1917: The Russian Revolution

February 1917	The February Revolution begins in Petrograd with mass protests & strikes against food shortages & the autocracy. Tsar Nicholas II abdicates on March 2, ending over 300 years of Romanov rule. The Provisional Government is established, led initially by Prince Georgy Lvov & later by Alexander Kerensky.
April 1917	Vladimir Lenin returns to Russia from exile, delivering his April Theses, which call for "All power to the Soviets" & the overthrow of the Provisional Government.
July 1917	The July Days, a period of unrest & demonstrations in Petrograd, are suppressed by the Provisional Government, leading to a temporary decline in Bolshevik influence.
October 1917	The October Revolution (Bolshevik Revolution) begins on October 25 (Julian calendar), when the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and Leon Trotsky, seize key government buildings and overthrow the Provisional Government. The Bolsheviks establish the Council of People's Commissars, with Lenin as its head.

1918-1922: Russian Civil War & Formation of USSR

1918-1920	Russian Civil War between the Red Army (Bolsheviks) & the White Army (anti-Bolsheviks), along with foreign intervention

1918-1922: Russian Civil War & Formation of USSR (cont)

March 1918	Treaty of Brest-Litovsk is signed, ending Russia's involvement in WWI
July 1918	Execution of Tsar Nicholas II & his family
1921	The Red Army secures victory in the Civil War; famine & economic hardship lead to the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP)
December 1922	The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) is officially established, with Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, & the Transcaucasian Federation as founding members

1924-1929: Stalin's Rise to Power

January 1924	Vladimir Lenin dies, leading to a power struggle among the Soviet leadership. Joseph Stalin, General Secretary of the Communist Party, begins to consolidate power.
1924-1927	Stalin maneuvers against his rivals, including Leon Trotsky, Lev Kamenev, and Grigory Zinoviev, who form the United Opposition. Stalin allies with Nikolai Bukharin and Alexei Rykov initially, then turns against them as well.
1927	Trotsky is expelled from the Communist Party and later exiled from the Soviet Union in 1929.

1929-1939: Stalin's Rule & Great Purge

1928-1932	The First Five-Year Plan is launched, emphasizing rapid industrialization and collectivization of agriculture. This leads to significant increases in industrial output but also widespread disruption and suffering in rural areas.
1932-1933	The Holodomor, a man-made famine in Soviet Ukraine, causes the deaths of millions of people due to forced collectivization and grain requisition policies.
1934	The assassination of Sergei Kirov, a prominent Communist leader, triggers a massive purge of perceived enemies within the Communist Party, the military, and broader society.
1936-1938	The Great Purge (or Great Terror) reaches its peak, with show trials, executions, and imprisonments of millions, including senior Communist Party members, military officers, intellectuals, and ordinary citizens.
1936	The Soviet Constitution of 1936 is adopted, proclaiming the Soviet Union as a socialist state and ostensibly granting broad rights to its citizens, while in practice consolidating Stalin's totalitarian control.

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Published 8th August, 2024.
Last updated 7th August, 2024.

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1939-1945: World War II

23 August 1939	The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact) is signed, including a secret protocol dividing Eastern Europe into spheres of influence. This allows the USSR to annex parts of Poland, the Baltic states, and Bessarabia.
17 September 1939	The USSR invades eastern Poland, following the German invasion from the west.
November 1939	The Winter War between the Soviet Union and Finland begins, resulting in significant Soviet losses but eventually leading to Finnish territorial concessions.
22 June 1941	Operation Barbarossa, Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union, begins, catching the Red Army by surprise and leading to massive early losses.
1942-1943	The Battle of Stalingrad becomes a turning point in the war, with the Soviet Union achieving a decisive victory and beginning to push German forces westward.
1943-1944	The Soviet Union launches a series of successful offensives, regaining lost territory and advancing into Eastern Europe.

