

TEXT SUMMARY

In recent years, many countries have moved from dictatorship to democracy. This transition has taken many forms. Often the first step is an argument between **hardliners** and **softliners** as to how to handle reform within the government. Hardliners do not want reform, while softliners support reform in order to keep the government in power longer.

In Poland, in response to economic problems, Lech Walesa and the Solidarity trade union persuaded softliners within the communist government to grant them some fundamental rights. Ultimately the dictatorship fell, and Walesa became Poland's first democratically elected president. Similarly, in the former Soviet Union the transition began when Mikhail

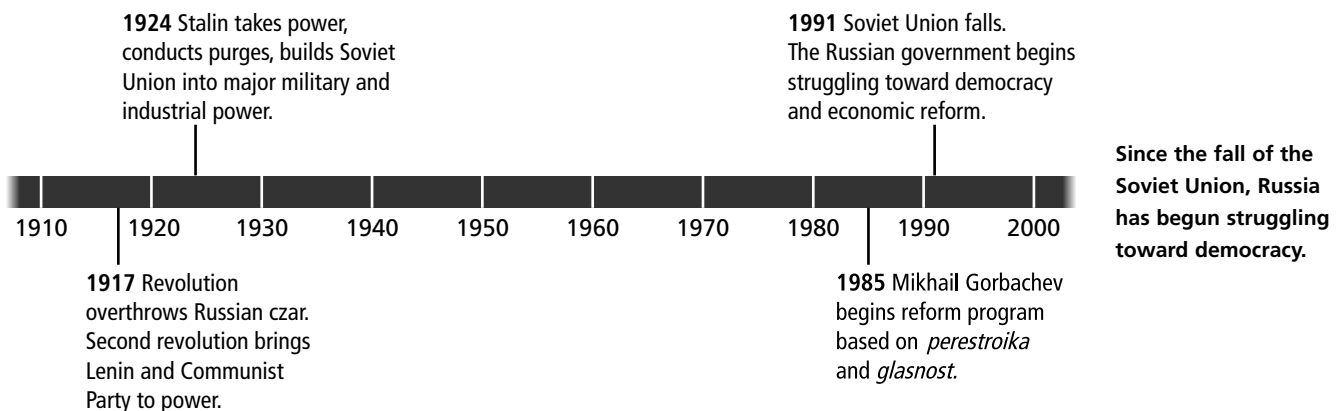
Gorbachev took soft-line, reform positions known as *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring). Russian president Boris Yeltsin then demanded further reforms, and the Soviet Union collapsed.

The final step in democratization is **democratic consolidation**—building strong institutions to make sure democracy survives. Where democratic institutions are weak, the government can often return to dictatorship or fall into civil war. In some cases, the problems become so serious that the government disappears. These **failed states**, such as Somalia or Afghanistan, can provide homes for terrorists.

THE BIG IDEA

To successfully change from dictatorship to democracy, countries must build strong institutions that the people trust and respect.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: *The Path to Russia*



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What factors are necessary to bring about democratic consolidation? Why is this process so difficult?
2. **Time Line Skills** At what point was Russia able to strive for democracy?