

The SOVIET UNION: The Leadership of the Soviet Union

After World War II, the Soviet Union was a superpower. Stalin still was firmly in control he poured money into industry, science, and the military. His labor camps forced political prisoners to toil for their country.

Khrushchev

Nikita Khrushchev became the Soviet leader after Stalin in 1953. He shocked all Communist party leaders when he proclaimed Stalin abused his power. Khrushchev then followed a “de-Stalinization” policy. It included lifting bans from literary works. He then released political prisoners and wanted a “peaceful coexistence” with the West.

Khrushchev also tried to put more emphasis on increasing consumer goods and agriculture. He allowed more freedoms like low rents, free health care, and jobs for almost everyone. Since World War II, Germany had been divided into a democratic western state and a communist eastern state. Some Germans decided to flee from communist Germany to democratic Germany. To end this, in 1961, Khrushchev ordered the building of the Berlin Wall to permanently separate Eastern Germany from Western Germany.

Unfortunately, not all of his intentions brought success. The industrial growth rate slowed, and foreign policy failures damaged his reputation. In 1964, due to these economic and foreign policy set backs, Khrushchev was removed from power.



Brezhnev

Under the new leadership of the Soviet Union, Leonid Brezhnev was determined to keep all of Eastern Europe communist. He was not interested in reform. His policy, the Brezhnev Doctrine, insisted on the right of the Soviet Union to intervene if communism was threatened in another communist state. Dissidents (critics of the government) were jailed, punished, and sent away to insane asylums. At this time, there were many problems with Soviet economy, including a huge bureaucracy, rise in alcoholism, a declining economy and poor working conditions.


Questions:

1) Did Khrushchev help or hurt the Soviet Union? Explain.

2) Did Brezhnev help or hurt the Soviet Union? Explain.

3) Are these leaders leading to a future of failures or success for the Soviet Union? Explain.


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Stalin
1922-1953



Khrushchev
1956-1964



Brezhnev
1964-1982

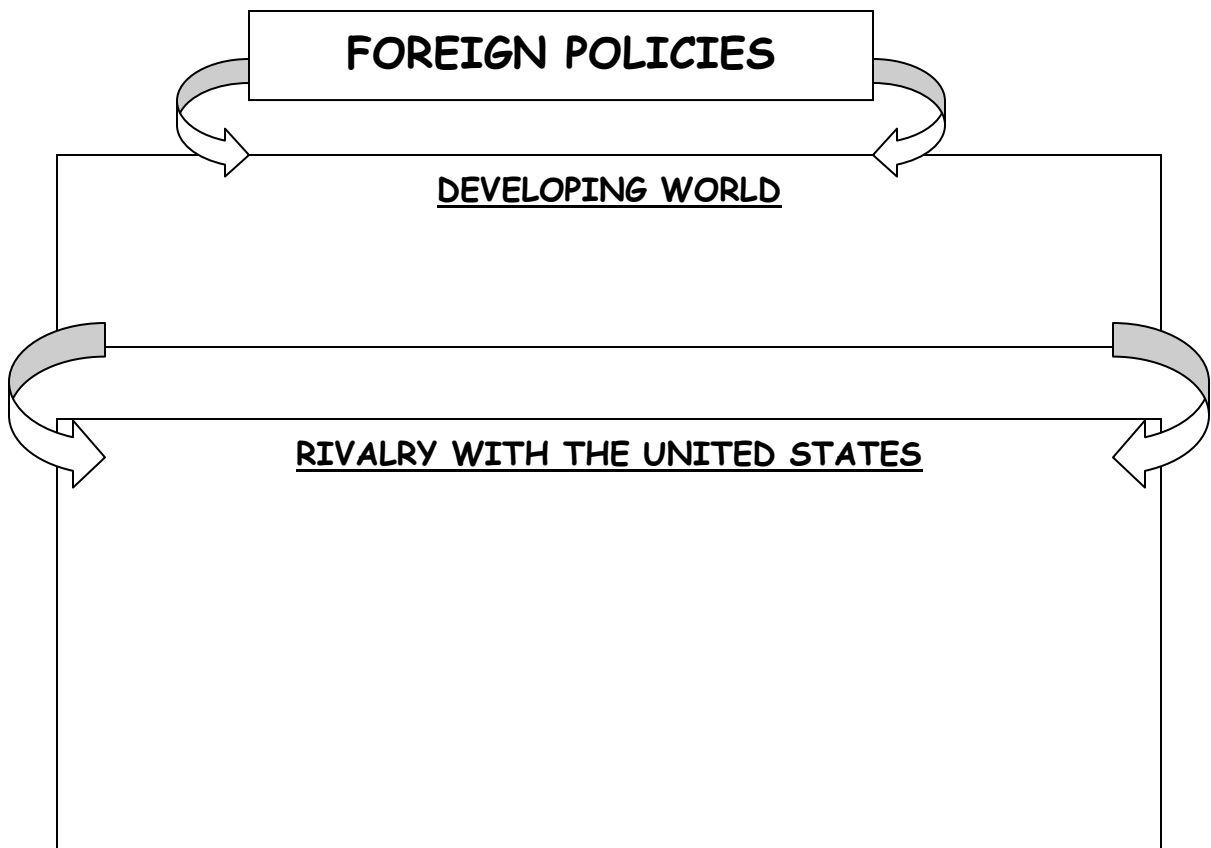
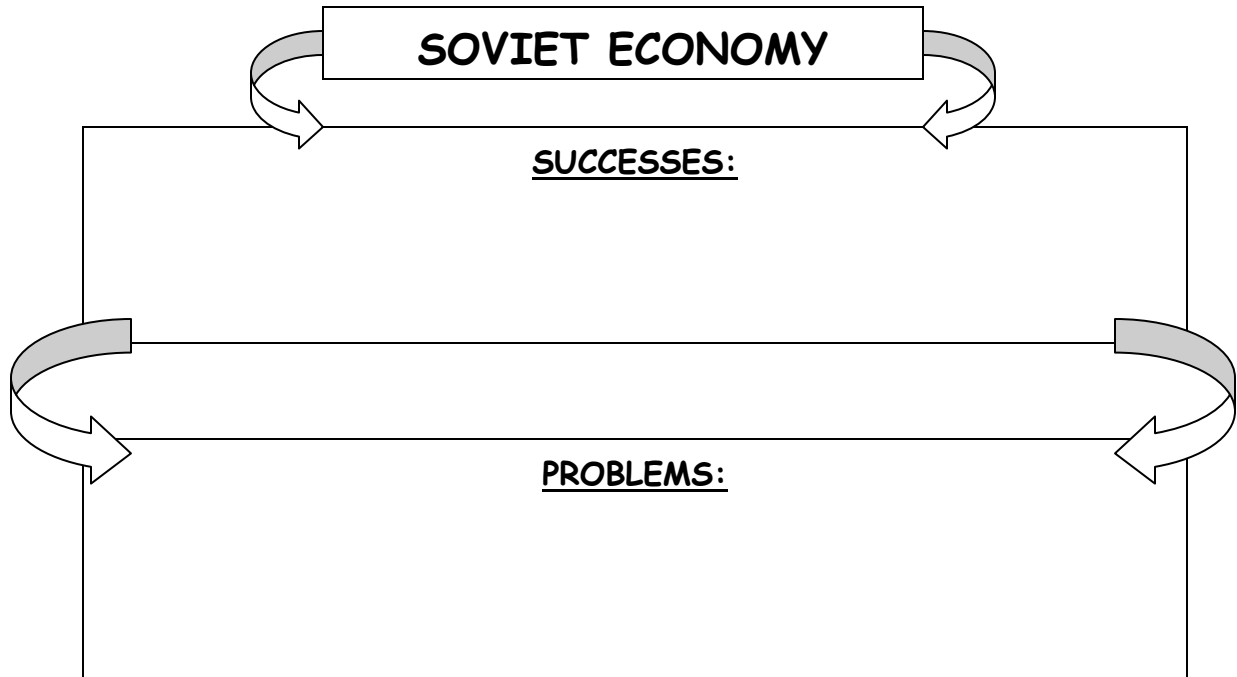