1939-1945: World War II (cont)

9 May 1945	Nazi Germany surrenders; the USSR emerges victorious, having suffered immense human and material losses.

1945-1953: Post-War Period & Stalin's Last Years

1945	The USSR establishes control over Eastern Europe, installing pro-Soviet governments in Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania.
1947	The Truman Doctrine is announced, marking the beginning of the Cold War. The Marshall Plan is introduced, which the USSR rejects for itself and its Eastern European allies.
1948	The Berlin Blockade begins, leading to the Berlin Airlift by Western Allies.
1949	The Soviet Union successfully tests its first atomic bomb, breaking the US monopoly on nuclear weapons.
1950-1953	The Korean War sees the USSR supporting North Korea against South Korea and UN forces led by the United States.
5 March 1953	Joseph Stalin dies, leading to a power struggle among the Soviet leadership.

1953-1964: Khrushchev's Thaw

1953-1955	A power struggle ensues among Soviet leaders, resulting in Nikita Khrushchev's rise to power. Lavrentiy Beria, the head of the secret police, is arrested and executed.

1953-1964: Khrushchev's Thaw (cont)

1956	Khrushchev delivers his "Secret Speech" at the 20th Party Congress, denouncing Stalin's cult of personality and initiating a period of de-Stalinization and political liberalization.
October 1956	The Hungarian Revolution is crushed by Soviet forces, reaffirming Soviet control over Eastern Europe.
1957	The USSR launches Sputnik, the first artificial satellite, marking the beginning of the space race.
1961	Yuri Gagarin becomes the first human to orbit the Earth, enhancing Soviet prestige in the space race.
1961	The Berlin Wall is constructed, symbolizing the division between East and West during the Cold War.
October 1962	The Cuban Missile Crisis brings the world to the brink of nuclear war, but is resolved through negotiations between Khrushchev and US President John F. Kennedy.
1964	Khrushchev is ousted in a coup led by Leonid Brezhnev and other party officials. Brezhnev becomes the new General Secretary of the Communist Party.

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1964-1982: Brezhnev Era

1968	The Prague Spring, a period of political liberalization in Czechoslovakia, is crushed by Warsaw Pact troops, emphasizing the Brezhnev Doctrine of limited sovereignty for socialist states.
1972	The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I) treaty is signed with the United States, marking a period of détente and arms control.
1979	The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan begins, aiming to support the communist government against insurgent groups. This leads to a protracted and costly conflict.
1980	The Moscow Olympics are boycotted by several Western countries in protest of the invasion of Afghanistan.

1982-1985: Interregnum

November 1982	Brezhnev dies; Yuri Andropov, former head of the KGB, becomes General Secretary.
1984	Andropov dies; Konstantin Chernenko, a senior party official, becomes General Secretary.
1985	Chernenko dies; Mikhail Gorbachev, a reform-minded leader, becomes General Secretary, signaling the start of significant changes.

1985-1991: Gorbachev's Reforms & end of USSR

1985	Gorbachev introduces policies of Glasnost (openness) and Perestroika (restructuring) to reform the Soviet political and economic system, aiming to make it more transparent and efficient.

1985-1991: Gorbachev's Reforms & end of USSR (cont)

1986	The Chernobyl nuclear disaster occurs, exposing systemic flaws and leading to increased calls for reform.
1987	Gorbachev initiates significant arms reduction talks with the United States, leading to the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 1987.
1988-1989	Nationalist movements gain strength in the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) and other Soviet republics, demanding greater autonomy or independence.
1989	The Berlin Wall falls, leading to the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union refrains from intervening, marking the end of the Brezhnev Doctrine.
1990	Gorbachev receives the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in reducing East-West tensions.
March 1990	Lithuania declares independence from the Soviet Union, followed by other Baltic states.
June 1991	Boris Yeltsin is elected President of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, the largest Soviet republic, signaling a shift in power.

1985-1991: Gorbachev's Reforms & end of USSR (cont)

August 1991	A coup attempt by hardline Communists against Gorbachev fails, but severely weakens his authority. Yeltsin emerges as a key figure in opposing the coup.
8 December 1991	The leaders of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus sign the Belavezha Accords, declaring the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).
25 December 1991	Gorbachev resigns as President of the USSR, effectively ending the existence of the Soviet Union. The Russian Federation becomes the successor state.

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