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Designed for student research, this one-stop resource contains a wealth of information, reference material, and analysis of the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union. Combining narrative description, analytical essays, lengthy biographical profiles, and the text of key primary documents, Watson examines the reasons for the decline and fall of the Soviet Union and its ruling Communist party in 1991. Five essays provide a historical overview of the rise and fall of the Soviet brand of communism; the evolution of Gorbachev's perestroika reform policies; the costly Soviet imperial legacy and the ten-year Afghan war; nationalism and the dissolution of Soviet unity; and post-Soviet Russia under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin. Ready-reference features include: a timeline of key events; biographical profiles of 15 leaders involved in the decline and fall of Soviet communism; the text of 22 documents including writings by Gorbachev, Yeltsin and other key figures; a glossary of terms; and an annotated bibliography of print and video materials. Photos and maps complement the text.