



The Collapse of the Soviet Union

- Soon into the Cold War American leaders realized that the Soviet Union's economy would not be able to support its huge military spending. Simply put, the USSR could not pay for the massive military that they were building.
- Throughout the 1970s & 1980s the United States poured vast amounts of money into their military. In retaliation, the Soviets continued to invest in their military.
- The USSR entered neighboring Afghanistan in 1979 supporting a newly-established proSoviet regime in Kabul. In short order, nearly 100,000 Soviet soldiers took control of major cities and highways. Foreign support propped up the diverse group of rebels, pouring in from Iran, Pakistan, China, and the United States. In the brutal nine-year conflict, an estimated one million civilians were killed, as well as 90,000 Mujahideen fighters, 18,000 Afghan troops, and 14,500 Soviet soldiers. Civil war raged after the withdrawal, setting the stage for the Taliban's takeover of the country in 1996.
 - Who was one of the rebels in Afghanistan funded by the US to help the fight against the USSR?
- Both superpowers created vast reserves of nuclear weapons, military and naval equipment. Nuclear testing occurred throughout this time, devastating the environment.
 - In 1983 US President declares the USSR an "evil empire."
- The USSR and the US developed rapidly – sometimes with disastrous consequences such as the Chernobyl meltdown.

- In 1986 the Soviet Chernobyl nuclear reactor near the city of Pripyat (Ukraine) experienced a devastating meltdown, contaminating vast amounts of Europe with radiation. The city of Pripyat had to be permanently evacuated (and remains so to this day). The USSR tried to deal with the disaster itself, but soon lost control.

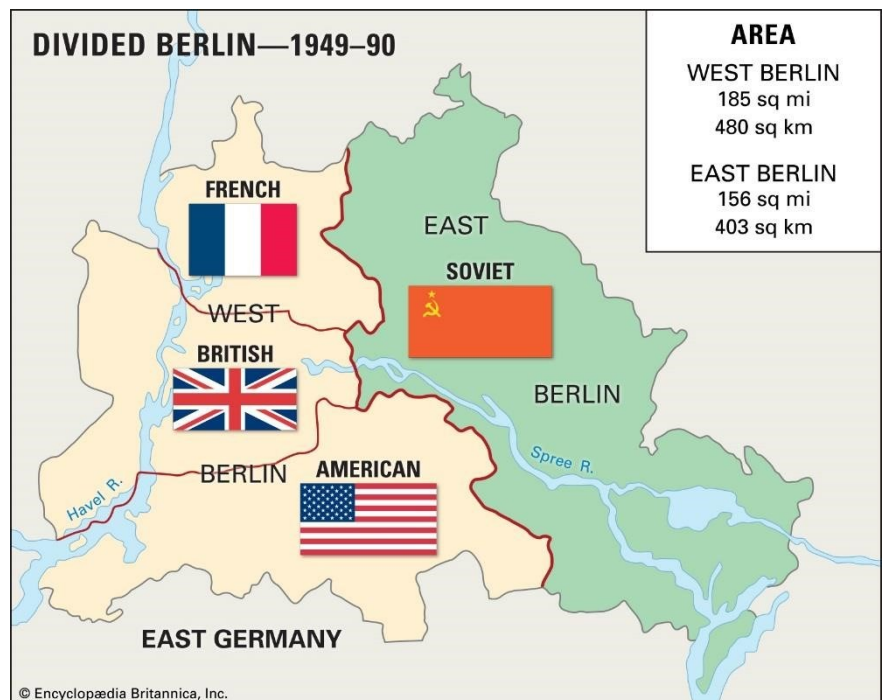


- The meltdown impacted 9 million people and caused the Soviet government to re-locate 1,800 towns and villages. 500,000 people were moved.
- The plant is still in the process of being decommissioned.
- The meltdown highlighted that the Soviet Union was beginning to fall apart – it could not manage the crisis itself and had to seek help from foreign states (including the US).
- Mikhail Gorbachev becomes leader of the USSR in 1985. Following the Chernobyl Crisis, Gorbachev orders the end of all financial support to Allied Communist countries (Warsaw Pact).
- Between 1986-1987 the US and USSR begin dismantling their nuclear stockpiles. The USSR could no longer afford to support their massive military – the country's economy was stagnating.
- Gorbachev tries to breathe new life into the USSR by introducing new economic policies, as well as political freedoms. It was too late.



Mikhail Gorbachev meets with Ronald Reagan

- No longer funded by the USSR, Communist governments in Europe begin to collapse. In 1989 Poland becomes the first country to declare themselves a democratic country. Others quickly follow (including Czechoslovakia, land of Flosman).
- The Berlin Wall is dismantled in 1989, paving the way for the collapse of the Communist East Germany and its reunification with the West.



- In August 1991 the Soviet military began a failed coup against Gorbachev. Led by hard-line Communists, the coup diminished Gorbachev's power and propelled Boris Yeltsin and the democratic forces to the forefront of Soviet and Russian politics.
- In early December 1991, Boris Yeltsin and the leaders of Ukraine and Belarus met to form the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), effectively declaring the demise of the Soviet Union.
- On December 25th, 1991, Gorbachev resigns and is not replaced. The Soviet Union is dissolved, leaving 15 independent states in its wake (The Russian Federation remains).



The countries created out of the Soviet Union's collapse.

- The disintegration of the Soviet Union is a shock for the Russian People – many did not see this coming, and it severely degraded their quality of life. For many, this event would have a lasting impact on their view of Russia and its place in the world. There is someone in particular that this was very true for ...

