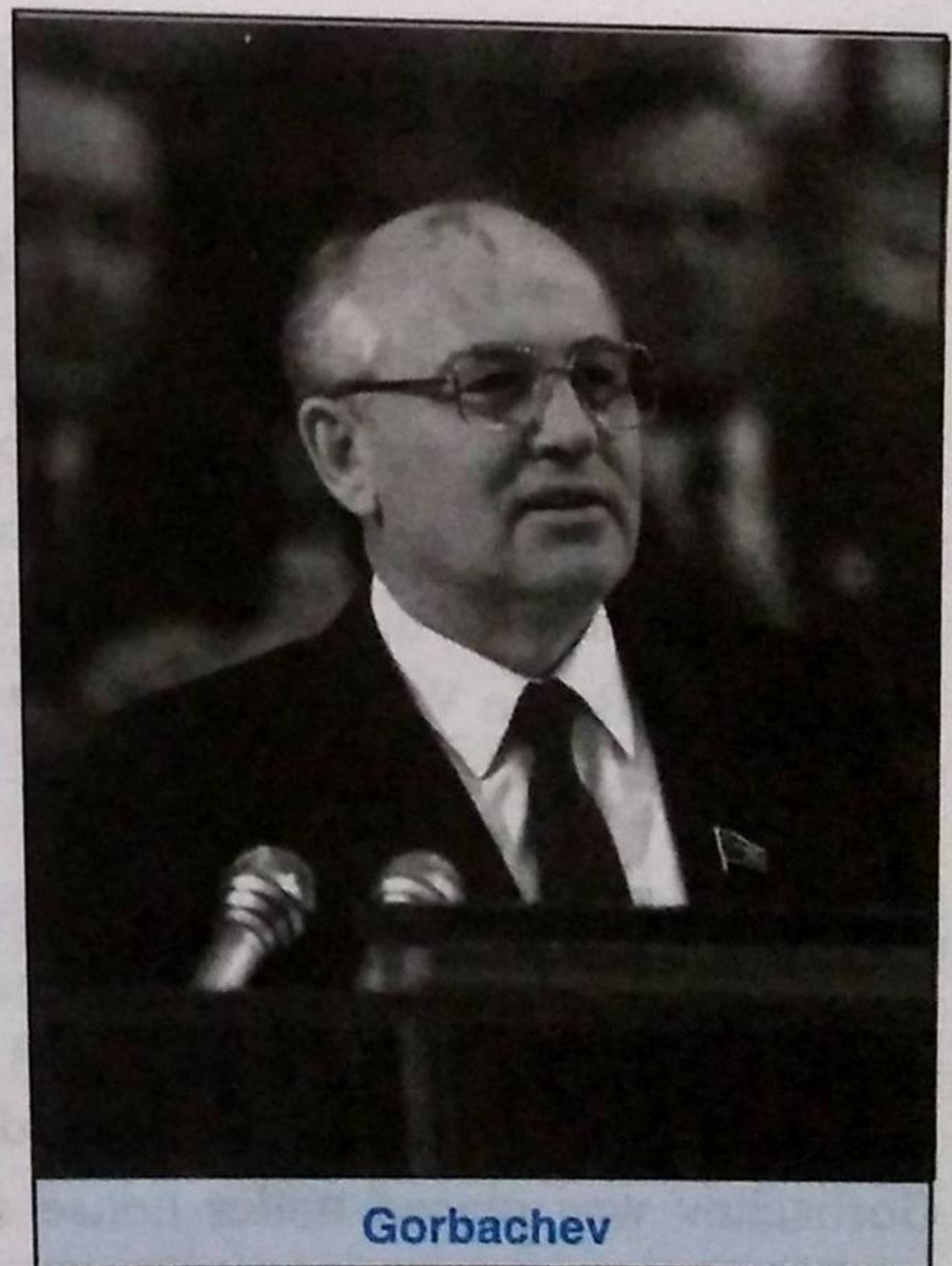


After Russia's disastrous defeat in the First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution took place in 1917 under the leadership of Lenin. The Czarist regime came to an end and the Communist rule started. After Lenin, the other leaders were Joseph Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev. The next leader was Mikhail Gorbachev who was in power from 1985 to 1991.

THE REGIME OF GORBACHEV (1985-1991)

Mikhail Gorbachev was the most dynamic leader Russia had ever seen for many years. He was determined to revitalize and transform the country. During his stay in office, he introduced several policies which revolutionized the internal and external affairs of the Soviet Union. He wanted to modernize the Communist Party with two new policies known as **Perestroika or Restructuring and Glasnost or Openness**.



