ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS
What motivates political change?
How can economic and social changes affect a country?

Reading HELPDESK
Content Vocabulary
perestroika fundamental restructuring of the Soviet economy; a policy introduced by Gorbachev
glasnost a Soviet policy permitting open discussion of political and social issues
ethnic cleansing a policy of killing or forcibly removing an ethnic group from its lands; used by the Serbs against the Muslim minority in Bosnia
autonomous self-governing

Academic Vocabulary
demonstration a public display of group feeling toward a person or cause
collapse to break down completely; to suddenly lose force or effectiveness

TAKING NOTES: Categorizing
1. ACTIVITY As you read, use the table below to identify events that happened after the fall of communism in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania.

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<th>Poland</th>
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IT MATTERS BECAUSE
After 40 years of the Cold War, the new division of Europe between West and East seemed to be permanent. Major changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe brought an end both to the Cold War and to this division of Europe.
Gorbachev and Perestroika

GUIDING QUESTION How did Mikhail Gorbachev’s reforms change the Soviet Union?

The Soviet Union was not doing well by 1980. It had a declining economy, rising infant mortality rates, quickly growing rates of alcoholism, and poor working conditions. A small group of reformers appeared within the Communist Party. One reformer was Mikhail Gorbachev (GAWR•buh•chawf). A new period began when the party chose him as leader in March 1985.

Gorbachev talked about the need for radical reforms. These reforms were based on perestroika (PEHR•uh•STRAWIH•kuh), or restructuring. At first, this meant restructuring, or reorganizing, economic policy. Gorbachev wanted a market economy that better met consumers’ needs. It would have a limited amount of free enterprise. This meant that in this new system, some businesses would be privately owned and operated. Gorbachev, however, realized that reforming the economy would not work without political reform. He hoped glasnost, or openness, would help this happen. It was a policy that encouraged Soviet citizens and officials to talk about the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet Union. It allowed for criticism of the government and a freer press, or spread of news.

Gorbachev set up a new Soviet parliament of elected members at the 1988 Communist Party conference. It was called the Congress of People’s Deputies, and it first met in 1989. Then he created a new state presidency. Gorbachev’s position had been the first secretary of the Communist Party. It was the most important position in the Soviet Union under the old system. In March 1990, Gorbachev became the Soviet Union’s first president. He was also its last.

Mikhail Gorbachev’s rise to power in 1985 also eventually brought a dramatic end to the Cold War. He was willing to rethink Soviet foreign policy, and his “New Thinking” led to big changes. Gorbachev made an agreement with the United States in 1987 to get rid of intermediate-range nuclear weapons. (These were middle-range missiles, which could travel a distance of about 300 to 3400 miles, or 500 to 5,500 kilometers.) It was called the Intermediate-Range INF Treaty. Both Gorbachev and U.S. president Ronald Reagan wanted to slow down the arms race. In the arms race, the United States and the Soviet Union built up larger and larger supplies of weapons to keep up with each other. The two leaders wanted to reduce their military budgets to solve domestic problems. Gorbachev hoped to focus resources on social and economic change in the Soviet Union. The United States wanted to cut its national debt, which had tripled during the time Reagan was president.

Gorbachev stopped giving Soviet military support to Communist governments in Eastern Europe. This action helped lead to the end of Communist regimes there. A revolutionary movement spread through Eastern Europe in 1989. The changes in government were mostly peaceful. Germany was reunified on October 3, 1990. This was a powerful symbol of the end of the Cold War. In 1991 the Soviet Union ended. The long rivalry between the two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States, was over.
Revolutions in Eastern Europe

GUIDING QUESTION How did popular revolutions help end Communist regimes in Eastern Europe?

Gorbachev decided to stop sending troops to support the governments of the satellite states in Eastern Europe. (These were the Communist states there that were dependent on the Soviet Union.) In response, revolutions broke out throughout Eastern Europe. A look at three Eastern European states shows how the process worked.

Workers’ protests in Poland led to demands for change. In 1980, a worker named Lech Walesa (lehk vah•LEHN•suh) organized a national trade union that was known as Solidarity. Solidarity gained the support of the workers and of the Roman Catholic Church. The Church was then under the leadership of Pope John Paul II, the first Polish pope. The movement continued even after Walesa was arrested. The Polish regime finally agreed to free parliamentary elections in 1988. They were the first free elections in Eastern Europe in 40 years. A new government was elected, and 45 years of Communist rule ended.

