Who was Mikhail Gorbachev?

◆ The last head of state of the USSR

◆ Devoted his career to establishing peace between the USSR and western powers

◆ Aimed for a social democratic gov’t in the USSR
Gorbachev’s Background/Brief History

- Born in the agricultural region of Stavropol, Gorbachev
- He studied law at Moscow State Univ. and married a philosophy student, Raisa Maksimovna Titorenko in 1932.
- Returning to Stavropol, he moved gradually upward in the local Communist party.
- 1983, he assumed full responsibility of the economy.
- 1985, Gorbachev was appointed general secretary (head of state) of the USSR despite being the youngest member of the party.
- Here, he embarked on a comprehensive program of political, economic, and social liberalization under the slogans of openness and restructuring. “(CHANGE we can believe in!)”
Initial Economic Setting

- Gorbachev needed to repair the Soviet Union after a period of socio-economic slowdown under Leonid Brezhnev
- He announced that the Soviet economy was stalled and that reorganization was needed
  (Hence his policies)
Mikhail Gorbachev’s slogans are known as “glasnost” and “perestroika”

translation: (openness) and (restructuring)
The nuclear disaster at Chernobyl (1986) gave Gorbachev even greater freedom of expression. The government released political prisoners, allowed increased emigration, attacked corruption, and encouraged the critical reexamination of Soviet history.

In a series of summit talks (1985–88), Gorbachev improved relations with President Ronald Reagan.

1987 - They signed an Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF)- an arms limitation treaty.

1989 – Gorbachev had brought about the end of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and encouraged the end of Communist monopoly of political power in Eastern Europe.
• 1990 Mikhail Gorbachev received a Nobel Peace Prize for reducing East-West tension.

• However, the countless changes made failed to improve the economy of the USSR
  ○ this resulted in the rising of independent republics in republics of Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldov.
Gorbachev Encounters Setbacks

- The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) began to lose power as Gorbachev deepened political reform.
- During 1990 and 1991, Gorbachev was forced to stall the drive for reform and focus on rebuilding the economy in the USSR and its satellite countries.
- The August Coup (see next slide)
The August Coup

• Coup d’etat = French for takeover of government
• Political uprising led by hardliners who were opposed to the break up of the USSR, and against Gorbachev’s reform-minded policies
• Boris Yeltsin gained prestige and power because he was the reason for the unsuccessful Coup
Between 21 August and 22 September, satellite states such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan declared their independence.

The USSR was in a rapid state of deterioration
  - Gorbachev dissolved the Communist Party
  - The presidents of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus met in Belovezh Forest, near Brest, Belarus, on December 8th, founding the Commonwealth of Independent States and declaring the end of the Soviet Union.
  - Gorbachev was presented with a *fait accompli* (*French for “done deal”*) and reluctantly agreed with Yeltsin, on 17 December, to dissolve the Soviet Union.
Resignation

- Gorbachev resigned on December 25\textsuperscript{th} and the Soviet Union was formally dissolved the next day. Two days later, on December 27\textsuperscript{th}, Yeltsin moved into Gorbachev's old office.
Gorbachev’s Policies

- 1985 → uskoreniye (acceleration) later was renamed glasnost (liberalisation, opening up) or perestroika (restructuring), which introduced some elements of capitalism into the economy after the economy failed.
- 1985 → increased the prices and taxes on alcohol to fight widespread alcoholism.
- 1987 → sweeping reforms in the military after a German man flew a plane and landed right next to the red square without being challenged by authorities.
Gorbachev’s Policies ...continued...

- 1988 → Law of cooperatives allowed private business ownership
- 1989 → Elections to the Congress of People's Deputies were held throughout the Soviet Union. This was the first free election in the Soviet Union since 1917
- 1985 → He announced the suspension of the deployment of SS-20s in Europe as a move towards resolving intermediate-range nuclear weapons (INF) issues.
Gorbachev’s Policies ...continued...

- 1986 → he announced his proposal for the elimination of intermediate-range nuclear weapons in Europe and his strategy for eliminating all nuclear weapons by the year 2000
- 1988 → Gorbachev announced that the Soviet Union would abandon the Brezhnev Doctrine, and allow the Eastern bloc nations to freely determine their own internal affairs
Gorbachev’s Legacy

- His policies were good for the world, but not for the Soviet Union itself, his introduction of capitalism, freedom of speech and other liberal reforms led to the fall of the USSR, and communism in Europe