Gorbachev

ECONOMIC REFORMS

Perestroika means opening up of Soviet economy to open market forces. By 1987, private ownership of business was allowed for the first time since 1920s. He wanted to introduce reforms for the inefficiencies he had seen in the state-controlled agricultural sectors. Apart from this, small-scale private enterprises were also allowed. The motive behind this reform was to provide competition against the slow and inefficient services provided by the state. Another important aspect of this reform was to provide alternative employment facilities to the people. He realized that introduction of automation and computerization had lessened the scope of manual and clerical works. He also removed the

central control over raw materials, production quotas and trade so that the factories could work according to the orders of the customers.

CULTURAL REFORMS

In internal affairs, Gorbachev introduced the concept of **Glasnost means openness**. This was a distinct break from the authoritarian past of the Soviet Union. Glasnost led to greater freedom of speech, freedom of worship and a reduction in state control over individual lives. A number of 1000 political prisoners were released during his period. Long-banned anti-Stalin films and novels were allowed to publish. Media was also given freedom to discuss and criticize the policy of the government. Even Sakharov was allowed to return to Moscow.

END OF COLD WAR

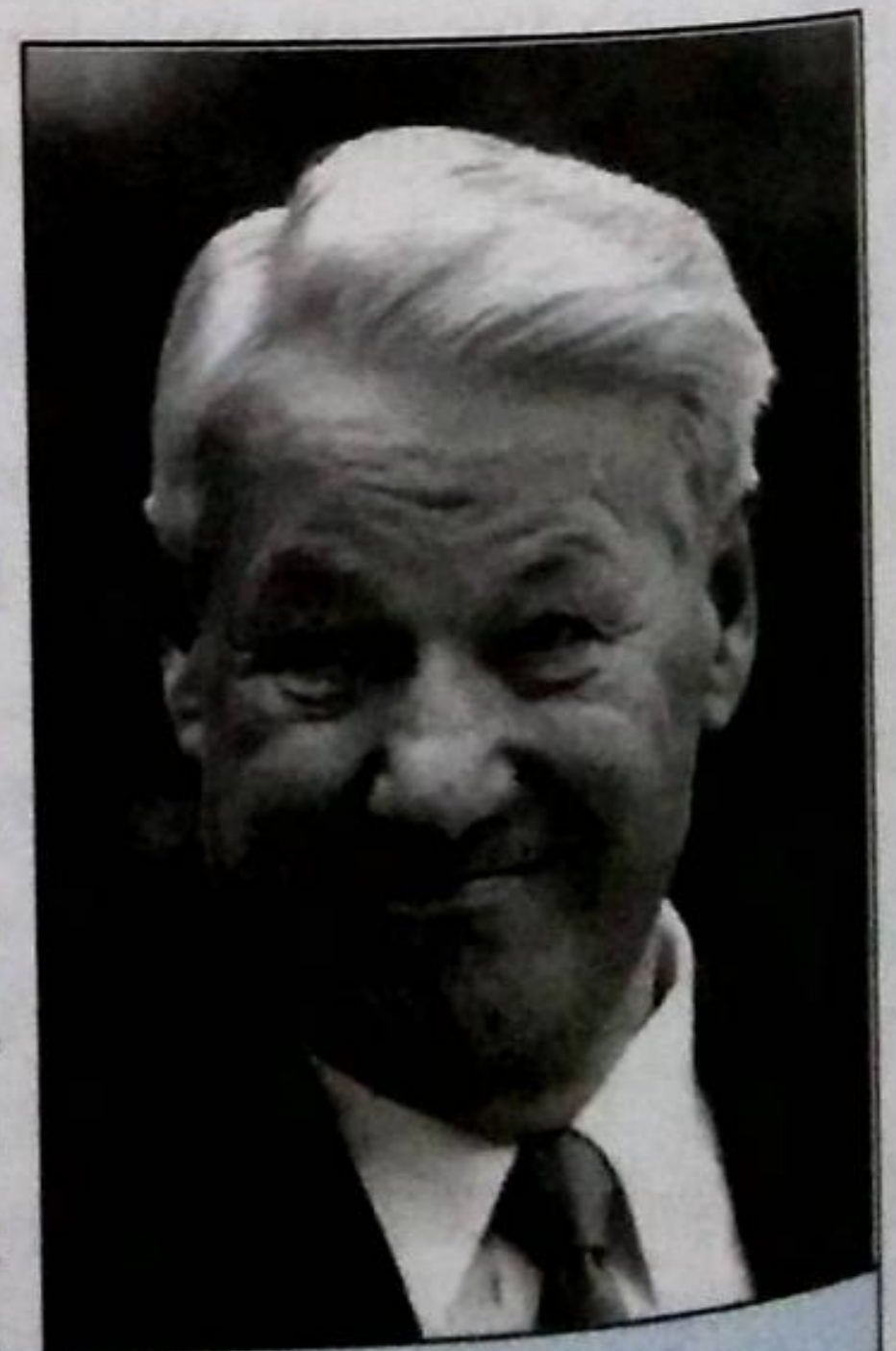
In 1980s the Soviet economy was in bad condition due to inefficiencies of a planned economy and the huge sums spent on the arms race. Gorbachev felt that the Soviet Union could no longer afford to spend such great sums on military system. This led to sign Nuclear Missile Reduction Treaties with America. This effectively ended the Cold War which had dominated international politics since 1945. In 1989, the Soviet army was withdrawn from Afghanistan to save the costly expenditure of the state.

