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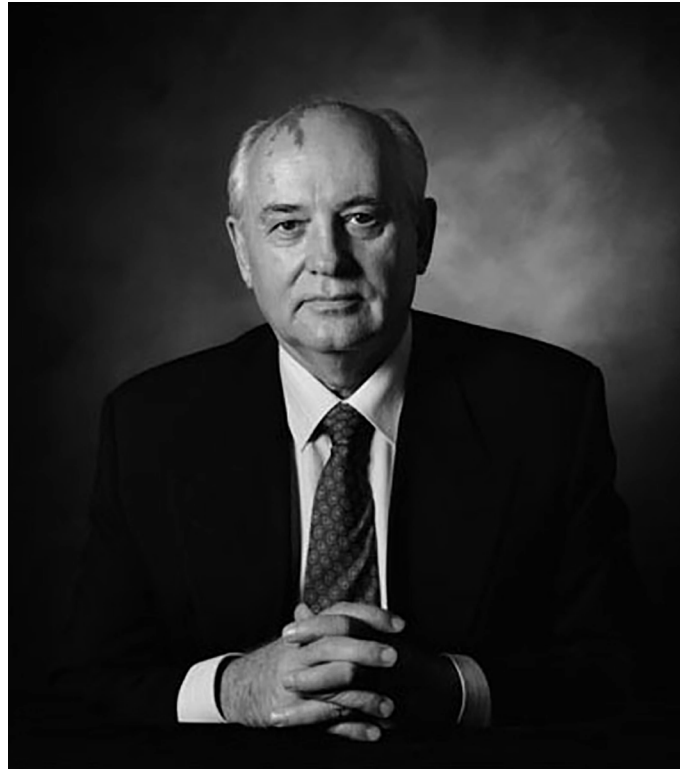
SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER

**HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS WHO
ARE CHANGING
OUR WORLD**

**MIKHAIL GORBACHEV: FREE EXPRESSION, FREE
ELECTIONS, AND DEMOCRATIC REFORMS**

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

(HE/HIM/HIS)



“I WILL NEVER AGREE TO HAVING OUR SOCIETY SPLIT ONCE AGAIN INTO REDS AND WHITES, INTO THOSE WHO CLAIM TO SPEAK AND ACT ‘ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE’ AND THOSE WHO ARE ‘ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE.’”

Mikhail Gorbachev was born to Russian peasants in 1931. At age 15, he joined the Komsomol, or “Youth Communist League.” Local party officials recognized his promise and sent him to law school in Moscow, where he became a Communist Party member. He also became the youngest full member of the Politburo, then the highest executive committee in the Soviet Union. In 1985, the Politburo elected Gorbachev general secretary of the Communist Party, and he set about installing bold reforms, including “glasnost” (“openness”) and “perestroika” (“change”).

In 1987, Gorbachev and U.S. President Reagan signed an agreement to destroy all their intermediate-range nuclear-tipped missiles. In 1989, Gorbachev openly supported reformist groups in Eastern European Soviet-bloc countries, starting a chain reaction that led to the fall of communism in Europe. The Berlin Wall fell in 1989, and the Cold War between East and West was brought to a halt. President Gorbachev was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990 for his role in the peace process. On December 25, 1991, the day he resigned, the Soviet Union ceased to exist.

Opinions on his leadership remain deeply divided to this day, but Mikhail Gorbachev was seen by many as a visionary.

INTERVIEW WITH MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

EXCERPTS FROM *MIKHAIL GORBACHEV: 1991 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LECTURE*

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

This moment is no less emotional for me than the one when I first learned about the decision of the Nobel Committee. For on similar occasions great men addressed humankind—men famous for their courage in working to bring together morality and politics. Among them were my compatriots.

The award of the Nobel Peace Prize makes one think once again about a seemingly simple and clear question: What is peace?

Preparing for my address I found in an old Russian encyclopedia a definition of “peace” as a “commune”—the traditional cell of Russian peasant life. I saw in that definition the people’s profound understanding of peace as harmony, concord, mutual help, and cooperation.

