

# Countdown to fall of USSR

Twenty years ago, the Soviet Union split apart and the Cold War came to an end. But the chain of events leading to the collapse was set in motion six years earlier by the sweeping reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev

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

■ **Jun 1991:** Yeltsin elected president of Russian Federation

■ **Aug 19:** Gorbachev overthrown in coup by Communist hardliners while at his holiday home in Crimea. Plotters aim to prevent signing of new treaty giving republics greater freedom

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

■ **Aug 22:** Gorbachev freed from house arrest – returns to Moscow but is humiliated in Russian parliament by Yeltsin, who orders that Soviet Communist Party end its activities on Russian soil

■ **Aug 23:** Gorbachev resigns as General Secretary of CPSU



■ **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 (CIS)**

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

■ **1985:** New Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) leader **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