POLITICAL CHANGES

In 1988 Gorbachev declared that Soviet Union would no longer maintain political control over the Warsaw Pact countries. Gorbachev gave the Eastern European countries the right to follow their own political agenda. This drastically changed the European political map. Starting with Poland, the Eastern European countries experienced peaceful democratic revolution. The pro-Soviet Communist Parties were thus replaced by other democratic parties. This was like a revolution. Most symbolically in 1989, the Berlin Wall was torn down. East and West Germany was allowed to unite again.

AUGUST COUP OF 1991

But the conservative section of the Communist Party was now alarmed for the breakup of the old Soviet Union. In 1991, Gorbachev was placed under house arrest by the conservative section led by Gorbachev's Vice-President **Gennady Yanayev**. This was known as the **August Coup**, but after three days he was released. After the Coup, Gorbachev dissolved the Communist Party and resigned from the post of party General Secretary. The new General Secretary was **Boris Yeltsin**. In early December,



Boris Yeltsin

1991, Ukraine, the second largest Soviet Republic, voted for independence. It was now clear that the old USSR was going to be ended sooner or later. On December 8, 1991, Yeltsin met the leaders of the other Republics and they announced the dissolution of the USSR. But they decided to form the **Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) of fifteen Republics**, thereby ending the world's largest and most influential Communist regime. This development meant that the USSR now ceased to exist.

IMPACT ON POLAND

In Poland, a new trade union movement under Solidarity demanded referendum about a new government to be formed. The leader of the government General **Jaruzelski** declared martial law and banned Solidarity. But the original problem to improve economy did not succeed. Jaruzelski very soon realized that in this changed situation he would not receive any help from Soviet Russia. Talks then started between the Communist government and Solidarity and the other opposition groups. By April, 1989, all agreed to change the existing constitution of Poland. The new constitution was only transitional. After the collapse of communism in other East European countries, further changes took place in Poland. In the elections of December, 1990, **Lech Walesa, the Solidarity leader**, was elected President of Poland. Thus the peaceful revolution in Poland was complete.

DEVELOPMENT IN GERMANY

The new wave of liberation also touched East Germany. The Communist leader **Enrich Honecker** was against any kind of reform. Gorbachev was badly in need of economic aid. He now promised the West German **Chancellor Helmut Kohl** to help him to end the divided Germany in return for German economic aid. During August and September, 1989, thousands of East German people began to escape to West via Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary when Hungary opened its frontier with Austria. In the mean time, the Great Powers gave positive indications that they would not oppose a re-united Germany. The East German people wanted immediate union. The Soviet Russia and America expressed their willingness for the re-unification of Germany. Yeltsin promised to withdraw the Russian troops from East Germany within 1994. France and Britain supported the move. **Thus Germany was finally reunited at mid night of October 3, 1990. Helmut Kohl became the first Chancellor of united Germany since the Second World War.**

IMPACT ON CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Czechoslovakia had extensive trade with the Western countries throughout the 1970s. But during the early 1980s, the economy was in trouble because the industries were not properly modernized. In November, 1989, there was a huge demonstration in Prague against the communist government in which a number of people were injured by police authority. A national

strike was declared when Alexander Dubcek spoke before a huge rally. This movement ultimately led to fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia in 1989.

Answer the following:-

1. Discuss the economic and political reforms introduced by Gorbachev.

2. Discuss the impact of the end of Cold war on the following :-

a. Germany.

b. Poland.

c. Czechoslovakia.