

Cold War Gallery Set # 12

Russia's New Beginning: Mikhail Gorbachev

In 1985 a new leader emerged in Russia, his name was Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev was eager to reform inefficiencies in government and the economy. These changes however might have been the undoing of the Soviet Union. The Gorbachev Revolution wanted to end Cold War tensions between the U.S and Russia. He also signed arms control treaties with the U.S. These were some of his foreign policies. Gorbachev was not only focused on world problems, he dealt with ones at home too.

Mikhail Gorbachev Makes Reforms

In 1985, **Mikhail Gorbachev** came to power in the Soviet Union and set out to bring the country out of crisis. His two most important reforms were called *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*

Glasnost or transparency improved freedom of expression in following ways:

- freedom of press
- access to Western press
- the creation of political unions that opposed communism
- banned books that challenged Soviet history or Communist rule were published in large editions
- dissidents were released from prison
- greater religious tolerance
- freedom to travel to Western countries

Perestroika or restructuring of the government and economy led to changes in the following ways:

- farmers were allowed to sell goods on the free market
- appointed new members to the Secretariat and reduced the size of the bureaucracy
- supported limited private ownership

In the spirit of Glasnost and Perestroika, Gorbachev sought to avoid confrontation and established positive relationships with Western leaders, particularly American presidents. By 1987, these annual summits led to results including arm control treaties.

- In Russia, Gorbachev launched an effort of reform. The first reform was called Glasnost or openness. He ended censorship, and encouraged people to publicly discuss the problems that the country was having. Second was the restructuring of government and the economy, called perestroika. By streamlining government and reducing the size of the body of non-elective government officials, he hoped it would boost efficiency and output. Factory managers were put in charge of production and farmers received more land to plant, producing more food to sell for themselves.

Such rapid change brought economic turmoil. Shortages grew worse and prices soared. Factories that could not survive without government assistance closed. Glasnost caused unrest in Russia. The republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania regained full independence. These countries followed by Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria and East Germany broke free from Soviet control. This caused more unrest in the Russian Republics and Gorbachev resigned as president in 1991. The Soviet Union was no more

Fall of Soviet Union

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