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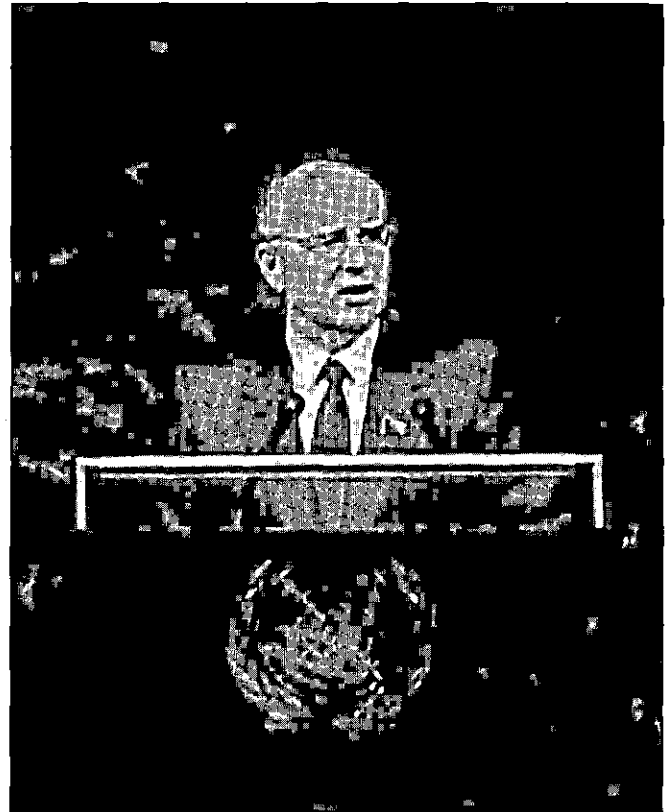
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GORBACHEV, MIKHAIL

Gorbachev (1931–), born in the village of Privolnoye in Stavropol Province, a fertile land of the north Caucasus, inadvertently helped bring the 1917 Russian Revolution to an early close. The father of Soviet *perestroika*, or restructuring, he experienced a life trajectory resembling that of millions of his compatriots: a middling-peasant family background; the somersault of the rural social order with collectivization; the arrest (and release) in the Terror of his collective-farm-chairman grandfather; the (brief) deportation to Siberia of his other grandfather; the World War II front for his father (who somehow survived); the Nazi occupation for the women and children left behind in the village; and Communist Youth League (*Komsomol*) service, migration to the city, and Communist Party membership for Mikhail. He rose, and despite the devastating hardships the country rose along with him—he just got further than most, only to bring everything down.

Like his father and grandfather, Gorbachev might have become a farmer, but Stalin's upheavals of the 1930s brought—besides death and destruction—expanded educational opportunities. Mikhail completed eight grades in the village, two more in the district center twenty kilometers away, and set his sights on a university education, aiming not for the local ones but for Moscow. With a peasant-worker background, a pupil's silver medal, a high state award for helping bring in the harvest, and precocious candidate membership in the party, Gorbachev was accepted, and in 1950 made the leap to the Soviet capital. During his five years at Moscow State University's law faculty, the Stavropol hayseed came into contact with a handful of erudite professors as well as members of the Moscow cultural elite, met and married Raisa Titorenko, mourned the death of Stalin, and wrote a thesis setting out socialism's superiority to capitalism. Posted upon graduation to the Stavropol procuracy, Gorbachev switched almost immediately to a position in the *Komsomol* bureaucracy and set about organizing discussion groups in remote settlements in order, as he explains in his autobiography, to "fling open a window to the world." As he climbed the *Komsomol* ladder, Nikita Khrushchev's de-Stalinization provided a boost. But Gorbachev writes that survivalist functionaries sabotaged the Moscow-instigated reforms. In 1964 the top party elite removed Khrushchev in a conspiracy.

Khrushchev became a memory, local officials advanced higher, and Gorbachev was shifted in 1966 to the party bureaucracy. By 1970 he had climbed to first secretary for Stavropol Province. Because his fief happened to be a southern region where the central elite maintained sanatoria, he



Mikhail Gorbachev

played host to many top figures in the leadership, including KGB chief Yuri Andropov. It was Andropov who in 1978 arranged Gorbachev's transfer to Moscow as the new chief of the Central Committee agricultural department. This assignment was followed in 1980 by promotion to full membership in the Politburo. Andropov, who succeeded Leonid Brezhnev in 1982, placed Gorbachev in charge of new appointments, allowing his protégé to congratulate personally those marked for elevation. Andropov was ill, however, and upon his death in 1984 the old guard blocked Gorbachev's path. Yet once the invalid Konstantin Chernenko also passed away, in 1985, the surviving septua- and octogenarians had little choice but to appoint the one relative youth in their midst. With the support of the KGB (Andropov's old power base) as well as officials in the Central Committee and economic ministries whose appointments he had overseen, the fifty-four-year-old Gorbachev became general secretary for what looked like a very long time.

