

Reform and Collapse Student Worksheet

Introduction:

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the Soviet Union and launched a series of reforms known as *perestroika* (“restructuring”) and *glasnost* (“openness”). These reforms were vigorously resisted by the political elites of the Soviet Union, but the costs of occupying an increasingly restive Eastern Europe became such that the Soviet leadership saw no choice but to acquiesce in the loosening of control there.

All Web links for this lesson can also be found at:

<http://www.socialstudies.com/worldlinks.html>.

Directions:

Perestroika: As Defined by the Communist Party Plenum of Jan 1987

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/archives/pere.html>

Read the document, then answer the following questions:

1. What does the Plenum say the “main idea” of *perestroika* was?
2. What effect was *perestroika* intended to have on politics?
3. What effect was *perestroika* intended to have on economics?
4. What effect was *perestroika* intended to have on working conditions? On general living conditions?
5. What effect was *perestroika* intended to have on society in general?
6. Did the Plenum see *perestroika* as consistent with Lenin-style socialism or as a departure from it? Explain, and give examples that support your conclusion.

Resolution: Soviet Unity for Leninism and Communist Ideas

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/archives/ab2unity.html>

Read the document, then answer the following questions:

7. Why did the resolution reject *perestroika*?
8. Gorbachev had portrayed *perestroika* as a response to economic and social crises in the last half of the 1980s. What does the resolution have to say about the “crisis situation” of this time? Did the “All-Union Society” believe that reforms were necessary, or did they believe that something other than weaknesses in the Soviet structure had caused the crisis?

Excerpts of Address by Mikhail Gorbachev: 43rd UN General Assembly Session, December 7, 1988

<http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/23/documents/gorbachev/>

This is a long document, but you only need to read certain parts of it. Follow the directions in the questions to find the appropriate passages:

9. Scroll down to the paragraph (it's in the middle of the document) that begins, "Our country is undergoing a truly revolutionary upsurge." According to Gorbachev, what was the first step in *perestroika* ("restructuring")? What did he see as necessary for "implementing the plans for restructuring"?
10. Scroll down to the paragraph that begins, "We have gone substantially and deeply into the business of constructing a socialist state based on the rule of law." According to Gorbachev, what changes were being made to the laws? How were these changes to affect the human rights situation in the Soviet Union?
11. Scroll down to the paragraph that begins, "Now about the most important topic..." What was this "topic"? In the next paragraph, what did the Soviet Union pledge to do?
12. Read the next paragraph ("By this act..."). What is the "topical problem" of which Gorbachev speaks? Did he believe the Soviet Union could solve this problem? What does he say the USSR is going to do?
13. Did *perestroika* fatally weaken the USSR, or did it prevent a bloody revolution from occurring? Explain, and give examples to support your conclusions.