



# CHANGES START OF A NEW ERA

Relations took another turn when Mikhail Gorbachev gained power in 1985, incorporating reforms to improve the living standards of all Soviets. His pragmatism brought about the first nuclear reduction treaty and won him the 1990 Nobel Peace Prize for easing Cold War tensions.

The American public, along with President Ronald Reagan, reacted warmly to Gorbachev, rushing to shake his hand during an unscheduled Washington street appearance. A 1991 Communist coup against him was thwarted when Russian President Boris Yeltsin stood on an invading Soviet tank to rally reformers. Within months, the various USSR republics voted to dissolve the Soviet Union. Democratic reforms began, as well as radical economic measures.

After 28 years, the Berlin Wall, symbolically preventing all Eastern Europeans under Soviet control from even visiting the democratic West, fell. Eastern European states were free to determine their own destinies – and the mutual destruction of Cold War nuclear weapons began.



*Top left: Cellist Mstislav Rostropovich commemorates the fall of the Berlin Wall, 1989. Top right: Dismantling the Berlin Wall, 1989. Left middle: President Ronald Reagan greets a young citizen held by Soviet President Gorbachev in Red Square, 1988. President Gorbachev is welcomed on the streets of Washington, DC, 1987. Bottom left: Boris Yeltsin speaks from atop a tank in Moscow, 1991. Bottom middle: Soviet missile is destroyed in compliance with an arms control treaty, 1989. Bottom right: Soviet and U.S. ballistic missiles on permanent display at the National Air and Space Museum, Washington, DC, 2006.*