Gorbachev
1985-

KHRUSHCHEV'S POLICIES

BREZHNEV'S POLICIES

The SOVIET UNION: Domestic and Foreign Policy



The SOVIET UNION: Domestic and Foreign Policy



Soviet Economy

Citizens enjoyed benefits like low rents, cheap bread, free health care, and day care for their children. Although wages were low, unemployment was almost nonexistent.

Neither Khrushchev nor Brezhnev were able to solve basic Soviet problems. The Soviet Union's command economy could not compete with the free-market economies of the West in producing consumer goods.

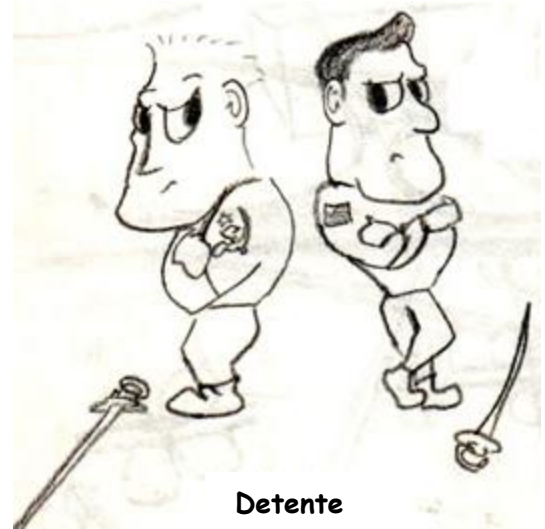
Soviet items (shoes, suits, televisions) were far inferior to luxuries (cars, washing machines) from the West. The collectivized agriculture remained so unproductive that the Soviet Union had to import grain.

Foreign Policies

As nations emerged from colonial rule, the Soviet Union, like the United States, supplied them with military and economic aid.

The relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union swung back and forth between confrontation and détente. Détente, was a period of lessening tensions between the US and the Soviet Union which involved arms control talks/treaties, cultural exchanges, and trade agreements. In 1961, Cold War tension increased when the Berlin Wall was built. A year later, Khrushchev tried to build a nuclear missile base in Cuba. Brezhnev invested a lot of money into a large military build up. Also, the Brezhnev Doctrine claimed the Soviet Union had a right to intervene in any Warsaw Pact nation.

Relations between the two superpowers worsened. Détente came to an end when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan.



Questions:

1) Despite Khrushchev and Brezhnev's efforts why were they never able to solve the Soviet Union's Economy?

2) What is détente? Explain the relationship between the US and Russia at this time.