This understanding is embodied in the canons of world religions and in the works of philosophers from antiquity to our time. The names of many of them have been mentioned here before. Let me add another one to them. Peace “propagates wealth and justice, which constitute the prosperity of nations”; a peace which is “just a respite from wars ... is not worthy of the name”; peace implies “general counsel.” This was written almost 200 years ago by Vasiliy Fyodorovich Malinovskiy—the dean of the Tsarskoye Selo Lyceum at which the great Pushkin was educated.

Since then, of course, history has added a great deal to the specific content of the concept of peace. In this nuclear age it also means a condition for the survival of the human race. But the essence, as understood both by the popular wisdom and by intellectual leaders, is the same.

Today, peace means the ascent from simple coexistence to cooperation and common creativity among countries and nations. Peace is movement towards globality and universality of civilization. Never before has the idea that peace is indivisible been so true as it is now.

Peace is not unity in similarity but unity in diversity, in the comparison and conciliation of differences.

And, ideally, peace means the absence of violence. It is an ethical value. And here we have to recall Rajiv Gandhi, who died so tragically a few days ago.

I consider the decision of your committee as a recognition of the great international importance of the changes now under way in the Soviet Union, and as an expression of confidence in our policy of new thinking, which is based on the conviction that at the end of the twentieth century force and arms will have to give way as a major instrument in world politics.

I see the decision to award me the Nobel Peace Prize also as an act of solidarity with the monumental undertaking which has already placed enormous demands on the Soviet people in terms of efforts, costs, hardships, willpower, and character. And solidarity is a universal value which is becoming indispensable for progress and for the survival of humankind.

But a modern state has to be worthy of solidarity; in other words, it should pursue, in both domestic and international affairs, policies that bring together the interests of its people and those of the world community. This task, however obvious, is not a simple one. Life is much richer and more complex than even the most perfect plans to make it better. It ultimately takes vengeance for attempts to impose abstract schemes, even with the best of intentions. Perestroika has made us understand this about our past, and the actual experience of recent years has taught us to reckon with the most general laws of civilization.

This, however, came later. But back in March–April 1985 we found ourselves facing a crucial and, I confess, agonizing choice. When I agreed to assume the office of the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee, in effect the highest State office at that time, I realized

that we could no longer live as before and that I would not want to remain in that office unless I got support in undertaking major reforms. It was clear to me that we had a long way to go. But of course, I could not imagine how immense were our problems and difficulties. I believe no one at that time could foresee or predict them.

Those who were then governing the country knew what was really happening to it and what we later called *zastoi*, roughly translated as “stagnation.” They saw that our society was marking time, that it was running the risk of falling hopelessly behind the technologically advanced part of the world. Total domination of centrally managed state property, the pervasive authoritarian bureaucratic system, ideology’s grip on politics, monopoly in social thought and sciences, militarized industries that siphoned off our best, including the best intellectual resources, the unbearable burden of military expenditures that suffocated civilian industries and undermined the social achievements of the period since the Revolution which were real and of which we used to be proud— such was the actual situation in the country.

As a result, one of the richest countries in the world, endowed with immense overall potential, was already sliding downwards. Our society was declining, both economically and intellectually.

And yet, to a casual observer the country seemed to present a picture of relative well-being, stability, and order. The misinformed society under the spell of propaganda was hardly aware of what was going on and what the immediate future had in store for it. The slightest manifestations of protest were suppressed. Most people considered them heretical, slanderous, and counter-revolutionary.

Such was the situation in the spring of 1985, and there was a great temptation to leave things as they were, to make only cosmetic changes. This, however, meant continuing to deceive ourselves and the people.

This was the domestic aspect of the dilemma then before us. As for the foreign policy aspect, there was the East-West confrontation, a rigid division into friends and foes, the two hostile camps with a

corresponding set of Cold War attributes. Both the East and the West were constrained by the logic of military confrontation, wearing themselves down more and more by the arms race.

The mere thought of dismantling the existing structures did not come easily. However, the realization that we faced inevitable disaster, both domestically and internationally, gave us the strength to make a historic choice, which I have never since regretted.

