

# A New Era Begins, 1989-Present

## THE STORY MATTERS...

The Berlin Wall stood as a potent symbol of the division of the world into two hostile camps during the Cold War. From 1961 to 1989, the Berlin Wall separated West and East Berlin, dividing families and limiting travel across the border. In a major Cold War speech in 1987, U.S. president Ronald Reagan stood in front of the Brandenburg Gate of the Berlin Wall as he challenged the Soviet leader: “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” In 1989 the East German government finally ended the political division between West and East.

## Lesson 34-1

# End of the Cold War

### READING HELPDESK

#### Academic Vocabulary

demonstration collapse

#### Content Vocabulary

perestroika glasnost  
ethnic cleansing autonomous

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What motivates political change?
- How can economic and social changes affect a country?

### IT MATTERS BECAUSE

Most Western European countries recovered rapidly from World War I. The United States experienced an economic boom after World War I but was troubled by social and political issues.

## Gorbachev and Perestroika

**GUIDING QUESTION** *How did Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms change the Soviet Union?*

By 1980, the Soviet Union was ailing. It had a declining economy, a rise in infant mortality rates, a dramatic surge in alcoholism, and poor working conditions. Within the Communist Party, a small group of reformers emerged. One was Mikhail Gorbachev. When the party chose him as leader in March 1985, a new era began.

From the start, Gorbachev preached the need for radical reforms based on *perestroika* (PEHR • uh • STRAWIH • kuh) or restructuring. At first, this meant restructuring economic policy. Gorbachev envisioned a market economy more responsive to consumers. It was to have limited free enterprise so that some businesses would be privately owned and operated. He realized, however, that reforming the economy would not work without political reform. He hoped to achieve this through *glasnost*, or openness, a policy that encouraged Soviet citizens and officials to discuss openly the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet Union. At the 1988 Communist Party conference, Gorbachev set up a new Soviet parliament of elected members, the Congress of People's Deputies. It met

in 1989. He then created a new state presidency. Under the old system, the first secretary of the Communist Party (Gorbachev's position) had been the most important in the Soviet Union. In March 1990, Gorbachev became the Soviet Union's first-and last-president.

Mikhail Gorbachev's accession to power in 1985 also eventually brought a dramatic end to the Cold War. His willingness to rethink Soviet foreign policy led to stunning changes.

Gorbachev made an agreement with the United States in 1987, the Intermediate-Range INF Treaty, to eliminate intermediate-range nuclear weapons. Both Gorbachev and U.S. president Ronald Reagan wanted to slow down the arms race. They sought to reduce their military budgets to solve domestic problems. Gorbachev hoped to focus resources on social and economic change. The United States wanted to cut its national debt, which had tripled during the Reagan presidency.

Gorbachev also stopped giving Soviet military support to Communist governments in Eastern Europe. This opened the door to the overthrow of Communist regimes. A mostly peaceful revolutionary movement swept through Eastern Europe in 1989. The reunification of Germany on October 3, 1990, was a powerful symbol of the end of the Cold War. In 1991 the Soviet Union itself was dissolved. The long rivalry between the two superpowers was over.

### READING PROGRESS CHECK

**Describing** How did Gorbachev's reforms affect Soviet foreign relations?

## Revolutions in Eastern Europe

**GUIDING QUESTION** *How did popular revolutions help end Communist regimes in Eastern Europe?*

When Gorbachev decided the Soviets would no longer send troops to support the governments of the satellite countries, revolutions broke out throughout Eastern Europe. A look at three Eastern European states shows how the process worked.

Workers' protests led to demands for change in Poland. In 1980, a worker named Lech Walesa (lehk vah •

LEHN • suh) organized a national trade union known as Solidarity. Solidarity gained the support of the workers and of the Roman Catholic Church, which was under the leadership of Pope John Paul II, the first Polish pope. Even when Walesa was arrested, the movement continued. Finally, in 1988, the Polish regime agreed to free parliamentary elections – the first free elections in Eastern Europe in 40 years. A new government was elected, ending 45 years of Communist rule.

