

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS SESSION XIX



## GORBACHEV'S CABINET: 1989 BACKGROUND GUIDE

**CHAIR: CLAIRE LOW**  
**ASSISTANT CHAIRS: ANDREW IRONS, NOAH BUSSELL,  
LIA BOMMARITO**

**Table of Contents**

**Letter to Delegates**..... 3

**Topic A: Domestic Stability**..... 4

    Introduction ..... 4

    Current Issues ..... 4

    History ..... 7

    Conclusion..... 10

    Questions to Consider ..... 11

    Works Cited..... 12

**Topic B: Economic Stability**..... 13

    Introduction ..... 13

    History ..... 13

    Current Issues ..... 14

    Conclusion..... 15

    Questions to Consider ..... 16

**Topic C: Foreign Isolation**..... 17

    Introduction ..... 17

    History ..... 17

    Current Issues ..... 19

    Conclusion..... 21

    Questions to Consider ..... 21

    Works Cited..... 22

## *Letter to Delegates*

*“I’m back in the U.S.S.R.,  
You don’t know how lucky you are, boy.  
Back in the U.S.S.R.”*  
-*Back in the U.S.S.R.*, The Beatles

Dearest Delegates,

Welcome to Gorbachev’s Cabinet, a specialized committee focused on ensuring the survival of the Soviet Union in its declining days. I am absolutely ecstatic to be your chair this year as we discuss three pressing topics that the Soviet Union faced in the final stages of its existence. These issues include the fragile economic and domestic stability of the Soviet Union, as well as the increasingly isolated position it has taken on in the globalized world.

To give you all a bit of an idea as to who I am: my name is Claire Low and I am a junior pursuing a double major in International Relations and Political Theory & Constitutional Democracy. I am particularly interested in the history of Russia during the Cold War and after, which has guided me into formulating this committee. This is my third year as a staffer in MSUMUN, and in my two previous years I have been on the Project National Glory: Retake Mainland China committee as well as the Russian Provisional Government 1917 committee. I am also a member of MSU’s Mock Trial and participate in undergraduate-level Moot Court. My hobbies include napping, playing strategy games, and making candy.

In our committee, you’ll also get to work with three amazing staffers of mine. Noah Bussell is a Junior going into Urban & Regional Planning with a minor in Geographic Information Science. This is his third year of doing MSUMUN, and was previously the chair of *Run Through the Jungle: The 1973 Paris Peace Accords*. Lia Bommarito is a freshman going into Social Relations and Policy, as well as a major in the Arts and Humanities, and is excited to be involved. Finally, there is Andrew Irons, a third-year student graduating in the Spring and is very involved in campaign politics.

I look forward to great discussions and some Soviet memes. You can count on the Soviet anthem being played at least once during the conference.

Sincerely,  
Claire Low  
Chair, Gorbachev’s Cabinet: 1989

## Topic A: Domestic Stability

### Introduction

In order to allow for success on the international stage, the Soviet Union must first ensure that there is peace at home. Mikhail Gorbachev introducing socially liberal freedoms to Soviet citizens and implementing Gorbachev-friendly leaders of different states seems to be working in a short-term sense, but the fallacies and failures of these implemented policies are emerging. Outward discontent with communism, criticism of the government, and full-on uprisings are beginning to materialize. The committee must recognize these problems and address them accordingly to maintain a strong central Soviet state and maintain domestic stability.

### Current Issues

Both internationally and internally, USSR's primacy must continue. To do this, in 1985, Gorbachev established *Perestroika*, or "restructuring". This economic and political policy will bring the Soviet Union up to economic par with Capitalist nations such as Germany, Japan, and the United States. Perestroika eliminates centralized economic control and encourages businesses to become self-financing, creating a semi-free market system with consumer's choice.<sup>1</sup>

In restructuring the USSR economically, Gorbachev felt that it was necessary to transition the format of the economy itself. The USSR currently holds, and has maintained throughout its lifetime, a *Command Economy*: economy in which all means are publicly controlled by a centralized power. This centralized power assigns economic production goals for individual enterprises. Consumers and individual businesses do not have much freedom of choice.<sup>2</sup> Gorbachev feels, however, that a *Mixed Economy*, or a economy in which free markets coexist with government intervention, would benefit the development of the state. Government intervention could be in

---

<sup>1</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Perestroika." Encyclopædia Britannica. September 28, 2018. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/perestroika-Soviet-government-policy>.

