

A2 The Cold War, c1945 – i1991



The ending of the Cold War, 1985-1991

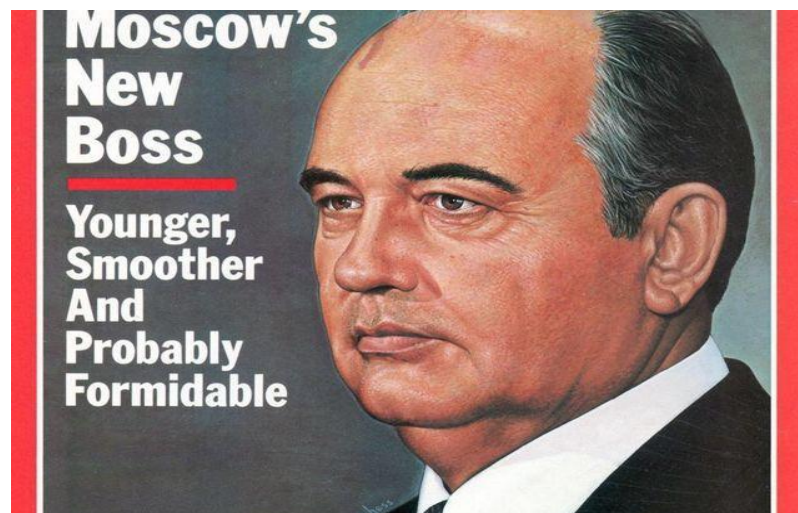
Pressures on and significance of Gorbachev's a Soviet leader

Problems associated with the Brezhnev era

Under Brezhnev, the USSR tried to deal with the failed agricultural policies that had plagued the Soviet Union. In 1972, the USSR suffered a series of crop failures, leading to food shortages. Furthermore, the USSR was spending a tremendous amount of money on its military programme. After the Cuban Missile Crisis it had been determined that the Soviet navy needed to be upgraded and the space programme was using substantial resources. Thus, approximately 25% of Soviet GNP (gross national product) from 1964 to 1982 was spent on Soviet military supplies in the hope of closing the gap between the USSR and the USA.

However Brezhnev was successful in reversing some of the effects of collectivisation, and instead allowed farmers to return to working on state owned plots, giving them an incentive of keeping or selling surplus products for reaching their goals. Brezhnev also tried to increase productivity in consumer goods, through the Ninth and Tenth Five Year Plans, however the availability of these goods remained limited. The USSR suffered another poor harvest in 1975, which exacerbated the economic distress that the country faced. To keep the citizens of the USSR and Eastern Europe fed; Brezhnev had to increase agricultural imports. This was at the expense of the promised increase in consumer goods.

Brezhnev died in November 1982, leaving behind an aged, stagnant political leadership. He was succeeded by Yuri Andropov and then Konstantin Chernenko, neither of whom had the political clout to effect the change. However the aged authority was diminishing, and Chernenko's death in March 1985 paved the way for change in the form of his successor, Mikhail Gorbachev, who inherited the economic crisis. He realised that the Soviet system, and indeed communism itself, was failing to deliver progressive improvements relative to the west.



Gorbachev's initial response to the economic problems of the Soviet Union

Gorbachev linked mediocre economic growth to political, ideological and foreign policy problems. If the economy could be made to expand and become more efficient, then these problems would be reduced.



“Without an acceleration of the country’s economic and social development, it will be impossible to maintain our positions on the international scene.”

The Soviet Union’s economic system was based on an inflexible system of central planning, which determined output targets and tended to reject innovation by management and the introduction of new ideas to maximise productivity. There were a number of factors which had served to undermine Soviet economic growth:

- Alcoholism: This was a common feature of Soviet life. It led losses in productivity through worker absenteeism and frequent workplace injuries.
- A lack of foreign investment: The USSR was largely closed to foreign investment, this stifled growth and business innovation. The state held the absolute monopoly.
- State controlled businesses: The monopoly the state had over business was focused on centralised control and planning and there was little recognition of consumer demand.
- Inflation and worker discontent: Workers wages rarely stayed in line with inflation. This led to unrest and frequent strikes, which in turn undermined productivity.

‘New Thinking’ and its practicalities

The first major reform of the Gorbachev era targeted alcohol. Prices were raised on wine, beer, vodka and the places and times for selling alcohol were restricted. There were arrests for public drunkenness and for being intoxicated at work.



