Contemporary Russia

Frederick H. White
August (19-21, 1991) Putsch

While Mikhail Gorbachev was “detained” in the Crimea, Boris Yeltsin was supporting armed resistance in Moscow.

24 August: Gorbachev resigned as General Secretary of the CPSU and advised the Central Committee to dissolve.

8 December: Yeltsin, along with the presidents of Ukraine and Belarus founded the Commonwealth of Independent States and declared the end of the Soviet Union in the Belavezha Accords.

17 December: Gorbachev dissolves the Soviet Union.

25 December: Gorbachev resigns and two days later, Yeltsin moves into the Kremlin.
Post-Soviet Russia

Unexpected bloodless revolution
1917-1991

Boris Yeltsin (1931-2007): President of Russia
Transform Russia into a free market economy
Implement economic shock therapy
Price liberalization and privatization programs
Result: Widespread corruption, inflation, economic collapse and enormous political and social problems.
October 1993: Russian constitutional crisis
- Yeltsin illegally ordered the dissolution of the parliament, which then attempted to remove Yeltsin from office.
- Shelled the “White House” (187 died)
- New constitution in which Presidential powers were strengthened

1996: Reelected President
- Limited options (Zhirinovskii, Ziuganov)

Rise of the “bandit” culture
- Thieves in Law
- “Russian mafia”

Rise of “oligarchs”
- Privatization of State enterprises
- Boris Berezovskii; Roman Abramovich; Mikhail Khodorkovskii

1998: Ruble default
- Blessing is disguise

1999: Surprise resignation
- Appointed Valdimir Putin (Prime Minister)

Yeltsin Years (1991-1999)
31 December 1999: Acting President of the Russian Federation
- Putin had three months to mount a political campaign
- Boris Berezovskii played the role of “King-maker”
- Putin won in the first round of elections with 53% of the vote

First Presidency (2000-2004)
- Reduced the power of the Oligarchs
  - Berezovskii in self-exile in London
  - Mikhail Khodorkovskii arrested (2003)
- Second Chechen War (1999)
  - Apartment bombings (Sept. 1999)
- Legal reform (land and tax reform)
- Problems: Kursk (2000; 118 sailors), Nord-Ost (2002; 130 dead)
2004: Received 71% of the vote in re-election

September 2004: Beslan
- 3 days: capture of over 1,100 hostages; 777 children (380? dead)

2005: Increase in wages in healthcare and education

Continued pressure on Oligarchs
- 2005: YUKOS destroyed -> Rosneft
- Kodorkovskii: 10 years hard labor

Crackdown on media
- Government now owns most of the TV channels

2006: Murder of Alexander Litvinenko (b. 1962)
- Accused FSB of apartment bombings.
- Accused Putin of ordering the murder of Politkovskaia.
- Polonium-210
- British: Andrei Lugovoi (ex-KGB)

2007: Successful bid of Sochi for the 2014 Winter Olympics

2008: Full-scale military reform [??]
- Since early 2000s, had improved the lot of the military, police and former-KGB
- 2003: US invasion of Iraq (Soviet trained military)
Dmitry Medvedev
b. 1965

- Professor of law St Petersburg State University
- 2000: Putin’s Presidential campaign manager
- 2005: Appointed First Deputy Prime Minister
- 2008-2012: President of Russia
  - Prime Minister: Putin
  - Government by tandem
- On his watch...
  - 2008: South Ossetia war
  - 2008: Launched an anti-corruption campaign
    - 2011: Admitted that the plan had failed
  - Dealt with financial crisis (2008-09)
    - $90 billion in stimulus and loans
  - 2009: Reset with US-Relations
  - 2011: Russia admitted to the WTO
- 2012: Appointed Prime Minister by President Putin
2012: won election with 64% of the vote
Mass protests before and after the election
6 May: between 8,000-20,000 protestors
Russia’s future...