

THE RISE AND FALL
OF THE
SOVIET UNION
1917-1991

THE RISE OF THE SOVIET UNION

- 1917 Czarist Russia under Czar Nicholas II
- 1917(Mar) Russian Revolution undertaken by the combined forces of the nobility, middle class, and the Communist Party (Provisional Revolutionary Government set up under Alexander Kerensky).
- 1917(Oct) Bolshevik Revolution undertaken by the Communist Party led by Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin. A Civil War between the Red Army and the White Army will continue for the next four years.
- 1918(Jan) Lenin withdraws the Russians from World War One. U.S.S.R. is formed(Union of Soviet Socialist Republics).
The United States refuses to recognize the U.S.S.R.
- 1918 United States, France, Britain, and Japan send expeditions in an effort to help the White Army defeat the Red Army. Siberian Expedition
- 1920s-30s Intellectuals around the world admire the Soviet experiment including such literary figures as George Bernard Shaw.
- 1924 Lenin dies. Josef Stalin assumes power.
- 1930s(early) Stalin's extermination of the Kulaks(5 million)
- 1933 The United States recognizes the U.S.S.R.
-Need for an ally to help curb Japanese aggression.
-Open up Soviet markets.
-Help pull United States out of the Depression.
William Bullitt becomes the U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union.
George Kennan is considered America's foremost expert on the Soviet Union.
- 1938 Stalin's purges and show trials(especially against the Soviet Army leadership).
- 1939(Aug) Soviet-Germany Non-Aggression Pact
Stalin-Hitler Non-Aggression Pact
Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact
Whatever you wish to call it, this "pact made in hell" set the stage for the beginning of World War Two(September 1, 1939)
- 1940 Leon Trotsky(one-time "heir apparent" to Lenin) is assassinated in Mexico City.

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- 1940 The Soviet Union will capture Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (The Baltic countries).
- 1941 Operation Barbarossa: 3 million Nazis invade the Soviet Union violating the Non-Aggression Pact of 1939.
Hitler wants to destroy the Judeo-Bolshevik Soviet menace.
The Soviets will refer to this as the Great Patriotic War in which over 25 million Soviets will lose their lives.
- 1941-1944 The 900 Day Siege of Leningrad. More than any other city in the history of mankind, Leningrad will suffer(losing over one million of its citizens). However, unlike Paris, the brave people of Leningrad never surrendered.
- 1942 Joseph Stalin argues for an immediate Second Front.
- 1942-43 Battle of Stalingrad. Soviets break the back of the German Army on the Eastern Front.
- 1943 Joseph Stalin is Time Magazine's "Man of the Year."
- 1944 The Western Allies finally set up a Second Front on the western Coast of France with the Normandy Invasion on June 6th. This relieves pressure on the Soviets in the East.
- 1945 The Yalta Conference of the Big Three(Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt). F.D.R. agrees to share the occupation of Europe with the Soviets.
- 1946 Winston Churchill makes his famous "Iron Curtain" speech. An iron curtain has fallen from the Baltics to the Balkans (the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic Sea) separating Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe from the West.
The Soviets fear Capitalistic Encirclement. They fear a United Germany. And they want Eastern Europe as a Buffer Zone against the Western Europe.
- 1947 George Kennan announces the Containment Doctrine.
- 1948 The Berlin Airlift is a major test of wills in the escalating Cold War. Berlin will be a constant Flash point between the two superpowers until 1989.
- 1949 The Soviets get the A-Bomb.

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- 1953 The Soviets get the H-Bomb.
Joe Stalin Dies.
- 1955 Nikita Khrushchev(1955-1964) comes to power in the Soviet Union.
- 1957 The Soviets put Sputnik into orbit.
The Soviets have I.C.B.M.s.
- 1961 Berlin Wall is erected. This will become the most dramatic symbol of the Cold War.
- 1962 The Cuban Missile Crisis. John Kennedy forces the Soviets to remove their missiles from Castro's Cuba.
- 1964 Leonid Brezhnev(1964-1982) replaces Krushchev as the leader of the Soviet Union.
- 1965 Leonid Brezhnev and the Soviet Union's aid to Ho Chi Minh in 1965 caused the United States to fear Soviet Expansion into Southeast Asia.
- 1972 Richard Nixon visits Moscow. Detente(easing of tension) begins between the two super powers(1972-1979).
- 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The United States is outraged over this aggression and the Cold War begins to freeze up again. Many Historians consider Soviet involvement in the quagmire of Afghanistan to be equivalent to our earlier involvement in Vietnam.
- 1981 Ronald Reagan takes office and labels the Soviet Union as the "Evil Empire." Detente is over.
- 1984 Ronald Reagan proposes the Strategic Defense initiative. The Soviet Union will not be able to compete financially with the United States.
- 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev(1985-??) takes power in the Soviet Union.
- 1986 Gorbachev will promote Glasnost(openness) and Perestroika(economic restructuring). He will also consider scaling down the arms race due to the fact that the Soviet Union can not compete financially with the United States.

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- 1986 Nuclear accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the Ukraine (near Kiev).
- 1989 The Soviet Union begins withdrawal from the quagmire of Afghanistan after 10 years (1979-89)
- 1989 The Berlin Wall is torn down.
Eastern Europe is liberated
East Germany-Poland-Czechoslovakia-Hungary-Bulgaria-Rumania
 The Cold War is over.
 Eastern Europe moves towards a "Free-market" system.
- 1990 The Soviet Union becomes a multi-party system.
 Mikhail Gorbachev moves towards a "Free-market" system.
- 1990 Gorbachev wins the Nobel Peace Prize.
- 1990 Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania demand independence from the Soviet Union
 Gorbachev is popular with the Western World, but he is unpopular in the Soviet Union.
- 1991 Boris Yeltsin is elected President of the Russian Republic. He becomes the first democratically elected political leader in the 1,000 year history of Russia. Mikhail Gorbachev is still the President of the Soviet Union.
- 1991(August) FAILED COUP against Gorbachev.
- 1991(Sept) Break-up of the Soviet Union.
 Gorbachev is still the President of the "Soviet Union" (or the remains thereof).
 Most Republics demand and gain their independence.
 Russia and the Ukraine emerge as two large and separate countries.
 Question arises of what to do with the Soviet nuclear arsenal that was set up in four different republics.
 The COLD WAR IS OVER. For all intent and purposes there is no Soviet Union, the raison d'être for the Cold War.