Russia: Historical Foundations

Historic Highlights 1917-1985

1917

Russian Revolution

- Causes
  - political, economic & social
  - World War I
- Key figures
  - Nicholas II (1894-1917)
  - Alexander Kerensky
  - V.I. Lenin & the Bolsheviks
  - Lenin's interpretation of Karl Marx
  - Party was “vanguard of the people”

Historic Highlights 1918-1921

Russian Civil War

- Reds (communists) v. Whites (anti-communist coalition)
- Trotsky and the Red Army
- Failure of Lenin's War Communism
- Reds were victorious
- Russia physically and economically destroyed by civil war
### Historic Highlights 1917-1985

#### 1921

**Lenin’s NEP**
- Lenin’s New Economic Policy—plan to rebuild destroyed Russian economy
  - allowed some elements of free enterprise capitalism (small businesses)
  - large industries remained nationalized
- Results: successful initially, but NEP was derailed by Lenin’s death (1924)

#### 1924-1927

**Power Struggle**
- Trotsky and Stalin battled for control of the Soviet Union
- Stalin won; Trotsky went into exile
- Economy worsened during the power struggle

#### 1928-1953

**Soviet Union under Stalin**
- Pre-WWII
  - Industrial 5-year plans (command economy)
  - Collectivization of Agriculture (command economy)
  - Great Purge Trials
- World War II
- Post-WWII
  - Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe
  - Cold War

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**Russia: Historical Foundations**
Historic Highlights 1917-1985

1958-1964

The Khrushchev Years
• “destalinization”
• Cold War
  – talked of “peaceful coexistence”
  – U2 Affair (1960)
  – Cuban Missile Crisis (1962)
• Poor relations with Communist China
• Attempted to reform the economy
• Forced to resign by the Politburo

Nikita Khrushchev
Addressing the UN's General Assembly, 1960

Historic Highlights 1917-1985

1964-1982

Period of stagnation: Leonid Brezhnev
• Declining economy
  – grain production fell; it had to be imported
  – economy and technology fell behind that of the west
  – huge amount of money spent on the military
• Brezhnev Doctrine: use force to put down revolts in Eastern Europe
  – Prague Spring (1968)
  – Poland (1970s-early 1980s)

Leonid Brezhnev

Historic Highlights 1917-1985

1982-1984

Yuri Andropov: Attempts at Reform
• Attempted to revitalize Soviet economy and initiate reforms
• Poor health and death slowed reform

Yuri Andropov
Historic Highlights 1917-1985

1984-1985

Konstantin Chernenko

- Return to Brezhnev-like policies: reformed movement squashed
- Died soon after taking office

Russia: Historical Foundations

Mikhail S. Gorbachev, 1985-1991

Background of a leader

- Born and raised on a collective farm in the north Caucasus region
- Worked at a machine-tractor factory
- Studied law, politics and agriculture
- Rose up the ranks of the Communist Party
  - Joined the Communist Party in 1952
  - Became regional party chief for Stavropol
- Became general secretary of the Communist Party upon the death of Chernenko (1985)

Russia: Historical Foundations

Mikhail S. Gorbachev, 1985-1991

Economic reform: perestroika

- “Economic restructuring”
  - Characteristics and goals
    - encouraged free market capitalism for small businesses
    - allowed more local and regional decision making (less Moscow-centered command economy)
    - attempted to reform failing agricultural sector
    - hoped to raise the standard of living for Soviet citizens
    - make Soviet economy more competitive
  - Results: significant changes to Soviet economy and life
    - many citizens lost jobs, health insurance, and security
    - weakened the Soviet Union more than it strengthened it

Russia: Historical Foundations
### Chernobyl Disaster 1986: World’s Largest Nuclear Reactor Accident

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- human error (emergency water cooling system turned off)</td>
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<td>- reactor (#4) had no containment structure</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Effects</th>
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<td>- 31 immediately killed and 500 hospitalized</td>
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<tr>
<td>- radiation spread in western Soviet Union and Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>- thousands live with illnesses related to radiation</td>
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<tr>
<td>- cancer</td>
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<td>- immune deficiency (known as “Chernobyl AIDS”)</td>
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<td>- Greenpeace estimates that in the 20 years since the disaster 93 million people have died resulting from Chernobyl-related cancer</td>
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| Political results: encouraged Gorbachev to expand glasnost            |

### Political reform: glasnost

- “openness”
- Goal: Soviet government would be more open about what was happening in the country
- Characteristics for citizens
  - could criticize the government
  - given more freedom of speech and press
  - greater access to foreign ideas, news, culture and products
- Results
  - increased Soviet criticism of Soviet society and even Gorbachev
  - hastened the process of Soviet decline

### Political reform: democratization (demokratizatsiia)

- Democratization
  - process of democratic reform
  - experimenting with some elements of democracy
- Goal: make the government more responsive to popular sentiments
  - competitive elections (allowed non-communists to run)
  - ended one-party rule (1990)
- Results
  - increased demands for self-determination in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe
  - radicals gained influence, especially those who argued Gorbachev was not changing the Soviet Union enough in terms of capitalism and democracy
Mikhail S. Gorbachev, 1985-1991

Growth of nationalism
- Gorbachev's reform movement increased nationalism in multi-ethnic Soviet Union
- Demands for self-determination
  - Within Soviet Union
    - Baltic republics (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia)
    - Ukraine
    - Belarus
  - Eastern European satellite state
- Results: one of the major factors that led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union