Perestroika

Perestroika (meaning 'restructuring' and referring to the political, economic and social reforms) was the key to Gorbachev's economic reforms which were designed to improve the performance of the economy. Planning was to become decentralised and some degree of self-management was permitted without the loss of state ownership of the factories and other business enterprises. This would allow managers to implement economic changes without having to wait for the Soviet Planning agency, GOSPLAN, to make decisions at a local level.

Another component of the policy was to end state price controls, however at first this would lead to increased prices and a lower standard of living. It was hoped that *Perestroika* would open up the Soviet Union to foreign investment.

New economic laws

The Law on Joint Ventures allowed foreign ownership of no more than 49% of business, although this was extended to 100% by 1990. Also the 1988 Law on State Enterprises aimed to decentralise authority and devolve decision-making down to businesses and enterprise themselves.

Glasnost 'openness'

In 1986, both the challenges and necessity of reform became apparent with the Chernobyl disaster and the release of dissident Andrei Sakharov.

Andrei Sakharov

One of the Soviet Union's most outspoken critics, nuclear physicist Dr Andrei Sakharov, was ordered into internal exile.

Officials in Moscow were angered by an interview Dr Sakharov gave American television, in which he called for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. He also told American viewers he supported plans to boycott the summer Olympics in Moscow and was in favour of the US sanctions ordered by President Carter in retaliation for the invasion.

Dr Sakharov was credited with creating the first Soviet hydrogen bomb - but later became involved in campaigning for nuclear disarmament.

In April, the explosion at the nuclear reactor in Chernobyl was initially depressed, according to the traditional Soviet censorship policies. However the scale of the disaster, along with Swedish reports of high levels of radiation coming from the Ukraine, forced the Soviets to make the accident public.

Although the accuracy of the reports that came from the Soviet news agency, TASS, could be questioned, it began to release regular reports on the course of the disaster. Upon his release from internal exile, physicist Sakharov travelled throughout the USSR and the world presenting information on the repression of Soviet citizens and the conditions in Soviet prison camps. These two events led to criticisms of government actions, and of the past and how it was officially portrayed within the USSR.



The official recognition and acceptance of this came in 1988, when Gorbachev announced *glasnost*. This policy, translated as 'openness', led to a re-examination of Soviet history and an open debate on past government actions, such as forced collectivisation and Party purges. Former enemies of the state, especially those persecuted by Stalin, were rehabilitated during this period. Gorbachev's government was free to do this as most of the participants of Stalinist policies were now dead, and the criticisms would not cause serious division within the Communist Party leadership.

The economic effects of Soviet foreign policies

Foreign policies were easily the largest drain on the Soviet economy. Furthermore the material support that the Soviet Union provided to its satellite was too costly and unsustainable by the 1980s. The Soviet Union made it clear that cheap exports of fuel and raw materials to Eastern Europe could not continue. This only served to alienate and push Eastern European states closer to the Western capitalist economic system. In 1985 the Secretary-General of Comecon, Syrov, contacted the president of the European Commission

suggesting mutual diplomatic recognition. The whole process ultimately came to a conclusion in June 1988 when the European Commission was able to set up trade and cooperation agreements with individual, starting with Hungary.

The importance of Soviet economic problems

The economy was seen as the crux of the problems in the Soviet Union, and Gorbachev was hoping that his policies would lead to long-desired improvements. In the 70 years, the Soviets had only sporadic periods of growth.

Another issue that arouse was the dependence on foreign grain. Although grain production in the Soviet Union increased, the demand from cities was growing further. Gorbachev encouraged foreign investment, hoping that it would stimulate the struggling economy.

Finally the conflict in Afghanistan was extremely costly. The necessity of withdrawing from that country was as clear as ending the subsidies for Comecon countries. The USSR could not afford war any longer.

The social and political significance of Gorbachev's economic policies

One of the short term problems of the *perestroika* was that while the general public saw a decreased standard of living and was suffering hardships, a small, entrepreneurial class was benefiting from the relaxations. No one wanted a return to pre-Gorbachev censorship, but the economic system failing most of the USSR.

The Gorbachev era saw an end to collectivisation, and a transition to privatisation where farmers were granted long term leases in an attempt to improve productivity. The state still remained the owner of the land, but framers paid for their leases and were taxed on the product.