As head of the party, and later Soviet president, Gorbachev led the country on a quest for reformed socialism, but his program of *perestroika* culminated in the autoliquidation of both socialism and the USSR. Unable to control or counter the forces he had helped set in motion, he officially disbanded the USSR and stepped down in December

1991. However, Gorbachev left the deepest of impressions on his times, above all, in the area of disarmament.

See also *USSR Collapse and Dissolution (1989–1991)*.

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GRAMSCI, ANTONIO

Gramsci (1891–1937), one of the greatest Marxist theorists, labor activists, and political journalists of the twentieth century, was born in the small town of Ales in Sardinia. Influenced by Karl Marx, Benedetto Croce, and the Italian Marxist Antonio Labriola, he joined the Italian Socialist Party in 1913.

During World War I he became deeply radicalized, investing the bulk of his energies in the militant Turin working-class movement associated with both the emergent council formations and the Italian Socialist Party. As a party journalist, Gramsci hoped to articulate the theories of the spontaneous popular movements of Turin. Sharply disillusioned when party leadership failed to take advantage of revolutionary opportunities during 1916–1919, Gramsci and other leading Italian radicals founded the Italian Communist Party in 1921, with Gramsci as one of its guiding intellectual and political figures.

In 1922 Gramsci went to Moscow to serve as the Italian Communist Party representative to the Comintern. He returned to Italy just as fascism was consolidating power, and in May 1924 he was elected to parliament as a party delegate. With the right on the ascendancy, Gramsci was arrested by the regime of Benito Mussolini in November 1926. From late 1926 until just before his death in April 1937 Gramsci was confined to prison, often kept in isolation, where he suffered mounting ill health, loneliness, and detachment from the world of everyday politics.

Despite the ordeal of prison, Gramsci was able to read and write—and he indeed wrote prolifically. It was during these years that Gramsci compiled his various notes, which were eventually smuggled out by his sister-in-law, Tatiana Schucht. Systematically assembled only after World War II, these notes would come to be known as the *Prison Notebooks*, a collection of treatises that would soon be famous around the world. International pressure mounted for Gramsci's release,

and he was finally given his freedom in Rome in April 1937. But by this time he was so physically and mentally broken that he died just five days after his release.

The body of Gramsci's intellectual contribution includes his early writings from the Italian Socialist Party and the journal *The New Order* (1914–1920), his prolific interventions during the Italian Communist Party years (1921–1926), and above all the *Prison Notebooks*. The *Notebooks*, which have been translated into every major language, covered amazingly diverse topics—Italian history, political affairs, education, culture, philosophy, theory of the state, and his illuminating discourses into the realm of (Marxist) political strategy. A major theme underlying his otherwise fragmented notes was the task of forging a Marxist theory and strategy adequate to the requirements of socialist transformation in the advanced industrial setting.

In the late twentieth century Gramsci became probably the most widely known of the Western Marxists who sought to free classical Marxism of its economism and determinism and who looked to a more democratic, egalitarian revolutionary process than was typical of the Soviet and other Leninist experiences. Gramsci's most famous concept was that of ideological hegemony, which pointed toward the complex forms of ideological and cultural domination that helped reproduce capitalism, especially in highly industrialized societies. To combat the spread of capitalism, Gramsci insisted on the necessity of a broad cultural war of position designed to renew civil society—that would join the more conventional war of position associated with the struggle for political and economic power. Gramsci expected influential critical thinkers immersed in the everyday life of workers to lead the struggle.

Gramsci's legacy is a powerful and multifaceted one that lives on within and without the Marxist tradition. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s Gramscian discourse entered into and helped shape a number of modern academic disciplines, including sociology, history, film studies, literature, urban planning, and anthropology. Gramsci's ideas have spread throughout the world, far outlasting the regime that sought to silence him.

See also *Communism; Italian Fascist Revolution (1919–1945); Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels*.

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