<sup>2</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Command Economy." Encyclopædia Britannica. September 28, 2018. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/command-economy>.

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS

the form of taxes, tariffs, subsidies, and state-owned enterprises. Gorbachev aimed for aspects of a mixed economy in his reforms.<sup>3</sup>

In 1987, Gorbachev felt that “A reappraisal of values and their creative rethinking is under way,” generally feeling that the morals of the nation needed to change.<sup>4</sup> In this, he created the concept of *Glasnost*, or “openness.” Glasnost covers a wide range of sociopolitical reforms bestowed on citizens of the USSR during Gorbachev’s time in power, including but not limited to: decreased censorship in the media, freedom of speech to criticize government officials, and transparency of government actions/information. Generally, the goal for Glasnost was to allow for some socially liberal freedoms to be granted to citizens.

Glasnost, to Gorbachev, was vital because:

“The Soviet citizen is a person of growing cultural and educational standards, who has lived through much. The collective experience of seventy years of socialist construction had produced a generation which won’t accept simplistic answers to questions, and keenly senses the falsehoods produced by an inability or fear to reveal the real contradictions of socialist development... To that person, we are bound to speak only the truth.”<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, he noted that:

“Glasnost is an integral aspect of socialist democracy and a norm of all public life. Extensive, timely and candid information is an indication of trust in people and of respect for their intelligence, feelings and ability to comprehend various events on their own... Glasnost in the work of Party and state agencies is an effective means of combating bureaucratic distortions and obliges people to take a more thoughtful approach to...the rectification of shortcomings and deficiencies.”

---

<sup>3</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Mixed Economy." Encyclopædia Britannica. September 28, 2018. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mixed-economy>.

<sup>4</sup> Aron, Leon. "Everything You Think You Know About the Collapse of the Soviet Union Is Wrong." Foreign Policy. June 20, 2011. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/06/20/everything-you-think-you-know-about-the-collapse-of-the-soviet-union-is-wrong/>.

<sup>5</sup> McNair, Brian. "Glasnost, Perestroika, and the Soviet Media." Monoskop. Accessed November 18, 2018. [https://monoskop.org/images/5/55/McNair\\_Brian\\_Glasnost\\_Perestroika\\_and\\_the\\_Soviet\\_Media.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/5/55/McNair_Brian_Glasnost_Perestroika_and_the_Soviet_Media.pdf).

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS

To continue consolidation of political power to advance his administration's agenda, Gorbachev aimed to isolate the Conservative Party opponents in any way possible, including through the establishment of the *Congress of People's Deputies*. Established in Spring 1989, the Congress of People's Deputies was a democratically elected committee to discuss political issues and the balance between autonomy and communism. Boris Yeltsin gained political power and recognition by establishing the liberal Inter-Regional Deputies Group within the Congress.<sup>6</sup>

Generally, Gorbachev aimed for balance. In 1985, Gorbachev announced *Uskorenie*: a Soviet policy aimed at the acceleration of political, social and economic development of the Soviet Union. All the previous reform goals consolidate to form *Uskorenie*, the ultimate goal of the administration, in accelerating the development, power, and quality of life of the USSR. Gorbachev aimed for a *Halfway House*: preserving aspects of a traditional Leninist system - the primacy of the Communist party and strategic control of the main direction of the economy - while implementing aspects of a mixed economy and some socio political freedoms.<sup>7</sup>

Because of the increased political freedoms and the common citizen's ability under Gorbachev's USSR to speak out against political representatives, many citizens of the USSR are beginning to express discontent through the press. Uprisings and political speech against the government has led to unrest.<sup>8</sup> The freedom of the press and relaxation of media through *glasnost* has caused the press to reveal failures of the state, crimes committed by the state, poor housing, alcoholism, drug abuse, pollution, outdated Stalin-era factories, and petty to large-scale corruption.<sup>9</sup> In allowing *glasnost* and greater freedom of the press, the Soviet Union is now at mercy to critical press releases:

“All areas of Soviet life have been subjected to greater or lesser degrees of ‘critical’ *glasnost*. Even the army and internal security organs, from being ‘zones beyond criticism’, have been placed under

---

<sup>6</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Congress of People's Deputies." Encyclopædia Britannica. September 28, 2018. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Congress-of-Peoples-Deputies>.