Gorbachev also faced problems from the corrupt bureaucracy and wanted to remove the apparatchiks (members of the Communist Party). Instead of the reforms he envisioned, vast political changes were let loose that hastened the collapse of the USSR.

The Summits between the USA and the USSR

Gorbachev understood that having a large number of nuclear weapons did not guarantee security for a state. His approach required an end to confrontation and

competition between the super powers. As far as Gorbachev was concerned this meant an end to the Cold War.

Another key element of 'New Thinking' was interdependence. Gorbachev acknowledged that states had common interests and that these could best be served by working together. He brought an end to the traditional Soviet notion of the inevitability of class war between the communists and capitalist states. Reagan also had profound fears of nuclear weapons and was keen to resume discussions. With both leaders having similar goals they decided to meet.

Geneva, November 1985

Gorbachev and Reagan worked towards cutting offensive nuclear weapons by 50%. They also made plans for a provisional agreement on limiting/ eliminating medium-range nuclear missiles. Also they discussed collaboration to end nuclear proliferation to other countries and the banning of chemical weapons.

Although there were no concrete outcomes, the joint statement they issued stated that 'a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought' and went on to refer to the 'importance of preventing any war between the USA and the USSR whether conventional or nuclear.'



One contentious issue was Reagan's idea of Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI). Although he presented it in positive, defensive terms it continued to be a constant source of tension.

Reykjavik, October 1986

The purpose of the summit was to put US-Soviet relations back on track, and in many respects the



summits accomplished this. However little concrete agreements were made as Gorbachev would not discuss things unless Reagan agreed to abandon his plans for SDI. Although it was clear that both sides wanted arms reduction and wanted to discuss human rights and humanitarian issues. Thus Reykjavik was important in that both sides gained insights into each other.

Washington, December 1987

At this summit Reagan and Gorbachev signed the INF Treaty. This agreement was generally regarded as the most significant step taken by the USA and the USSR to bring an arms race to an end. The treaty ended the use of all intermediate-range ballistic and cruise missiles, meaning those that could travel between 500 and 5500 kilometres, and these were destroyed by 1991. By the deadline the USA had destroyed 846 weapons to the USSR's 1846.

The INF Treaty was significant as:

- It was the first time that both the USSR and USA had agreed to remove a whole class of nuclear weapons.
- The USSR made no demands that it should be able to retain 100 SS-20 missiles in defence against China or that the treaty was subject to the withdrawal of the SDI.
- The Soviet Union accepted that British and French nuclear weapons need not be part of the overall deal.
- Gorbachev agreed to withdraw troops from Afghanistan.

Moscow, May-June 1988

The official stated goal of the Moscow Summit was to agree to the Strategic Arms Reduction, or START. This agreement was initially proposed in Geneva and was intended to limit the number of nuclear to 5000 for each side. In total, Gorbachev and Reagan signed seven agreements that included fishing rights and student exchange programmes.

A high point in Reagan's public appearances in Moscow came when he visited the University, his theme was freedom and this showed a shared vision of a Soviet Union free of totalitarian control.

Reagan and 'Star Wars' (SDI)



In March 1983, Reagan directed the military, scientific and industrial communities in the USA to undertake a long-term research project that would eliminate nuclear weapons. Reagan believed that a defence system against ICBM could be created, which would act as an incentive for the Soviet Union to reduce its stocks of these weapons. The Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) proposed the creation of a sophisticated anti-nuclear defence system that could destroy nuclear weapons in space, before they reached their targets.

Although the SDI was never developed, Soviet leadership feared American possession of this technology. With the SDI the USA would have the ability to destroy Soviet nuclear weapons. Critics believed that the technology would be impossible and disparagingly nicknamed it 'Star Wars'.

Western Europeans were divided on the significance of the SDI, Thatcher called in 'pie in the sky' and the French President Mitterrand called for cooperative approach to outer space. Neither of these leaders saw SDI as a real threat.



George H.W. Bush and the US response in 1991

The new president, Bush, realised that the USA should do nothing to undermine the stability of Gorbachev's position as leader. In 1989 Bush visited Poland and Hungary and focused on international stability and he saw Gorbachev's leadership as the most effective way to prove this.