Perestroika, which once again is returning our people to common sense, has enabled us to open up to the world, and has restored a normal relationship between the country’s internal development and its foreign policy. But all this takes a lot of hard work. To a people which believed that its government’s policies had always been true to the cause of peace, we proposed what was in many ways a different policy, which would genuinely serve the cause of peace, while differing from the prevailing view of what it meant and particularly from the established stereotypes as to how one should protect it. We proposed new thinking in foreign policy.

Thus, we embarked on a path of major changes which may turn out to be the most significant in the 20th century, for our country and for its peoples. But we also did this for the entire world.

I began my book about perestroika and the new thinking with the following words: “We want to be understood.” After a while I felt that it was already happening. But now I would like once again to repeat those words here, from this world rostrum. Because to understand us really—to understand so as to believe us—proved to be not at all easy, owing to the immensity of the changes under way in our country. Their magnitude and character are such as to require in-depth analysis. Applying conventional wisdom to perestroika is unproductive. It is also futile and dangerous to set conditions, to say: We’ll understand and believe you, as soon as you, the Soviet Union, come completely to resemble “us,” the West.

No one is in a position to describe in detail what perestroika will finally produce. But it would certainly be a self-delusion to expect that perestroika will produce “a copy” of anything.

Of course, learning from the experience of others is something we have been doing and will continue to do. But this does not mean that we will come to be exactly like others. Our State will preserve its own identity within the international community. A country like ours, with its uniquely close-knit ethnic composition, cultural diversity, and tragic past, the greatness of its historic endeavors and the exploits of its peoples—such a country will find its own path to the civilization of the 21st century and its own place in it. Perestroika has to be conceived solely in this context, otherwise it will fail and will be rejected. After all, it is impossible to “shed” the country’s thousand-year history—a history which we still have to subject to serious analysis in order to find the truth that we shall take into the future.

We want to be an integral part of modern civilization, to live in harmony with mankind’s universal values, abide by the norms of international law, follow the “rules of the game” in our economic relations with the outside world. We want to share with all other peoples the burden of responsibility for the future of our common house.

A period of transition to a new quality in all spheres of society’s life is accompanied by painful phenomena. When we were initiating perestroika, we failed to properly assess and foresee everything. Our society turned out to be hard to move off the ground, not ready for major changes which affect people’s vital interests and make them leave behind everything to which they had become accustomed over many years. In the beginning we imprudently generated great expectations, without taking into account the fact that it takes time for people to realize that all have to live and work differently, to stop expecting that new life would be given from above.

Perestroika has now entered its most dramatic phase. Following the transformation of the philosophy of perestroika into real policy, which began literally to explode the old way of life, difficulties began to mount. Many took fright and wanted to return to the past. It was not only those who used to hold the levers of power in the administration, the army and various government agencies and who had to make room, but also many people whose interests and way of life was put to a

severe test and who, during the preceding decades, had forgotten how to take the initiative and to be independent, enterprising, and self-reliant.

Hence the discontent, the outbursts of protest, and the exorbitant, though understandable, demands which, if satisfied right away, would lead to complete chaos. Hence, the rising political passions and, instead of a constructive opposition which is only normal in a democratic system, one that is often destructive and unreasonable, not to mention the extremist forces which are especially cruel and inhuman in areas of inter-ethnic conflict.

During the last six years we have discarded and destroyed much that stood in the way of a renewal and transformation of our society. But when society was given freedom it could not recognize itself, for it had lived too long, as it were, “beyond the looking glass.” Contradictions and vices rose to the surface, and even blood has been shed, although we have been able to avoid a bloodbath. The logic of reform has clashed with the logic of rejection, and with the logic of impatience which breeds intolerance.

In this situation, which is one of great opportunity and of major risks, at a high point of perestroika’s crisis, our task is to stay the course while also addressing current everyday problems—which are literally tearing this policy apart—and to do it in such a way as to prevent a social and political explosion.

Now about my position. As to the fundamental choice, I have long ago made a final and irrevocable decision. Nothing and no one, no pressure, either from the right or from the left, will make me abandon the positions of perestroika and new thinking. I do not intend to change my views or convictions. My choice is a final one.