Mikhail S. Gorbachev, 1985-1991

Foreign Policy: “New Thinking”
- “New Thinking”
  - rethinking of international relations in nonmilitary terms
  - emphasized cooperation, not competition with the West
- Eased Cold War tensions with the United States
  - dialogues with US President Reagan and British Prime Minister Thatcher
  - nuclear disarmament treaties (ex. Moscow Treaty 1988)
- Soviet Union pulled out of unpopular Afghan War (1979-89)
- Allowed Eastern European states to overthrow communist governments and declare independence from Soviet sphere

Mikhail S. Gorbachev, 1985-1991

Collapse of the Soviet Union and Fall of Gorbachev
- Failure of perestroika
- Soviet Constitutional Reform (late 1980s-1991)
  - formation of the Congress of People's Deputies (legislative body)
  - loss of one-party rule
- Growth of nationalism and self-determination
- Failed 1991 coup d’ état: attempt by hard-line communist to oust Gorbachev and return Soviet authority to former days
- Leadership of Boris Yeltsin
- The final days of the Soviet Union
  - Baltic states, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine declared independence
  - Gorbachev resigned and Soviet Union dissolved itself (12/1991)
**Boris Yeltsin, 1991-1999**

As leader of the Russian Republic, 1991-93

- Elected president of Russian Republic, 1991 (first popularly elected official in Russian history)
- Yeltsin's goals
  - make Russia democratic
  - make Russia capitalistic
- Given Russia’s history, challenges were extraordinary and difficult to meet

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**Boris Yeltsin, 1991-1999**

The 1993 Rebellion: A Background of Conflict

- **Power struggle:** Conflict between Yeltsin and the Russian parliament. Yeltsin was given extraordinary powers. Parliament wanted to reduce his power:
  - Yeltsin could issue decrees which had the power of law
  - Yeltsin could appoint heads of regional governments
  - Yeltsin declared himself to be prime minister
- **Economic reform:** Yeltsin wanted to initiate radical economic conversion to capitalism: “shock therapy”; opponents wanted to bring about more gradual change.

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**Boris Yeltsin, 1991-1999**

The 1993 Rebellion: The Event

- **Immediate causes**
  - Parliament attempted to impeach Yeltsin
  - Yeltsin dissolved parliament
- **The Revolt**
  - many key Parliamentary leaders barricaded themselves into the parliament building (the “White House”), attacked a nearby radio station, and declared their own president (Alexander Rutskoi)
  - legislators exchanged gunfire with Moscow police
- **Yeltsin’s response**
  - cut off electricity and water supply
  - military supported Yeltsin, stormed the parliament and forced the legislators to surrender; 100 killed
  - proposed a new constitution
**Boris Yeltsin, 1991-1999**

**The 1993 Constitution: Highlights**
- Semi-presidential system
- Asymmetrical federal system
- Extremely powerful president
  - head of state
  - names prime minister (must be approved by Duma)
  - appoints government ministers (cabinet)
  - introduces policy
  - appoints the commander-in-chief of the military
  - issues decrees
  - can temporarily suspend civil freedoms

**Boris Yeltsin, 1991-1999**

**The 1993 Constitution: Highlights**
- Bicameral legislature
  - Duma (lower house)
  - Federation Council (upper house)
- Yeltsin had the proposed 1993 Constitution approved by a referendum (plebiscite)—December 1993
  - 58.4% approved the constitution
  - 54.8% turned out to vote

**Boris Yeltsin, 1991-1999**

**Conflict in Chechnya (1994-present)**
- Background on Chechnya
  - region in southwestern Russia
  - growth of Chechen nationalism: different language, religion, and culture than Russia
  - Chechnya demanded greater autonomy from Russian state
  - Yeltsin’s desire to keep Chechnya as an integral part of Russia
- First Chechen War (1994-96)
  - bloody warfare, much of it in the Chechen capital Grozny
  - failure of Russia to win demonstrated the ineptness of the Russian military
  - Yeltsin lost popularity at home
  - war ended in a truce, but resumed later
### Boris Yeltsin, 1991-1999

**1996 Presidential Election: Background**
- Yeltsin was predicted to lose the election
  - Unpopular war in Chechnya
  - Discontent due to unpaid wages and pensions among state employees (like teachers)
  - Perceived as an overweight drunk
- Communists, led by Gennadii Zyuganov, were expected to win (based on the victory of the Communist Party in the 1995 parliamentary elections)

### Boris Yeltsin, 1991-1999

**1996 Presidential Election: The Campaigns**
- **Yeltsin**
  - Portrayed himself as a reformer and a stabilizing force
  - Sought to win the youth vote (used MTV-like campaign ads)
  - Personal: Lost 20 lbs.; appeared in active settings
  - Ended the war in Chechnya; Paid state workers
  - Turned the election into a campaign against going back to communism
- **Zyuganov**
  - Took advantage of the well organized communist party apparatus
  - Sought to gain the support of the right wing nationalists (all but wacko Zhirinovsky invited to join)
  - Gave confused message regarding property
  - Unlike Yeltsin, did not effectively use the media

### Boris Yeltsin, 1991-1999

**1996 Presidential Election: The Elections**
- **Round 1** (69.8% voter turnout)
  - Yeltsin 35%
  - Zyuganov 32%
- **Round 2** (68.9% voter turnout)
  - Yeltsin 53.8%
  - Zyuganov 40.31%
Boris Yeltsin, 1991-1999

The 1998 Crisis
- Political crisis
  - Parliament and Yeltsin disagreed over Yeltsin’s nominations of prime ministers
  - Parliament attempted to impeach Yeltsin
  - continued corruption in government
- Economic crisis
  - difficulty in the transition to capitalism
  - lack of economic security in Russian life (employment, health care, pensions)
  - Shortage of food and fuel
  - devaluation of the Russian ruble (the currency)
- Yeltsin’s declining health: heart trouble, heavy eating and drinking

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