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the satellite states

The satellite states faced the same problems as the Soviet Union. Gorbachev promised reforms and rejection of the Brezhnev Doctrine. However the changes proposed threatened the stability of the apparatchiks.

Traditionally there had been two changes that Eastern European states could not make:

- They could not challenge the authority of the Communist Party
- They could not leave the Warsaw Pact

Poland

Despite the suppression of Solidarity in 1981, Polish leader Wojciech Jarulewski recognised the need to reconcile with Solidarity's members. In September 1986 a general amnesty for all political prisoners was enforced. Martial law was also ended and the reconstruction of Solidarity was made legal.

This coincided with an economic downturn; to cope with this, the government raised food prices. This led to strikes and demands for changes in the system. Without Soviet support, the government had to work with dissenters, not to suppress them as they had done previously.

Discussions with the leaders of Solidarity lead to three major reforms:

- Legalisation of non-governmental trade unions
- Creation of the position of president
- Formation of a senate

Overall the new structure pleased the USSR. However in the June elections Solidarity won 92 of the 100 Senate seats and 160 of the 161 seats in the Diet (parliament). Many Poles simply refused to vote for the Communist Party candidates. Within weeks a new pro-Solidarity government was formed, this was supported by the USSR. Key decisions remained in the hands of communists in order to maintain peace and achieve reconciliation. However, by the end of 1989, Poland was a multi-party state with a coalition government dominated by Solidarity.

Hungary



The Communist Party in Hungary (the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party) initiated reforms. The leader Janos Kadar had overseen the brutal suppression since the 1956 uprising and refused to extend any reform programs. In 1988 Kadar resigned, a young Politburo member Neneth, who had negotiated a one billion Deutsche Mark loan from the West German banks, was named prime minister. He initiated political reforms including a multi-party system.

In April 1989, the Soviets agreed to withdraw all its military forces from Hungary by 1991. Furthermore the Hungarians agreed to open their frontier with Austria and allow East Germans, who could freely enter Hungary, to travel freely to West Germany.

Hungary's movement away from communism was peaceful and served as a model for other Eastern European countries.

East Germany

East German leader Eric Honecker ignored the calls for reform and the dissent at home and in other Eastern European states. Aged 77, Honecker was the last of the communist leaders who had come of age at the same time as Brezhnev. He remained firmly loyal to the Communist Party and it was determined to keep East Germany as a single party state. After Hungary removed the fence across its border to East Germany it is estimated that 60,000 East Germans crossed the border to seek asylum in West German embassies.



Encouraged by opposition groups in other Eastern European countries, East Germans protested at the lack of reforms. With such opposition the Politburo forced Honecker to resign and fellow member Egon Krenz became the General Secretary. He immediately announced democratic reforms and endorsed Gorbachev's ideas of *perestroika* and *glasnost*.

As East Germany was not offered any economic support from the Soviet Union it introduced travel laws however these were seen as too limited. This allowed free transit through border crossings into West Germany. The government also changed the constitution, eliminating the clause that gave the Communist Party a dominant role in the government. This allowed a coalition government to be set up. Most Germans wanted the reunification of the country, and negotiations began almost immediately. This led to revolutions in 1989, which led to the collapse of communism in East Germany. After 41 years as a separate state, East Germany ceased to exist and was incorporated into the Federal Republic of Germany on 3 October 1990.

Czechoslovakia

Communists in Czechoslovakia maintained control until the collapse in 1989. This was due to the Czechoslovakian economy thriving and the working classes had no reason to oppose the regime.

The opposition that did exist came from a small group of intellectuals led by Vaclav Havel who had previously organised opposition to the communist government in the 1970s and was jailed for his efforts. It was not until 1989 he began to gain support due to hearing and seeing western prosperity. Many demonstrations began to take place and these were further encouraged by the fall of the Berlin Wall. These protests resulted in police attacking and beating students prompting an outcry against the police and the government. As a result a united opposition group led by Havel was formed called the Civic Forum which set up goals such as state of law, social justice, clean environment, free elections and a return to Europe and prosperity.

This led to the constitution being changed and the Communists Party lost their position as lead party. As a result, elections were called and Havel was appointed president.