In December 1990, Walesa was chosen as president. Poland's new path, however, was not easy. Rapid free-market reforms led to severe unemployment. Aleksander Kwasniewski, who succeeded Walesa, continued Poland's move toward an increasingly prosperous free-market economy and democracy. Recent presidents have emphasized the need to combine modernization with tradition.

The Soviets crushed and then repressed the Czechoslovakian reform movement of 1968. Writers and other intellectuals continued to oppose the government, but they at first had little success. Then in 1988 and 1989, mass demonstrations took place throughout Czechoslovakia. By November 1989, crowds as large as 500,000 were forming in Prague.

In December 1989, the Communist government collapsed. At the end of that month, Václav Havel (VAHT • slahf HAH • vehl), a writer who had played an important role in bringing down the Communist government, became the new president. Havel was an eloquent spokesperson for Czech democracy and a new order in Europe.

The new government soon faced old ethnic conflicts. The Czechs and Slovaks agreed to a peaceful division of Czechoslovakia, which split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Havel became the first president of the Czech Republic, and Michal Kovac became the first president of Slovakia.

Under its second president, Vaclav Klaus, the Czech Republic had one of the most stable and prosperous economies of the post-Communist Eastern European states. Slovakia managed to make the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy.

Communist leader Nicolae Ceau-escu (nee. kaw • LY chau • SHEHS • ko) ruled Romania with an iron grip, using secret police to crush all dissent. Nonetheless, opposition grew. His economic policies led to a sharp drop in living standards. Food shortages caused rationing. In December 1989, the secret police murdered thousands of people who were peacefully demonstrating. Finally, the army refused to support any more repression. Ceau-escu and his wife were captured and executed. A new government was quickly formed.

Former Communists dominated the government until 1996. Twenty-five years after the end of Communist rule, Romanians elected center-right candidate Klaus Iohannis to succeed Traian Basescu who was limited from serving another term.

### READING PROGRESS CHECK

**Identifying** What role did protesters play in the new governments that formed after the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe?

## End of the Soviet Union

**GUIDING QUESTION** *How did the Soviet Union fall?*

The Soviet Union was made of 15 separate republics that included 92 ethnic groups and 112 different languages. As Gorbachev released the iron grip of the Communist Party, centered in Moscow, old ethnic tensions came to the forefront. Nationalist movements began. In 1989 and 1990, calls for independence came first in Soviet Georgia and then in the Baltic States (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia), Moldova, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan.

The conservative leaders of the traditional Soviet institutions—the army, government, KGB, and military industries—were worried that the breakup of the Soviet Union would end their privileges. On August 19, 1991, a group of these conservative leaders arrested Gorbachev and tried to seize power. The attempt failed, however, when Boris Yeltsin, president of the Russian Republic, and thousands of Russians bravely resisted the rebel forces in Moscow.

The Soviet republics now moved for complete independence. Ukraine voted for independence on December 1, 1991. A week later, the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus announced that the Soviet Union had “ceased to exist.”

### READING PROGRESS CHECK

**Analyzing** Why was President Gorbachev arrested on August 19, 1991?

## The New Russia

**GUIDING QUESTION** *What are political, economic, and social challenges faced by the new Russia?*

Gorbachev resigned on December 25, 1991. He turned over his responsibilities as commander-in-chief to Boris Yeltsin, the new president of Russia. By the end of 1991, one of the largest empires in world history had ended.

Boris Yeltsin was committed to introducing a free market economy as quickly as possible, but the transition was not easy. Economic hardships and social disarray were made worse by a dramatic rise in organized crime.

Another problem Yeltsin faced was in Chechnya, a province in the south that wanted to secede from Russia and become independent. Yeltsin used brutal force against the Chechens (CHEH • chuhnz) to keep the province as part of Russia. Yeltsin did not solve this problem, as fighting continued into the year 2000 under his successor.

At the end of 1999, Yeltsin resigned and was replaced by Vladimir Putin, who was elected president in 2000. Putin, a former KGB officer, was widely seen as someone who wanted to keep a tight rein on government power. In July 2001, Putin launched reforms to boost growth and budget revenues. The reforms included the free sale and

purchase of land and tax cuts. In spite of these changes, the business climate remained uncertain, which stifled foreign investment.

