Boris Yeltsin was Russia's first directly elected president
- Both faced problems from *Hardliners*, or conservatives who opposed reform.
 - Angry at the loss of the Soviets dominant rule in eastern Europe.

Boris Yeltsin



The End of the Soviet Union

- August 18, 1991- Hardliners detained Gorbachev at his vacation home
- The coup sparked anger against the Soviet party.
- The Soviet party voted to end all party activities.
 - Estonia and Latvia declared their independence.
 - By December 1991, all 15 republics declared independence.

After the Fall



Poland and Hungary Reform

- Poland and Hungary were amongst the first to embrace reform
- Workers went on strike demanding that their union, *Solidarity*, to be recognized
- The government did not agree, and the workers walked off jobs.
- Led to the voting out of the Communists, and the electing of Lech Walesa as president.

Germany Reunifies

- In 1989, Hungary allowed East German tourists across the border into Austria, then to West Germany.
 - In response, East Germany closed its borders.
- In October 1989, demonstrations had broken out in East Germany.
- A new East German leader opened the Berlin Wall on November 9th, 1989.
 - With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the communist party in East Germany fell the same year.
- Germany was reunified on Oct. 3, 1990

The Fall of the Berlin Wall



The Breakup of Yugoslavia

- Had many major ethnic groups
- After the president's death, ethnic differences boiled over.
 - Slovenia and Croatia declared independence.
- Serbian-led Yugoslav army invaded both countries.
 - Bosnia-Herzegovina declared independence in 1992.
- Serbians committed genocide against the Muslim population in Bosnia.
- Later that year, all parties involved signed a UN brokered peace treaty.

The breakup of Yugoslavia



Rebellion in Kosovo

- In 1998, violence erupted in the Balkans.
- The source of the violence was an independence movement, where the government was forced to respond harshly.
- Diplomatic solutions failed
 - NATO responded by starting a bombing campaign against Yugoslavia in the spring of 1999.

Bombing of Yugoslavia



Effects of the Fall of the Soviet Union

- Post Soviet countries struggled to adopt democracy.
 - Heavy ethnic conflicts
- A loose federation of former Soviet republics was formed, called the *Commonwealth of Independent States*.
- Today they still struggle in the void of communism.