

Former Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze Dies at 86

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Eduard Shevardnadze, ex-president of Georgia and former Soviet foreign minister, has died.

Eduard Shevardnadze, an ex-president of Georgia and former Soviet foreign minister, died on Monday after a long struggle with illness, his personal assistant said.

Shevardnadze, who was 86, played a vital role in ending the Cold War as Soviet foreign minister, went on to lead his native Georgia in the stormy early years after independence.

His assistant, Marina Davitashvili, said he had died after a long illness. She did not give any further details. Russia's Interfax news agency reported he had died at midday local time.

As foreign minister under the last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, Shevardnadze oversaw the thaw in relations with the West before the Berlin Wall came down and the communist Soviet Union was dismantled.

He was one of the intellectual fathers of "perestroika," the reform policy which Gorbachev said was conceived during a stroll along the shores of the Black Sea with his Georgian

comrade, although they later fell out.

After the Soviet Union collapsed, Shevardnadze returned to Georgia to become president and brought some stability to the republic after a period of anarchy, when protesters toting Kalashnikovs prowled the streets.

He was toppled in the country's 2003 Rose Revolution. In his final years, he lived in his residence and did not travel much.

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