Walesa was chosen president of Poland in December 1990. Poland’s new path was not easy, however. Rapid free-market reforms led to a lot of unemployment. Aleksander Kwasniewski was the next president. He helped Poland move toward a successful free-market economy and democracy. Recent presidents have tried to combine modern ideas with tradition.

The Soviets stopped the Czechoslovakian reform movement of 1968. Writers and other intellectuals continued to oppose the government, but they did not have much success at first. Then large demonstrations took place throughout Czechoslovakia in 1988 and 1989. Some crowds in Prague were as large as 500,000 by November 1989.

In December 1989, the Communist government collapsed. Václav Havel (VAHT•SLAHF HAH•vehl) became the new president at the end of that month. He was a writer who had played an important role in ending the Communist government. Havel was a powerful spokesperson for Czech democracy and a new order in Europe.
The new government soon faced old ethnic conflicts. The two national groups were Czechs and Slovaks. They agreed to a peaceful division of the country. Czechoslovakia split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Havel became the first president of the Czech Republic, and Michal Kovác became the first president of Slovakia.

Václav Klaus became the second president of the Czech Republic in 2003. The country has one of the most of the most stable and prosperous, or successful, economies of the former Communist Eastern European states. Over the years, Slovakia has gone from a centrally planned economy to a market economy.

Communist leader Nicolae Ceauşescu (nee•kaw•LY chau•SHEHS•koo) ruled Romania with an iron grip. He used secret police to stop anyone who was against him, but opposition grew. His economic policies led to a sharp drop in living standards. Food shortages resulted in food rationing, or limiting the amount of food people could get. In December 1989, the secret police murdered thousands of people who were peacefully demonstrating against the government. The army did not want to support any more repression, or stopping opposition by force. Ceauşescu and his wife were captured and killed. A new government was quickly formed in Romania.

Former Communists controlled the Romanian government until 1996. The current president is Traian Basescu. He leads a country that is just beginning to show economic growth and the rise of a middle class.

PROGRESS CHECK
3. Identifying What role did protestors play in the new governments that formed after the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe?

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End of the Soviet Union

GUIDING QUESTION How did Mikhail Gorbachev’s reforms change the Soviet Union?

Fifteen separate republics made up the Soviet Union. They included 92 ethnic groups that spoke 112 different languages. Gorbachev ended the iron grip of the Communist Party, centered in Moscow, over the Soviet Union. As a result, old ethnic conflicts reappeared, and nationalist movements began. In 1989 and 1990 calls for independence started. They came first from Soviet Georgia and then from the Baltic States (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia), Moldova, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan.

The traditional Soviet institutions were the army, the government, the KGB (security agency, including the secret police), and military industries (which produced military goods). The conservative leaders, or those opposing change, were worried that the breakup of the Soviet Union would end their privileges. On August 19, 1991, a group of these conservative leaders arrested Gorbachev and then tried to take power. They failed. Boris Yeltsin, president of the Russian Republic, and thousands of Russians bravely resisted the rebel forces in Moscow.

The Soviet republics wanted 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 did not exist.

PROGRESS CHECK
4. Analyzing Why was President Gorbachev arrested on August 19, 1991?

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The New Russia

GUIDING QUESTION What are political, economic, and social challenges faced by the new Russia?

Gorbachev left power on December 25, 1991. He gave his responsibilities as commander-in-chief to Boris Yeltsin, the new president of Russia. By the end of 1991, one of the largest empires in world history had ended.

Boris Yeltsin wanted to introduce a free market economy as quickly as possible. The transition, or change, was not easy, however. Russia already faced economic and social problems. A huge increase in organized crime made the problems worse.
Another problem Yeltsin faced was in Chechnya. Chechnya was a province in the south that wanted to split from Russia and become independent. Yeltsin used brutal force against the Chechens (CHEH•chuhnz) to keep the province as part of Russia.