It is my profound conviction that the problems arising in the course of our transformations can be solved solely by constitutional means. That is why I make every effort to keep this process within the confines of democracy and reforms.

This applies also to the problem of self-determination of nations, which is a challenging one for us. We are looking for mechanisms to solve that

problem within the framework of a constitutional process; we recognize the peoples' legitimate choice, with the understanding that if a people really decides, through a fair referendum, to withdraw from the Soviet Union, a certain agreed transition period will then be needed.

Steering a peaceful course is not easy in a country where generation after generation of people were led to believe that those who have power or force could throw those who dissent or disagree out of politics or even in jail. For centuries all the country's problems used to be finally resolved by violent means. All this has left an almost indelible mark on our entire "political culture," if the term is at all appropriate in this case.

Our democracy is being born in pain. A political culture is emerging— one that presupposes debate and pluralism, but also legal order and, if democracy is to work, strong government authority based on one law for all. This process is gaining strength. Being resolute in the pursuit of perestroika, a subject of much debate these days, must be measured by the commitment to democratic change. Being resolute does not mean a return to repression, diktat, or the suppression of rights and freedoms. I will never agree to having our society split once again into Reds and Whites, into those who claim to speak and act "on behalf of the people" and those who are "enemies of the people." Being resolute today means to act within the framework of political and social pluralism and the rule of law to provide conditions for continued reform and prevent a breakdown of the State and economic collapse, prevent the elements of chaos from becoming catastrophic.

All this requires taking certain tactical steps, to search for various ways of addressing both short- and long-term tasks. Such efforts and political and economic steps, agreements based on reasonable compromise, are there for everyone to see. I am convinced that the One-Plus-Nine Statement will go down in history as one such step, as a great opportunity. Not all parts of our decisions are readily accepted or correctly understood. For the most part, our decisions are unpopular; they arouse waves of criticism. But life has many more surprises in store for us, just as we will sometimes

surprise it. Jumping to conclusions after every step taken by the Soviet leadership, after every decree by the president, trying to figure out whether he is moving left or right, backward or forward, would be an exercise in futility and would not lead to understanding.

We will seek answers to the questions we face only by moving forward, only by continuing and even radicalizing reforms, by consistently democratizing our society. But we will proceed prudently, carefully weighing each step we take.

There is already a consensus in our society that we have to move towards a mixed market economy. There are still differences as to how to do it and how fast we should move. Some are in favor of rushing through a transitional period as fast as possible, no matter what. Although this may smack of adventurism we should not overlook the fact that such views enjoy support. People are tired and are easily swayed by populism. So it would be just as dangerous to move too slowly, to keep people waiting in suspense. For them, life today is difficult, a life of considerable hardship.

Work on a new Union Treaty has entered its final stage. Its adoption will open a new chapter in the history of our multinational state.

After a time of rampant separatism and euphoria, when almost every village proclaimed sovereignty, a centripetal force is beginning to gather momentum, based on a more sensible view of existing realities and the risks involved. And this is what counts most now. There is a growing will to achieve consensus, and a growing understanding that we have a State, a country, a common life. This is what must be preserved first of all. Only then can we afford to start figuring out which party or club to join and what God to worship.

The stormy and contradictory process of perestroika, particularly in the past two years, has made us face squarely the problem of criteria to measure the effectiveness of State leadership. In the new environment of a multiparty system, freedom of thought, rediscovered ethnic identity and sovereignty of the republics, the interests of society must absolutely be put above those of various parties

or groups, or any other sectoral, parochial or private interests, even though they also have the right to exist and to be represented in the political process and in public life, and, of course, they must be taken into account in the policies of the State.

I am an optimist, and I believe that together we shall be able now to make the right historical choice so as not to miss the great chance at the turn of centuries and millennia and make the current extremely difficult transition to a peaceful world order. A balance of interests rather than a balance of power, a search for compromise and concord rather than a search for advantages at other people's expense, and respect for equality rather than claims to leadership— such are the elements which can provide the groundwork for world progress and which should be readily acceptable for reasonable people informed by the experience of the twentieth century.