End of the Brezhnev Doctrine

Gorbachev took the decision almost from the point that he took office in 1985 to abandon the commitment of the USSR to the Brezhnev Doctrine and controlling by the threat of force. He was fully committed to the belief that communism could only survive if people were willing to accept it rather than be forced to live under it.

The end of Cold War tensions

Asia: Afghanistan

Not only did Gorbachev remove the Brezhnev Doctrine in Europe, he removed it globally. As a result, he wanted to remove troops from Afghanistan almost as soon as he came to office in 1985. His decision was influenced by American supply of weapons to the Afghan mujahideen guerrilla fighters (those engaged in Jihad, an alliance between those fighting against Soviets and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan). The Afghan army was in no position to defeat the mujaheddin by itself, but the Soviets were no more successful and their losses mounted. Public opinion over the conflict also declined. Gorbachev understood that he couldn't maintain the level of support for the Afghans and was prepared for the removal of troops, beginning in 1988.

Americas: Nicaragua, El Salvador and Cuba

Central America was no longer strategically significant to the USA. By the 1990s the USA wanted to develop regional institutions with the establishment of the Organisation of American States, which hoped to create democracies and to enable market economies to succeed.

Nicaragua

By the mid 1980s the Contras saw a reduction of US funding and as a result agreed a ceasefire with the Sandinista regime. With US influence, 14 Sandinista opposition parties were persuaded to campaign around a single presidential candidate. Violeta Chamorro was the popular choice after taking over her husband's role as editor of *La Prensa* after his assassination due to his outspoken views. She was given over \$1 million in financial support from the USA. She ended the civil war in Nicaragua after removing the Contras. Although her legacy was to end the war she left the country in financial ruin and was reliant on US support.

El Salvador

In 1984 the US supplied \$6 million to fund the campaign of a Christian Democrat in the El Salvador presidential elections. They also provided military assistance against leftist guerrilla groups (FMLN) in order to prevent the further spread of communism in the western hemisphere. However after the election of a new president, the FMLN launched a new offensive against the government, it was

apparent that a truce was needed. This was encouraged by the US. The peace accords were signed in 1992 and the FMLN became a legitimate party.

Cuba

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba lost a major source of its funding. While Castro remained committed to continuing communism and revolutionary struggle Cuba lacked the resources it previously had. After decades of dependence on sugar, Cuba was forced to diversify and made a new market in China. It also found that tourism was beneficial. Cuba was also able to conclude a series of agreements that brought hard currency to the country, which eventually led to the withdrawal of troops from Africa.

The end of Cold War tensions in Africa

Angola

In December 1986 Gorbachev announced the USSR's intention to reduce support for the leftist MPLA regime in Angola. This decision was based on his desire to improve relations with the USA, and reduce Soviet spending. However the USSR continued to supply \$1 billion of arms to the MPLA due to the continued US support of the nationalist faction (UNITA). This led to a major defensive against the UNITA in which Cuba began to supply 10,000 troops to support the MPLA. South Africa, fearing for its own regime, opened negotiations to end the civil war in Angola. The joint actions of the USA and USSR led to an agreement being reached in New York whereby a degree of stability was brought to Southwest Africa.

Ethiopia

After the Somali invasion of Ogaden, the Soviet Union, Cuba and North Korea all provided assistance that allowed Ethiopia to retake its territory. The Soviets continued to supply economic assistance and by 1987 The People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was formed signalling that the country was fully Marxist. It was led by the Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE), which continued to receive military and humanitarian assistance from the Soviet Bloc. Ethiopia continued to face Civil War and armed resistance which led to a series of defeats for the Ethiopian Army. This led to the fleeing of the country's leader after opposition forces stormed the capital. The new government, The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, received support from the USA.

The end of the Cold War: The Malta Summit

George H. W. Bush reviewed US policy towards the Soviet Union. Arms control negotiations with the USSR resumed with hopes of finalising START. The Malta Summit of March 1989 marked the end of Cold War economic conflict. Agreements were also reached over Eastern Europe with Gorbachev making it clear that the USSR would not use force to determine states deciding their political futures. There was less agreement over the reunification of Germany so Bush agreed that the USA would not intervene. He also agreed that they would not intervene in the Baltic Seas. No formal agreements were signed, as the main goal was to discuss the rapid changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet economic shift. However the summit paved the way for the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE Treaty) that was signed by Gorbachev, Bush and other European leaders in Paris in 1990. Gorbachev agreed to end the superiority in military capability held by the Soviet Union in Europe. This was followed by the final summit that Bush and Gorbachev would hold together which led to the conclusion of START I and the implementation of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty. Finally, it was agreed that nuclear technology was not to be passed to third party states.