Yeltsin left office at the end of 1999. Vladimir Putin, a former KGB officer, was elected president in 2000. Many thought he wanted to keep tight control on government power. Putin started reforms to increase growth and budget revenues in July 2001. The reforms included tax cuts and the free sale and purchase of land. Even so, the business conditions in Russia remained uncertain, and this hurt foreign investment.

Putin’s reforms helped Russia experience a budget surplus and a growing economy. Much of this growth is due to oil and gas exports. The country has an estimated 6 percent of the world’s oil deposits. It also has about 30 percent of the world’s natural gas deposits.

Putin wanted to return Chechnya to Russian control and to have a bigger role in international affairs. Fighting in Chechnya continued throughout 2000, and Chechnya’s capital city of Grozny was almost destroyed.

Russia has made economic gains, but it still faces some challenges. Russians are concerned about rising alcoholism. They also worry about crime and the weakening of the traditional family system. In 2008 Dmitry Medvedev became president of Russia. Putin could not run for reelection because of limits in Russia’s constitution, but he became prime minister. The two men have since shared power.

**PROGRESS CHECK**

5. *Describing* What were the effects of Russia’s transition to a market economy?

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**The Disintegration of Yugoslavia**

**GUIDING QUESTION** How did the fall of the Soviet Union impact Eastern Europe?

Yugoslavia had a Communist government, but it was never a Soviet satellite state. Josip Broz Tito had been the dictator of Yugoslavia since World War II until his death in 1980. He worked to keep together the six republics (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Slovenia,
Serbia) and two provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo) that made up Yugoslavia. However, the Communist Party collapsed by 1990.

Yugoslav politics were complex. Slobodan Milošević (slaw•BAW•dahn muh•LOH• suh•vihch), the leader of Serbia, rejected efforts toward independence. He thought the borders first needed to be redrawn to form a new Greater Serbian state. However, these negotiations failed. Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence in June 1991. The Yugoslav army attacked Croatia in September 1991. The Yugoslav army was increasingly dominated by Serbia. Serbian forces captured one-third of Croatia’s territory before the conflict ended.

The Serbs next attacked Bosnia-Herzegovina and took 70 percent of Bosnian territory. Many Bosnians were Muslims. The Serbs followed a policy called *ethnic cleansing* toward Bosnians. They killed or forced Bosnians from their lands. Ethnic cleansing brought back memories of the horrific Nazi crimes in World War II. In 1995 Bosnian and Croatian forces regained a lot of territory from Serbia with help from NATO air attacks. The Serbs signed a formal peace agreement. It split Bosnia into a Serb republic and a Muslim-Croat federation.

A new war started in 1998 over Kosovo. Kosovo was an *autonomous*, or self-governing, province in Yugoslavia. Slobodan Milošević took away Kosovo’s independence in 1989. Then groups of ethnic Albanians founded the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and fought against Serbian rule. Serb forces massacred ethnic Albanians. The United States and NATO allies (partners) worked on a settlement to end the killing. The Albanians in Kosovo regained their independence in 1999. Milošević’s rule ended in 2000. Milošević died in 2006 while he was on trial for killing civilians in Kosovo.

Yugoslavia no longer existed by 2004. The government officially renamed the country Serbia and Montenegro in that year. The people of Montenegro voted for independence in 2006. Kosovo declared its independence in 2008. Six republics had formed Yugoslavia in 1918. All were now independent nations again, and a new one, Kosovo, was born.

**PROGRESS CHECK**

6. **Describing** What role did NATO play in the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia?

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A New Era Begins: Reading Essentials and Study Guide: Lesson 1

**Answer Key**

1. Poland: Lech Wałęsa elected, modernization. Czechoslovakia: Havel becomes president, country splits. Romania: Economy falters; Ceaușescu and his wife are executed.

2. A slowing of the arms race and the end of military assistance in Eastern Europe led to the decrease of Soviet influence.

3. Lech Wałęsa, a labor activist, became the leader of Poland; and Václav Havel, a writer, became leader of Czechoslovakia.

4. Gorbachev was arrested by conservative Soviet leaders who saw their power being eroded. This attempted coup failed.

5. The transition caused economic hardships and social problems, including a rise in alcoholism and organized crime.

6. In 1995 NATO led air strikes against the Serbian forces. NATO was also involved in stopping the fighting in Kosovo.