

**CHAPTER 35** Section 3 (pages 1046–1051)

# The Collapse of the Soviet Union

## BEFORE YOU READ

In the last section, you read about political conflicts in Africa.

In this section, you will read about the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of Russia.

## AS YOU READ

Use the time line below to take notes on key events leading up to and following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

### TERMS AND NAMES

**Politburo** Ruling committee of the Communist Party

**Mikhail Gorbachev** Leader of the Soviet Union from 1985 to 1991

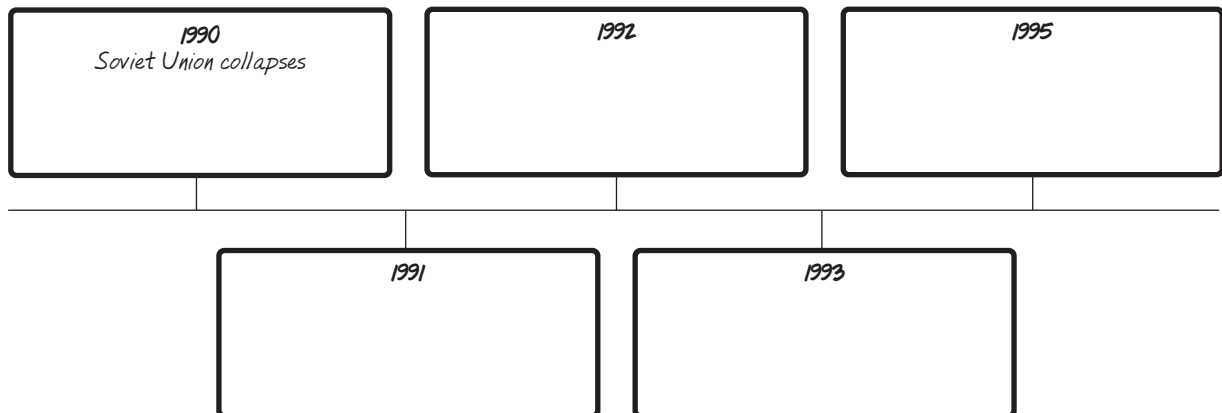
**glasnost** Gorbachev’s policy of openness

**perestroika** Gorbachev’s policy aimed at reforming the Soviet economy

**Boris Yeltsin** Political opponent of Gorbachev who became president of Russia

**CIS** Commonwealth of Independent States, a loose federation of former Soviet territories

**“shock therapy”** Yeltsin’s plan for changing the Soviet economy



## Gorbachev Moves Toward Democracy (page 1046)

### *How did Gorbachev open up Soviet society?*

During the 1960s and 1970s, the leaders of the Soviet Union kept tight control on society. Leonid Brezhnev and the **Politburo**—the ruling committee of the Communist Party—crushed all political dissent. In 1985, Communist Party leaders named **Mikhail Gorbachev** as the leader of the Soviet Union. He was the youngest Soviet leader since Joseph Stalin. He was expected to make minor reforms. But his reforms led to a revolution.

Gorbachev felt that Soviet society could not improve without the free flow of ideas. He started a policy called **glasnost**, or openness. He opened churches. He let political prisoners out of prison. He allowed books to be published that in the past had been *banned*.

#### 1. What was Gorbachev’s policy of glasnost?

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## Reforming the Economy and Politics (page 1047)

*What changes did Gorbachev make in the Soviet economy and politics?*

Gorbachev began a policy called **perestroika**, or economic restructuring. It tried to improve the Soviet economy by lifting the tight control on all managers and workers.

In 1987, Gorbachev opened up the political system by allowing the Soviet people to elect representatives to a legislature.

Finally, Gorbachev changed Soviet foreign policy. He moved to end the arms race against the United States.

### 2. What was Gorbachev's policy of perestroika?

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## The Soviet Union Faces Turmoil

(pages 1048–1050)

*What problems did the Soviet Union face?*

People from many different ethnic groups in the Soviet Union began calling for the right to have their own nation. In 1990, Lithuania declared itself independent. Gorbachev sent troops. They fired on a crowd and killed 14 people. This action and the slow pace of reform cost Gorbachev support among the Soviet people.

Many people began to support **Boris Yeltsin**. Old-time Communists were becoming angry at Gorbachev. They thought his changes made the Soviet Union weaker. In August 1991, they tried to take control of the government. When the army refused to back the *coup* leaders, they gave up.

To strike back, the parliament voted to ban the party from any political activity. Meanwhile, more republics in the Soviet Union declared their independence. Russia and the 14 other republics each became independent states. Most of the republics then agreed to form the Commonwealth of Independent States, or **CIS**, a loose *federation* of former Soviet territories. By the end of 1991, the Soviet Union had ceased to exist.

### 3. Name three events that led up to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

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## Russia Under Boris Yeltsin (page 1050)

*What happened when Gorbachev lost power?*

After the coup failed, Gorbachev lost all power. Yeltsin became the most powerful Russian leader. As president of Russia, he faced many problems. He tried to change the economy. His economic plan was known as “**shock therapy**.” This move toward capitalism caused suffering.

In addition, rebels in the small republic of Chechnya declared their independence from Russia. Yeltsin refused to allow it. He sent thousands of troops to put down the Chechen rebels. As a bloody war raged, Yeltsin resigned and named Vladimir Putin as president.

### 4. What decisions did Yeltsin make about the economy?

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## Russia Under Vladimir Putin

(page 1051)

*How did Putin handle the situation in Chechnya?*

Putin dealt harshly with the rebellion in Chechnya but the rebellion dragged on for years. Chechen rebels seized a theater in Moscow and more than 100 people died.

Economic troubles continued as Russia dealt with social upheaval caused by years of change and reform. Social problems included homeless children, domestic violence, and unemployment, as well as declines in population, standard of living, and life expectancy.

### 5. What were some of the signs of social distress in Russia?

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