Since Putin's reforms Russia has experienced a budget surplus and a growing economy. Russia can attribute much of its economic growth to its oil and gas exports. The country has an estimated 6 percent of the world's oil deposits and about 30 percent of the world's natural gas deposits.

In 2008 Dmitry Medvedev became president of Russia. Putin could not run for reelection because of limits in Russia's constitution, but he became prime minister. However, since Russia's constitution only limits consecutive terms, Putin won the presidency again in 2012 and will be eligible to run for reelection in 2018.

Putin's latest term as president has been witness to controversies that have strained Russia's relationship with much of the world. Russian military interventions in both the Ukrainian revolution of 2014 and the Syrian Civil War of 2015 have been causes for alarm. Russia also faces internal challenges. A drop in the price of crude oil has impacted the Russian economy. Rising alcoholism, criminal activities, and the decline of the traditional family system continue to give Russians concern.

#### READING PROGRESS CHECK

**Describing** What were the effects of Russia's transition to a market economy?

## The Disintegration of Yugoslavia

**GUIDING QUESTION** *How did the fall of the Soviet Union impact Eastern Europe?*

Yugoslavia had a Communist government but was never a Soviet satellite state. After World War II, its dictatorial leader, Josip Broz Tito, worked to keep together the six republics and two provinces that made up Yugoslavia. By 1990, however, the Communist Party collapsed.

The Yugoslav political scene was complex. Slobodan Milosevic (slaw • BAW • dahn muh • LOH • suh • VIHCH), leader of Serbia, rejected efforts toward independence. In Milosevic's view, the borders of the

republic first needed to be redrawn to form a new Greater Serbian state. When negotiations failed, Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence in June 1991. In September 1991, the Yugoslav army attacked Croatia. Increasingly, Serbia dominated the Yugoslav army. Serbian forces captured one-third of Croatia's territory before the conflict ended.

The Serbs next attacked Bosnia-Herzegovina and acquired 70 percent of Bosnian territory. Many Bosnians were Muslims. The Serbs followed a policy called ethnic cleansing toward Bosnians—killing or forcibly removing them from their lands. Ethnic cleansing revived memories of Nazi atrocities in World War II. In 1995, with support from NATO air attacks, Bosnian and Croatian forces regained considerable territory lost to Serbian forces. The Serbs signed a formal peace treaty that split Bosnia into a Serb republic and a Muslim-Croat federation.

A new war erupted in 1998 over Kosovo, an autonomous, or self-governing province within Yugoslavia. After Slobodan Milosevic stripped Kosovo of its autonomy in 1989, groups of ethnic Albanians founded the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and began a campaign against Serbian rule. To crush the KLA, Serb forces massacred ethnic Albanians. The United States and NATO allies worked on a settlement that would end the killing. The Albanians in Kosovo regained their autonomy in 1999. Milosevic's rule ended in 2000. While on trial for his role in the massacre of Kosovo civilians, Milosevic died in 2006.

The last political vestiges of Yugoslavia ceased to exist in 2004 when the government officially renamed the country Serbia and Montenegro. The people of Montenegro voted for independence in 2006; and in 2008, Kosovo declared its independence. Thus, all six republics that formed Yugoslavia in 1918 were again independent nations, and a new one (Kosovo) was born.

#### READING PROGRESS CHECK

**Describing** What role did NATO play in the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia?

### LESSON 34-1 REVIEW

#### Reviewing Vocabulary

1. **Making Inferences** How did the policies of perestroika and glasnost lead to the end of the Soviet Union?

#### Using Your Notes

2. **Comparing** Use your notes to identify similarities among the countries of Eastern Europe after the fall of communist regimes.

#### Answering the Guiding Questions

3. **Making Generalizations** How did Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms change the Soviet Union?
4. **Drawing Conclusions** How did popular revolutions help end Communist regimes in Eastern Europe?
5. **Explaining** How did the Soviet Union fall?
6. **Assessing** What are the political, economic, and social challenges faced by the new Russia?
7. **Analyzing** How did the fall of the Soviet Union impact Eastern Europe?

#### Writing Activity

8. **Informative/Explanatory** Research and write an essay about how life has changed in Russia since the fall of the Soviet Union.