The future prospect of truly peaceful global politics lies in the creation through joint efforts of a single international democratic space in which States shall be guided by the priority of human rights and welfare for their own citizens and the promotion of the same rights and similar welfare elsewhere. This is an imperative of the growing integrity of the modern world and of the interdependence of its components.

I have been suspected of utopian thinking more than once, and particularly when five years ago I proposed the elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2000 and joint efforts to create a system

of international security. It may well be that by that date it will not have happened. But look, merely five years have passed and have we not actually and noticeably moved in that direction? Have we not been able to cross the threshold of mistrust, though mistrust has not completely disappeared? Has not the political thinking in the world changed substantially? Does not most of the world community already regard weapons of mass destruction as unacceptable for achieving political objectives?

Ladies and gentlemen, two weeks from today it will be exactly 50 years since the beginning of the Nazi invasion of my country. And in another six months we shall mark 50 years since Pearl Harbor, after which the war turned into a global tragedy. Memories of it still hurt. But they also urge us to value the chance given to the present generations.

In conclusion, let me say again that I view the award of the Nobel Prize to me as an expression of understanding of my intentions, my aspirations, the objectives of the profound transformation we have begun in our country, and the ideas of new thinking. I see it as your acknowledgment of my commitment to peaceful means of implementing the objectives of perestroika.

I am grateful for this to the members of the committee and wish to assure them that if I understand correctly their motives, they are not mistaken.

FREE EXPRESSION, FREE ELECTIONS, AND DEMOCRATIC REFORMS

LESSON GRADE LEVELS 9 TO 12

FREE EXPRESSION; PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY; FREE ELECTIONS

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

- **ARTICLE 19:** Right to freedom of opinion and information.
- **ARTICLE 20:** Right of peaceful assembly and association.
- **ARTICLE 21:** Right to participate in government and free elections.

TIME REQUIREMENT

40–200 Minutes

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How do the goals of those who govern affect political processes?
- How do powerful individuals and masses drive political change?

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- How the policy of perestroika led to political, social, and economic change in the Soviet Union.
- Why President Gorbachev pursued the policy of perestroika.
- How changes within the Soviet Union led to a different relationship between the Soviet Union and other nations.

COMMON CORE LEARNING STANDARDS

- CSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.9

CONCEPTS

- Reform
- Revolution
- Free market
- Laissez faire
- Demand economy
- Peaceable assembly
- Human rights
- Nobel Peace Prize
- Location theory
- Urban development models

VOCABULARY

- Glasnost
- Perestroika
- Demand economy
- Command economy
- Communism
- Capitalism
- Autocracy
- Bureaucracy
- Inalienable/unalienable human rights
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Totalitarianism
- Coup d'état

TECHNOLOGY REQUIRED

- Laptop cart (30-plus computers, each with internet connection)
- LCD projector

MATERIALS

- *An Introduction to Human Geography* (Rubenstein, 9th ed.)
- [CIA World Factbook](#)
- Rand McNally Goode's *World Atlas 22nd ed.*
- [Handout C](#): Article on the disintegration of the Soviet Union
- [Handout D](#): Gorbachev's acceptance speech to the Nobel Committee and Nobel Lecture
- [Online reading](#)

ANTICIPATORY SET

- Show students the [clip of President Ronald Reagan speaking at the Berlin Wall](#).
- After viewing the clip, begin a discussion using the following prompts:
 - What reforms initiated by Gorbachev were mentioned in the speech?
 - What did the Berlin Wall symbolize?
 - Why did Reagan ask Gorbachev to tear down the wall?
 - Based on what you learned about the Soviet Union, why were these reforms so radical?

