The Decline of the Soviet Union

September 28
The Space Race

• The Cold War spurred the effort by the USA and USSR to develop rocket technology

• The Soviets succeeded in launching the first Satellite (Sputnik) as well as the first man in Space (Yuri Gagarin)
Sputnik (1957)
Laika
Moon Landing

• Kennedy at his inauguration in 1960 stated the US goal of landing a man on the moon by the end of the 60’s
• this came to dominate the Space Race because of prestige
• The US Apollo Program began flights to the moon
• Apollo 11 landed successfully in July of 1969
• Astronaut Neil Armstrong, followed by crewmate Buzz Aldrin become the first humans on the moon
• Apollo program continued until 1972 (Apollo 17)
Soviets in Afghanistan

- Fought for control of resources
- Historians refer to this as the Soviet Union’s Vietnam
- USA channels $ and arms to Afghan forces as an indirect way to fight the Soviets

Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev
Mikhail Gorbachev

• Last premier of the USSR
• Implemented 2 major policies as leader
  • Glasnost (openness to the West)
  • Perestroika (economic reforms)
The Fall of the Berlin Wall

September 29, 2016
The Berlin Wall

• In the early 1960’s people were rapidly leaving East Berlin for West Berlin
• This was causing economic problems in the East
• 1961 – construction on a wall began
How the Berlin Wall looked in 1983

West Berlin
- Wall 3.60m high.
  - Made of reinforced concrete slabs with rounded tops to prevent people climbing over
- Ditch
- Sand bank
- Border
- Watch tower
- Border guards

East Berlin
- Electrified wire fence connected to alarms
- Concrete wall
- Signpost indicating a closed-off section of the border
- Bunker
- Spikes in ground
- Vehicle patrol
- Guard dogs

Source: Berlin Wall Archives
Kennedy in ‘63
Mikhail Gorbachev

• Last premier of the USSR
• Implemented 2 major policies as leader
  • Perestroika (economic reforms, more free markets)
  • Glasnost (openness to the West)
“Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”
The Berlin Wall is Taken Down (1989) – There was a new sense that protests for democratic reform in the communist countries would not be met with brutal repression under Gorbachev. More and more protests occurred in the communist countries. A momentum built up that could not be stopped. Eventually this led to the tearing down of the wall and to the fall of communism in Russia.
Fall of the USSR

• The Soviet Union contained 92 ethnic groups and 112 different languages
• As Gorbachev loosened the authoritarian grip, ethnic tensions escalated
• The army, KGB and military industries feared loss of privileges
• They tried to arrest Gorbachev and seize power
• Boris Yeltsin prevented a completed military coup, and allowed Soviet Republics their independence
• By 1991 the Soviet Union no longer existed