

- 2 **Economy:** The Soviet Union had major long-term economic problems. However Gorbachev's policy of Perestroika only made matters worse. Industrial output fell, prices rose and essential goods became scarce. By 1991 people were very angry about this, while the Soviet government itself had almost run out of money.
- 3 **Glasnost:** People used the policy of openness to criticise the Communist Party and Gorbachev. More and more people had the confidence to say that the Soviet Union had had its day.
- 4 **Coup d'état:** In August 1991 there was an attempted *coup* by hard-line communists. Gorbachev was placed under house arrest, while troops moved into Moscow. The hardliners were defeated after three days because they were successfully opposed by Boris Yeltsin, leader of the Russian Soviet Republic. He urged soldiers to mutiny and workers to strike in protest.

The defeat of the *coup* contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union in the following ways:

- It destroyed the authority of the Communist Party once and for all.
- Although Gorbachev resumed his position as leader, he no longer commanded much respect.
- Boris Yeltsin's popularity was boosted, but he hated communism and wanted to destroy the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev tried to stop the Soviet Union's collapse by promising greater freedom to the Republics in a new Union of Sovereign States. However the idea received little support. As a result, on Christmas Day 1991, Gorbachev made a special television broadcast announcing the end of the Soviet Union. As there was no longer a Soviet state to be president of, he also announced his own resignation. The Cold War was over.

The consequences of the Soviet Union's collapse

- Ten former Soviet Republics, including Russia, Belarus and the Ukraine, formed the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). This group of states loosely agreed to work together on mutual issues, including economics, defence and foreign policy.
- Some Soviet states decided to become fully independent and not join the CIS, including the Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.
- The Cold War was now at an end. With the demise of the Soviet Union, there was no longer any ideological rivalry between East and West.
- Only one superpower remained: the USA.

DO IT!

- 1 Create a revision diagram, showing four major reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union.
- 2 In just four sentences, sum up why the collapse of the Soviet Union was a significant event.

CHECK IT!

- 1 Describe the 'three baskets' of the Helsinki Agreement.
- 2 Outline two results of the 'Reagan doctrine'.
- 3 Give two reasons to explain why Gorbachev was not willing to use force to maintain communist control over Eastern Europe.
- 4 Compare the different ways communism came to an end in Czechoslovakia and Romania.