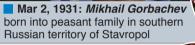


The last leader of the Soviet Union,
Mikhail Gorbachev brought about huge
political and social changes that led to
the end of the Cold War and the fall of
communism

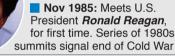




- 1952: Joins Communist Party. Enters law school at Moscow University, where he meets and later marries Raisa Titarenko (right). Couple have one daughter, Irina born in 1957
- 1955: Graduates with law degree, goes on to hold number of Communist Party posts in Stavropol, becoming party leader in 1970
- 1978: Summoned to Moscow to take up post of Central Committee Secretary for Agriculture. Becomes full member of Politburo USSR's top ruling body in 1980



Mar 1985: Made
Soviet leader after
Death of Konstantin
Chernenko. Begins
efforts to revive Soviet
economy through
policies of "glasnost"
(openness) and
perestroika (rebuilding)



1990: Receives Nobel Peace Prize for improving relations with West and ending nuclear arms race

■ Aug 1991: Coup by Communist Party hard-liners fails after mass protests led by Russian President Boris Yeltsin



- Dec 1991: His authority fatally undermined, Gorbachev resigns. Soviet Union officially dissolved
- 1992: Establishes political thinktank *Gorbachev Foundation*
- 1996: Makes one final bid for presidency of Russia, but receives just over one percent of vote