

The Decline of the Soviet Union

1953 Stalin dies, replaced by Nikita Khrushchev

Policy of “**destalinization**” – removing everything installed by the Russian dictator

Back in 1950 Mao + Stalin signed a 30-year Friendship Treaty

In 1959 Khrushchev punished China for not sharing nuclear secrets

The two countries agreements became tense, their split grew wider, fighting seen at their borders.

1956 Revolt in Hungary

Imre Nagy (even though a communist) promotes free elections and that Soviets leave Hungary.

In November Soviet tanks roll into Budapest. The Russian government takes over, Nagy is executed.

1964 Khrushchev voted out of office after “defeat” in the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The new premier is Leonid Brezhnev

His first plans are to limit human rights, stop freedom of speech and worship, and reinstall the secret police.

Czechoslovakia – Alexander Dubcek attempts reforms against the Soviet control.

- 1968 Soviet tanks roll into Prague

President Richard Nixon – Policy of **Détente** – lessened Cold War tensions

1972 - Nixon goes to China, affects Soviet feelings towards United States

- Nixon and Brezhnev sign SALT I Treaty – Strategic Arms Limitation Talks.

1975 – Helsinki Accords – 33 nations join Soviet Union and USA into world policy of Détente

1979 – President Carter and Brezhnev sign SALT II – but U.S. Congress does not ratify.

1981 – President Reagan (anti-communist) begins “Star Wars” – Strategic Defense Initiative

1985 – Mikhail Gorbachev – new premier chosen by the Politburo

(Ruling committee of communist party)

Goal is to have economic and social reforms through a flow of ideas and information

1985 – **Glasnost** (Openness) created.

Soviets to discuss ways to improve their society: churches opened to the people,

Dissidents freed from jails, once banned books now become available, criticism of

Government policies and officials now accepted.

1985 – **Perestroika** (Economic Restructuring) installed by Gorbachev.

The goal is not to throw out communism but make it more efficient and productive.

Reforms in Eastern Europe

1978 – A Polish Archbishop become Pope John Paul II

1980 – The **Polish Solidarity Movement** begins

Union ship builders strike in Gdansk. The local union leader Lech Walesa wins his cause and becomes a national hero

Solidarity defeats communism

1989 and 1990 free elections take place in Poland. Lech Walesa become Poland's president.

1989 – Hungary follows in Poland's footsteps.

The European Communist Party sees Polish reforms and votes itself out of existence

1989 – Open Policy allows visitors visas to East Germans. This allows East Germans to cross from Hungary into Austria and then they can travel into West Germany. East German government in turmoil over these actions

1994 – The Socialist Party takes power in Hungary.

1989 – East German government collapses after intense pressure from the West and the flood of East Germans back into West Germany via Hungary and Austria.

1989 – November 9th, due to intense pressure the Berlin Wall is opened. Thousands celebrate. By the end of the year the East German Communist Party ceases to exist.

Reunification of Germany takes place.

World feels threatened by another German super-nation emerging. West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl vows to the world that once reunited in 1990 Democracy and Human Rights will run the new German nation.

1989 – Czechoslovakia – After seeing East Germany fall demonstrations in Prague, police attacked protestors. Population rebels and 500,000 fill the center of Prague in protest to brutality. The people revolt against the system and that year the Czech Politburo resigns.

1989 – Christmas Day in Romania sees the collapse of their government regime. General elections in 1990 and 1992 sees the start of capitalism in Romania

1990 – Lithuania declares independence from the Soviet Union. Gorbachev orders a blockade of the country

1991 – January, Soviet troops attack demonstrators

1991 – June elections see Boris Yeltsin emerge against Gorbachev claiming his reforms are going too slowly. Yeltsin and Gorbachev in dispute.

August sees Gorbachev held hostage in his summer home on the Black Sea. The military, allied with Gorbachev attempts a coup against Yeltsin in Moscow. Troops and tanks turn back and refuse to arrest Yeltsin. Boris Yeltsin rules for the people. The Soviet Union collapses.

Estonia and Lithuania declare their own independence.

The **C.I.S. - Commonwealth of Independent States** is formed.