

## Chronology of Events

1989

*January 20:* George H.W. Bush is inaugurated president. Within three days, he calls Mikhail Gorbachev to promise no “foot-dragging” in the improvement of relations.

*February 15:* The USSR completes its military withdrawal from Afghanistan on schedule.

*March 6:* Negotiations on conventional arms in Europe open in Vienna.

*March 7:* James Baker receives Shevardnadze at the U.S. ambassadorial residence in Vienna for their first private meeting.

*March 16:* The CC CPSU adopts an agricultural reform program that would break up the central agricultural ministry and allow individual farmers to lease farmland.

*March 26:* Elections to the new Soviet Congress of People’s Deputies take place. Many Party and military officials lose to independent candidates. Boris Yeltsin and Andrei Sakharov win seats by large majorities.

*April 2–4:* Gorbachev visits Cuba where he finds Fidel Castro critical of Soviet reforms. He encourages Castro to engage with the United States.

*April 6:* Gorbachev travels to Great Britain. In a private meeting with Thatcher, he describes Bush’s policy “pause” as “intolerable.”

*April 9:* Soviet troops kill at least 20 Georgian nationalist demonstrators in Tbilisi.

*April 20:* The CPSU Politburo denounces the use of military force in Tbilisi.

*April 25:* One thousand Soviet tanks leave Hungary, marking the first stage of the planned Soviet withdrawal of 500,000 troops and 10,000 tanks from Eastern Europe by 1991.

*May 15–18:* Gorbachev visits China for the first Sino-Soviet summit in 30 years, and announces the “normalization” of relations.

*May 18:* The Lithuanian Supreme Soviet declares sovereignty.

*May 25–June 9:* The new Soviet Congress of People’s Deputies meets for the first time and elects Gorbachev president. The congress is televised and has a powerful public impact.

*June 4:* Chinese government troops with armored vehicles crush protests in Tiananmen Square, while voters in Poland give the opposition Solidarity movement a sweeping victory over the Communist Party in elections negotiated through the Roundtable process.

*June 19:* START negotiations resume in Geneva.

- July 6:* Addressing the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, Gorbachev declares the USSR will not block reform in Eastern Europe and will promote comprehensive European political and economic integration in the framework of a “common European home.”
- July 9–13:* Bush is hailed by crowds in Poland and Hungary where he meets with the reform Communist leadership and with opposition figures in both countries.
- July 22:* The Lithuanian Parliament declares the 1940 Soviet annexation of the Baltics illegal.
- August 18:* Aleksandr Yakovlev holds a press conference to denounce “unequivocally” the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact which led to the annexation of the Baltics. However, he states that the Soviet government still considers the Baltics a part of the USSR.
- September 8–10:* *Rukh*—the nationalist movement in the Ukraine—holds its constituent congress in Kiev and displays the banned blue-and-yellow flag of independent Ukraine.
- September 12:* Boris Yeltsin visits Washington, meets with Scowcroft and insists on seeing Bush. The president agrees to “walk in” and meet with Yeltsin for 15 minutes.
- September 22–23:* Eduard Shevardnadze and Baker meet at the latter’s ranch in Wyoming.
- September 29:* Margaret Thatcher stops in Moscow on the way from Japan. She speaks disapprovingly to Gorbachev of the idea of German unification.
- October 26:* Shevardnadze calls for the dissolution of NATO and the Warsaw Pact.
- November 9:* The Berlin Wall effectively falls after a bungled press briefing by Politburo member Günter Schabowski leads to an erroneous television bulletin announcing that the border to the west is open. Surging crowds convince confused border guards to open the gate at Bornholmer Strasse, starting a cascade through other gates and into West Berlin.
- December 1:* Gorbachev meets with Pope John Paul II. He promises to reestablish diplomatic relations with the Vatican and enact a law guaranteeing freedom of conscience and the legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.
- December 2–3:* The Malta summit takes place.
- December 18:* The European Economic Community and the Soviet Union sign a 10-year commercial agreement.

## 1990

- February 9:* Baker tells Gorbachev in Moscow that NATO will expand “not an inch” to the East if the USSR agrees to German unification in NATO.
- March 12:* The Supreme Soviet elects Gorbachev president of the USSR.
- May 30–June 4:* The Washington/Camp David summit takes place.
- June 7:* The last leadership meeting of the Warsaw Pact takes place in Moscow.