The Reunification of Germany

In 1990, the West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl wanted a united Germany that was a full member of NATO. In mid-July he met with Gorbachev who expressed reluctance at seeing NATO and its military resources expand into East Germany. However he accepted that it was inevitable and agreed to remove the Soviet presence and put no restrictions on German sovereignty. The reunification took place in October 1990.

The collapse of the USSR and the resignation of Gorbachev

The Soviet Union was a multi-ethnic and multilingual state made up of 15 republics. It was largely held together by force and the power of the Communist Party. Under Gorbachev, as the power of the Party diminished, nationalist feelings arouse and problems erupted across the Soviet Union.



In 1988, a crisis developed in Azerbaijan as Armenians within a region of the country demanded separation. Gorbachev supported Azerbaijan. He was aware that the implication of Soviet support for a nationalist movement would lead to further territorial or political demands which could undermine the USSR. Even though the government tried to diminish such sentiments, demands for Georgian independence flared up in 1989. Again this led to heightened demands for independence, with Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia beginning united action for sovereignty from the Soviet Union. This led to two million citizens forming a chain – named the Baltic Way – in commemoration of the annexation of the USSR.



In February 1990, Lithuania was the first state to declare independence, followed by Estonia in March and Latvia in May. The Soviets made a last ditch attempt to regain control in January 1991 by sending troops to Lithuania killing 12 people. However they failed to use enough force to destroy the independence movements. This created enemies for Gorbachev.

In 1991 a coup to remove Gorbachev was put in place by communist hardliners who felt his policies had failed and they needed to re-establish tighter, more orthodox controls. The coup failed but Gorbachev's position was never the same again and he resigned as General Secretary of the Party. He also encouraged the Central Committee and all Party bodies be destroyed. There were now eight cooperating republics trying to maintain economic and political unity, but without the Communist Party, the final unifying factor in the republic was gone.

In December 1991 the leaders of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine met at Minsk and created the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). On 26 December the USSR Supreme Soviet voted to dissolve itself and formally end the existence of the Soviet Union. The next day Russia's president, Yeltsin, seized Gorbachev's office in the Kremlin.

Glossary

Apparatchiks	Members of the Communist Party and/ or government bureaucracy who had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo.
Constitution	The rules defined by states, which define the rights of the people; the constitution also sets out the structure of government, the legislative system and the role of judiciary.
Coup	A violent seizure of power in which a ruling regime or government is overthrown by force rather than a democratic change of leadership.
Glasnost	The Soviet government policy of 'openness'. It allowed its citizens more freedom to discuss political problems.
GOSPLAN	The Soviet agency responsible for central economic planning.
Mujaheddin	Although it literally means Jihad, this was the name given to the loose alliance of guerrillas fighting the Soviets and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan by the English-language press.
Organisation of American States	An organisation created in 1948 in Columbia for the purposes of interregional solidarity
Perestroika	This means 'restructuring' and referred to the major social, political and economic reforms.
Politburo	The highest policy-making government authority under communist rule; it was the central to policy making and governing body of the Communist Party.

Basic Timeline

1983	March	Strategic Defence Initiative begins
1985	November	Geneva Summit Gorbachev becomes the new leader of the USSR Alcohol polices are introduced.
1986	February April October	27 th Communist Party Congress takes place Chernobyl reactor meltdown occurs Reykjavik Perestroika and glasnost are introduced
1987	December	Washington Summit INF signed
1988	May	Moscow Summit Law on State Enterprises Soviet decision to withdraw from Afghanistan George H.W. Bush is elected as US president.
1989	April June July September October November	Poland ends its ban on Solidarity Free elections are agreed in Hungary; overwhelming election victory by Polish Solidarity candidates Solidarity is invited to form a coalition government Hungary permits East Germans to enter via Hungary East German leader Erin Honecker resigns Czechoslovakia opens its border to allow access to Western European states; the Berlin Wall is brought down.
1991		START is ratified End to Marxist regime in Ethiopia Failed coup attempt in USSR Dissolution of the USSR and creation of CIS