**From Cold War to Post-Cold War** *(page 657)*

In the 1970s, relations between the United States and the Soviet Union improved. This phase in U.S.-Soviet relations is called **détente** (the relaxation of tensions between nations). The United States began to sell grain and consumer goods to the Soviet Union. Détente collapsed in 1979, however, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. President Jimmy Carter stopped the shipment of grain to the Soviet Union. He also would not allow Americans to participate in the 1980 Olympic Games, which were held in Moscow.

The Cold War intensified when Ronald Reagan was elected president in 1980. Reagan called the Soviet Union an “evil empire” and began a new arms race. Reagan also gave military aid to the Afghan rebels. When Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the Soviet Union in 1985, changes began that eventually ended the Cold War. Gorbachev made an agreement with the United States in 1987 to eliminate intermediate-range nuclear weapons. Both sides had reasons to slow down the arms race. Gorbachev hoped to make economic and other reforms in the Soviet Union. The national debt in the United States had tripled, and the United States had moved from being a creditor nation (a nation that exports more than it imports) to being the world’s biggest debtor nation. By 1990, both countries knew that their large military budgets would make it difficult to solve their domestic problems. Gorbachev stopped giving military support to Communist governments in Eastern Europe. This opened the door to the overthrow of Communist governments in these countries. A revolutionary movement swept through Eastern Europe in 1989. Germany was reunified on October 3, 1990. In 1991, the Soviet Union was dissolved. The Cold War had come to an end.

**Upheaval in the Soviet Union** *(page 658)*

When Nikita Khrushchev was removed from office in 1964, two men, Alexei Kosygin and Leonid Brezhnev, replaced him. Brezhnev became the dominant leader. He was determined to keep Eastern Europe in Communist hands and was not interested in reform. He insisted on the right of the Soviet

Union to intervene if communism was threatened in another Communiststate. This was known as the Brezhnev Doctrine. Under Brezhnev, the government did allow more access to Western styles of music, dress, and art. But dissidents (those who spoke out against the regime) were still punished. Brezhnev continued to emphasize heavy industry. Problems weakened the Soviet economy. The government’s central planning led to a huge, complex bureaucracy. This discouraged efficiency and led to indifference. Collective farmers also had no incentive to work hard. By the 1970s, Communist party leaders and leaders of the army and secret police enjoyed a high standard of living and had become corrupt. By 1980, the Soviet Union was in serious trouble, with a declining economy, a rise in infant mortality rates and alcoholism, and poor working conditions. Within the Communist Party, a small group of reformers emerged. One of these was Mikhail Gorbachev. In March 1985, he was chosen to lead the Soviet Union.

From the start, Gorbachev saw the need for radical reforms. The basis of these reforms was **perestroika** (restructuring). At first, this meant restructuring economic policy. Gorbachev wanted to start a market economy, in which consumers influence what is produced. But Gorbachev soon realized that it was not possible to reform the economy without political reform. In 1988, Gorbachev established a new Soviet parliament, the Congress of People’s Deputies. The members were elected and met in 1989. In 1990, Gorbachev allowed non-Communist political parties to organize. At the same time, he strengthened his own power by creating a new position—president of the Soviet Union. In March 1990, Gorbachev became the Soviet Union’s first (and last) president.

As Gorbachev loosened the control of the Communist Party, ethnic tensions in the Soviet Union surfaced. Nationalist movements emerged throughout the republics of the Soviet Union. In 1989 and 1990, there were calls for independence in Soviet Georgia, Latvia, Estonia, Moldavia, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Lithuania. By 1991, many Soviet leaders were worried. The breakup of the Soviet Union would mean an end to their privileges. On August 19, 1991, a group of conservative leaders arrested Gorbachev and tried to seize power.

The attempt failed. Boris Yeltsin, president of the Russian Republic, and thousands of Russians resisted the takeover. The Soviet republics now moved for complete independence. Ukraine voted for independence on December 1, 1991. A week later, the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus announced that the Soviet Union had “ceased to exist.” Gorbachev resigned on December 25, 1991, and turned his responsibilities over to Boris Yeltsin, the new president of Russia. Boris Yeltsin was committed to introducing a free market economy as quickly as possible, but the transition was not easy. Economic hardships were made worse by a rise in organized crime. Yeltsin also used brutal force against the Chechens, who wanted to secede from Russia and create their own republic.

At the end of 1999, Yeltsin resigned and was replaced by Vladimir Putin. Putin vowed to return the breakaway state of Chechnya to Russian authority. Fighting in Chechnya continued, and guerrilla attacks occurred in Moscow and in Chechnya during 2003. In July 2001, Putin began reforms to strengthen the Russian economy. The reforms included the free purchase and sale of land, tax cuts, and efforts to join the World Trade Organization. Since then, Russia had experienced a growing economy.