*July 15–16:* Chancellor Helmut Kohl meets with Soviet leaders in Moscow and at the resort town of Arkhyz for final talks on German unification and related matters.

*August 2:* Saddam Hussein invades Kuwait.

*August 3:* The United States and USSR issue a joint statement condemning Iraqi aggression. Baker later calls this “the day the Cold War ended.”

*August 6:* The United States launches Operation Desert Shield in the Persian Gulf.

*September 9:* Gorbachev and Bush meet in Helsinki for a one-day informal summit to discuss the Persian Gulf.

*October 15:* Gorbachev is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The announcement is received negatively by many Soviets. Gorbachev decides not to attend the ceremony.

*November 19–21:* The Paris CSCE summit takes place. Participants sign the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty and adopt the Charter for Europe. Gorbachev and Bush meet on the margins of the summit.

*December 20:* Shevardnadze steps down as foreign minister, accusing Gorbachev of a political swing to the right and warning of a coming dictatorship.

## 1991

*January 13:* Bloody Sunday takes place in Vilnius as Soviet interior troops with tanks attack protesters, leaving 15 dead and several hundred wounded. The tragedy follows other recent acts of suppression in the Baltics by Soviet forces.

*January 15:* Soviet Ambassador Alexander Bessmertnykh is recalled from Washington and named foreign minister.

*January 16:* Operation Desert Storm is launched in the Persian Gulf. Gorbachev tries unsuccessfully to delay the start of military action by 48 hours to allow one more effort to talk to Saddam Hussein.

*January 28:* Bessmertnykh visits Washington. He hands Bush a letter from Gorbachev on the Baltics, saying the use of force was not a presidential policy and will not be repeated.

*February 23:* The ground offensive in Iraq begins overnight. Gorbachev calls Bush hours beforehand to try to persuade him to postpone the operation.

*March 17:* An all-Union referendum takes place on preserving the Soviet Union as a “renewed federation of equal sovereign republics.” Seventy-seven percent of respondents vote in favor, the highest totals coming from the republics of Central Asia.

*March 31:* The Warsaw Pact ceases to exist.

*April 23:* At a state dacha outside Moscow, Gorbachev and nine republic leaders launch the “Novo-Ogarevo process” of drafting a new Union treaty.

*May 6:* Shevardnadze visits the United States as a private citizen and urges Bush to support Soviet reform and Gorbachev.

- June 12:* Yeltsin is elected president of the Russian Federation.
- June 14:* CFE agreements, refining the treaty signed in November 1990, are ratified by CFE ambassadors in Vienna.
- June 19–21:* Yeltsin makes his first visit to Washington as Russian president.
- July 17:* Gorbachev addresses the G-7 summit in London. He hopes to garner major financial support from the West and to win agreement to integrate the USSR into international economic institutions. In one-on-one meeting with Bush, the two presidents finalize the remaining issues with the START Treaty.
- July 29–August 1:* The Moscow summit takes place, featuring the signing of the START Treaty. The night before the summit, Gorbachev receives a commitment from nine republican leaders to support the new Union Treaty. During the summit, Bush meets separately with Yeltsin and with Nursultan Nazarbayev, leader of Kazakhstan.
- August 1:* Bush travels to the Ukrainian capital where he delivers what is dubbed the “Chicken Kiev” speech.
- August 19–21:* An anti-Gorbachev coup takes place, led by the heads of the KGB and the military. Gorbachev is placed under house arrest at Foros on the Black Sea. In Moscow, Yeltsin consolidates democratic forces to resist the takeover. The coup crumbles on the third day.
- September 27:* Bush calls Gorbachev to inform him about a breakthrough initiative on unilateral nuclear arms reductions he is about to unveil. Gorbachev responds enthusiastically and soon offers his own far-reaching proposals.
- October 29–30:* The Madrid summit on the Middle East takes place.
- December 1:* A referendum in Ukraine overwhelmingly (92 percent) approves a declaration of independence passed by the Rada the previous August.
- December 8:* Three key republic leaders—Yeltsin (Russia), Kravchuk (Ukraine) and Shushkevich (Belarus)—meet at Belovezhskaya Pushcha, in Belarus near the Polish border. They declare the Soviet Union dissolved and a new entity, the Commonwealth of Independent States, established. Yeltsin calls Bush ahead of Gorbachev to inform him.
- December 25:* Gorbachev resigns as president of the USSR, symbolically terminating the existence of the Soviet Union. He calls Bush to inform him and the two briefly revisit their joint achievements.