

# Countdown to fall of USSR



Thirty years ago, the Soviet Union split apart and the Cold War, which had dominated international relations in the later part of the 20th century, came to an end. But the chain of events leading to the collapse was set in motion six years earlier by new leader Mikhail Gorbachev's sweeping reforms

► **Jun 1991: Yeltsin elected president of Russian republic**

► **Aug 19:** On eve of signing of new Union Treaty – giving republics greater freedom – group of hardliners tries to seize power while Gorbachev is visiting Crimea

► **Aug 21: Coup collapses amid massive public demonstrations, spearheaded by Yeltsin**

► **Aug 22:** Gorbachev returns to Moscow but is humiliated in Russian Parliament by Yeltsin, who orders that Soviet Communist Party end activities on Russian soil

► **Aug 23: Gorbachev resigns as Soviet Communist Party general secretary**



► **Sep 6:** Independence of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia recognized

► **Dec 8:** Leaders of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine meet to disband Soviet Union and form *Commonwealth of Independent States*

► **Dec 25: Gorbachev steps down as Soviet president – USSR officially ceases to exist**

► **1985:** New Communist Party general secretary *Mikhail Gorbachev* calls for *perestroika* (economic restructuring) and *glasnost* (political openness)

► **1988:** Stirrings of independence in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia

► **1989:** *Boris Yeltsin* elected to parliament set up under Gorbachev's reforms. Soviet bloc crumbles as Berlin Wall falls

► **1990-91:** Gorbachev calls for multi-party politics – but pro-independence demonstrations in Azerbaijan and Lithuania are violently suppressed