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1

- Show these two videos: [“Mikhail Gorbachev”](#) and [“The End of the Soviet Union”](#).
- Instruct students to take notes while watching the videos.
- Once the videos are finished, separate the class into groups of three or four.
- Distribute Gorbachev’s Nobel laureate lecture and the [DePauw University speech article](#).
- Instruct students to read the two documents, underlining important words, phrases, and examples of change.
- Make two columns on a white board, one labeled “glasnost” and the other labeled “perestroika.”
- Hand out sticky notes to the groups. Ask students to list and define various reforms implemented by Gorbachev on the notes.
- As students complete the task, ask them to place the sticky notes under glasnost reforms or perestroika reforms, as appropriate.
- After all of the sticky notes have been placed, discuss the reforms Gorbachev introduced and their impact on the dismantling of the Soviet Union.
- Distribute the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and discuss which human rights the reforms represented. Ask the students to write an essay using this prompt:

- Choose two reforms initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev. Describe the reforms and how they changed life in the Soviet Union. Include in the essay the human rights issue that the reforms represented.

ACTIVITY 2

- Separate students into groups of four.
- Pull up maps from https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/history_commonwealth.html and the [CIA World Factbook on Russia](#). Ask students to label sticky notes with the strategic minerals mined in the Soviet Union, listing their percentage of world production and the finished goods these minerals produce. If multiple goods are produced from a single mineral, use multiple sticky notes. Be sure to include copper, lead, lithium, zinc, iron, manganese, nickel, other ferroalloys, steel production, and precious metals.
- Hang sheets of newsprint around the room labeled with the categories of finished goods that require these minerals: consumer, military, and industrial.
- Instruct the students to place each note on the appropriate sheet of newsprint.
- Distribute the article [“End of the Cold War and the Soviet Union,”](#) (This is a lengthy article, to save class time it can be assigned as homework.)
- Lead a discussion using the following prompts:

- Describe the economic system of the former Soviet Union.
- Describe the economic system under perestroika.
- Describe any similarities.
- What difficulties might arise when moving from a command economy to a market economy? (Record students' answers on the board.)

CULMINATING ACTIVITY

- Separate students into groups of four.
- Distribute the assignment and read the instructions to the class:
- You are a group from the Nobel Peace Prize Committee. Your task is to design the Nobel diploma that will be presented to Mikhail Gorbachev. It must include the following information:
 - Reforms under glasnost and perestroika.
 - The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Articles the reforms represent.
 - How the economic transformation of the Soviet Union led to the award.



INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

Since the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations (UN) in 1948, many other international documents—also called treaties, covenants, resolutions, or conventions—have been drafted to develop these rights further. Countries commit to protect the rights recognized in these treaties by ratifying them, and sometimes a specific institution is created within the UN to monitor their compliance.

Here are examples of relevant international documents:

INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS (ICCPR)

- **ARTICLE 18:** Right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.
- **ARTICLE 19:** Right to freedom of opinion and expression.
- **ARTICLE 21:** Right of peaceful assembly.
- **ARTICLE 22:** Right to freedom of association.
- **ARTICLE 25:** Right to participate in government.

For more information, visit the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' website:
www.ohchr.org.

BECOMING A DEFENDER

- Write an article for your school newspaper identifying a spatial or cultural conflict within the school and a possible solution to that problem. Include the possibility of meeting with the student council or school administrators to work out the solution. Then meet with these groups to create and implement the solution to the problem.
- Create a neighborhood map identifying safe play zones and potential dangers or neighborhood concerns.
- Organize a letter-writing campaign targeting agri-business giants or other U.S. businesses that tacitly cooperate with human rights violators.
- Organize a letter-writing campaign targeting actions taken by the local government that relate to zoning, renting, or other services that may not in the best interests of citizens living in a particular area.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

NOBEL PRIZE

http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1990/gorbachev.html

The Nobel Prize is an award for achievement in physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature, economics, and peace. It is internationally administered by the Nobel Foundation in Stockholm, Sweden.

THE INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STUDIES

<http://www.gorby.ru/en/>

The Gorbachev Foundation is an international non-profit NGO that conducts research into social, economic, and political problems of critical importance at the current stage in Russian and world history. The foundation seeks to promote democratic values as well as moral and humanist principles in society.

BBC NEWS

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1112551.stm>

A timeline of the rise and fall of the Soviet Union beginning with the 1917 Russian Revolution led by Vladimir Lenin and ending in 1991 with the Russian government takeover of the USSR offices.