

The Collapse of the Soviet Union – Outline

I. Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

- a. Better known as the Soviet Union or USSR
- b. Formed officially in 1922
- c. Eventually contained 15 republics
 - i. Today's Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Latvia, and Estonia
 - ii. Formed from Russia, it's former territories, and territories acquired following World War II
- d. Fell apart in 1991

II. Soviet Leaders

- a. Vladimir Lenin, 1917-1924
- b. Joseph Stalin, 1924-1953
- c. Georgy Malenkov, 1953-1955
- d. Nikita Khrushchev, 1955-1964
- e. Leonid Brezhnev, 1964-1982
- f. Yuri Andropov, 1982-1984
- g. Konstantin Chernenko, 1984-1985
- h. Mikhail Gorbachev, 1985-1991

III. Early history

- a. Russian Revolution
 - i. Russia and its territories still largely unindustrialized
 - ii. Revolution overthrew the tsar
- b. Russian Civil War
 - i. Red (Bolsheviks) eventually beat the Whites
 - ii. Bloody conflict
 - iii. Whites assisted by foreign powers such as the United States
 - 1. Reds saw foreign powers as threats to the fledgling Soviet state
 - iv. Left country in worse shape than before the revolution

IV. Vladimir Lenin's leadership

- a. NEP – new economic policy
 - i. Allowed for some degree of private enterprise
- b. Attempted to improve the Russian/Soviet economy without foreign assistance
- c. Desire to spread communist revolution worldwide

V. Joseph Stalin's Five-Year Plans

- a. Replaced the NEP
- b. Command economy focused on increased production of agriculture and heavy industry
- c. Little production of consumer goods

VI. World War II

- a. Country still not on par with the rest of Europe when Germany invaded
- b. Country was left devastated by the fighting

- i. Millions upon millions killed
 - ii. Cities bombed beyond recognition
 - iii. Fields and crops destroyed
- c. Recovery long and hard
 - i. No outside assistance
 - ii. Superpower
 - iii. Had to rebuild USSR while securing hold on Eastern Europe (iron curtain)

VII. Stalin's harsh regime

- a. Totalitarian regime
 - i. No freedom of speech
 - ii. No tolerance for dissidents
 - iii. Harsh censorship
 - iv. Enormous amounts of propaganda
 - v. Soviet realism in art
- b. Gulags – forced labor camps for “enemies of the state”
 - i. Dissidents, undesirables, religious people, etc.

VIII. De-Stalinization

- a. After Stalin died in 1953, Khrushchev eventually came to power
- b. De-Stalinization was the attempt to do away with the totalitarian remnants of Stalin's regime
- c. Greater freedom of speech
 - i. For example, formerly banned books were now in print
- d. Many dissidents were released from gulags and prisons
- e. Production of consumer goods increased
- f. Firm control continued
 - i. Hungarian uprising, 1956 – put down by Khrushchev
 - ii. Prague spring, 1968 – put down by Brezhnev

IX. USSR's command economy after World War II

- a. Soviets rebuilt their industrial base with German equipment
- b. Space race
 - i. *Sputnik I* launched in 1957
 - ii. Yuri Gagarin first person in space in 1961
 - iii. Valentina Tereshkova first woman in space in 1963
- c. Arms race
 - i. Competition with the U.S. to have the largest arsenal
 - 1. At the expense of manufacturing consumer goods
 - a. Consumer goods inferior
 - b. Luxury items very rare
 - ii. Massive military budget
 - 1. Many historians believe that the U.S.A. won the Cold War by outspending and bankrupting the U.S.S.R.
- d. Agriculture
 - i. Collective agriculture highly unproductive
 - ii. Soviet Union forced to import grain
- e. Bureaucracy
 - i. Production levels determined by Moscow rather than by plant managers
 - ii. Local needs not addressed
- f. Workforce
 - i. Guaranteed employment
 - ii. Little motivation to do quality work

X. Soviet Union's "Vietnam" – Afghanistan

- a. 1970s – Soviet Union backed a communist government in Afghanistan
 - i. This government attempted to redistribute land according to communist ideals
 - ii. Afghan warlords (who owned the land) fought against land redistribution
- b. 1979 – Brezhnev sent in Soviet troops
 - i. Warlords supported by mujahedin
 - 1. Mujahedin – Muslim religious fighters
 - 2. Hated the atheism of communism
 - 3. Also opposed to foreign intervention
 - ii. Soviet troops fought in Afghanistan for years with limited results
- c. 1980s – United States became involved
 - i. Afghanistan became in some ways another “proxy war” of the Cold War
 - ii. American government sent weapons to mujahedin such as Osama bin Laden

XI. Mikhail Gorbachev's rule

- a. Came to power in 1985
- b. Foreign policies
 - i. Removed Soviet troops from Afghanistan
 - ii. Signed nuclear disarmament treaties with the U.S. under President Ronald Reagan
- c. Domestic policies
 - i. Glasnost – policy of openness
 - ii. Perestroika – restructuring of the Soviet economy and government
 - iii. Shrunk the bureaucracy
 - iv. Allowed some degree of private enterprise
 - v. Increased local control
 - vi. Farmers' markets

XII. Collapse of the Soviet Union

- a. Results of reforms
 - i. Inflation
 - ii. Increased shortages
 - iii. Unemployment
 - iv. Sparked unrest in satellite states and republics
 - 1. 1989 – Bulgaria and Poland free of Soviet control
 - 2. 1991 – Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) independent
- b. Failed coup d'état
 - i. Military-backed hardliners attempted to oust Gorbachev
 - ii. Failed, but Gorbachev still resigned
 - iii. Remaining Soviet republics separated
 - 1. Commonwealth of Independent States formed from several former republics
 - 2. CIS now largely defunct
 - iv. No more Soviet Union

XIII. Russia as an independent country

- a. Boris Yeltsin
 - i. First president of Russia, 1991-1999
- b. Vladimir Putin
 - i. President, 2000-2008
- c. Dmitry Medvedev
 - i. President since 2008
 - ii. But Vladimir Putin still in control of country as prime minister