<sup>7</sup> United States of America. Central Intelligence Agency. Director of Central Intelligence. *Whither Gorbachev: Soviet Policy and Politics in the 1990s*.

<sup>8</sup> "History of the Soviet Union (1985-1991)." New World Encyclopedia. Accessed November 18, 2018. [http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/History\\_of\\_the\\_Soviet\\_Union\\_\(1985-1991\)](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/History_of_the_Soviet_Union_(1985-1991)).

<sup>9</sup> Arbes, Daniel J. "Moscow's Puzzle Is How to Motivate the Soviet Worker." Los Angeles Times. March 13, 1989. Accessed November 18, 2018. [http://articles.latimes.com/1989-03-13/local/me-302\\_1\\_worker-participation](http://articles.latimes.com/1989-03-13/local/me-302_1_worker-participation).

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS

public scrutiny. A Soviet observer notes that of 216 articles about the militsiya (Soviet police) published by Pravda, Izvestia and Moscow News in 1987, only 67 were positive, while 40 were critical, and 109 neutral.”

Worse, worker participation and general content is on the downfall. Less workers believe in the Soviet ideals of working and of idealized communism; additionally, disillusioned Soviets are lazier, not showing up to work, showing up to work intoxicated, etcetera. Unfortunately, “today's Soviet workforce is borne of a system that for generations treated the individual as little more than a meaningless cog in the wheel of production.” (9). Many Soviets don't believe in the ideology of communism anymore, therefore they do not believe in suffering for the state. The trouble is how Gorbachev's cabinet can increase morale and the belief in the communist system. How can we use Gorbachev's recognition of individualism to create more productive workers?

### **History**

#### *The Singing Revolution (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania)*

What some have coined *The Singing Revolution* is an uprising of Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) against the federal Soviet government, an ongoing struggle to gain independence and autonomy from 1987 onward. This unrest was most likely catalyzed by Gorbachev's social reforms and relaxation over the Baltic states.<sup>10</sup>

*Estonia.* Unrest began due to an unpopular decision to mine phosphate in 1987. Like many uprisings of soviet states at this time, it was catalyzed by Estonian press publishing a call for Estonian autonomy. The Estonian Popular Front was established in April 1988, a nationalistic organization that pressured Estonian leaders to allow citizens to fly the traditional Estonian flag and make Estonian the official language of the republic. The EPF also

---

<sup>10</sup> "Estonians Campaign for Independence (The Singing Revolution), 1987-1991." Global Nonviolent Action Database. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/estonians-campaign-independence-singing-revolution-1987-1991>.

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS

argued for the approval of a national sovereignty law that would affirm Estonian laws took precedence over Soviet laws.<sup>11</sup>

*Latvia.* The Latvian Popular Front was founded in June 1988. In late 1988 the Latvian Popular Front pressured Latvian leaders to allow citizens to fly the traditional Latvian flag, and make Latvian the official language of the republic.<sup>12</sup>

*Lithuania.* The Lithuanian Popular Front (also called Sajūdis, or “movement”) was founded in May 1988. Similarly, to Latvia and Estonia, the Sajūdis pressured Lithuanian leaders to allow the flying of the traditional Lithuanian flag, the establishment of Lithuanian as the official language. The Sajūdis also caused the legalization of the former nation’s national anthem.<sup>13</sup> In 1989, in elections to the Congress of People's Deputies, instead of electing officials from the Lithuanian Communist Party, 36 out of 42 officials elected were from independent national movement, Sajūdis.<sup>14</sup>

In Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, unrest was also catalyzed by Gorbachev’s decision to replace each state’s leaders (formerly conservative) to comparatively liberal leaders to align with his party. These leaders were often more sympathetic and allowed for citizens to have free speech, but this also allowed citizens to mobilize politically.

### *Uprisings in the Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Soviet Georgia)*

*Azerbaijan.* In February 1988, after false rumors of an Azerbaijani killed by an Armenian, thousands of citizens of Azerbaijan marched into the Majority-Armenian area and massacred over 50 Armenians in the process. Thus began the battle between Azerbaijanis and Armenians, resulting in almost 14,000 Armenians fleeing from Azerbaijan. Tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis fled Armenia as well. In November, a protest in Lenin Square

---

<sup>11</sup> Jaworowska, Jagna. "Revolution by Song: Choral Singing and Political Change in Estonia." European Network of Remembrance and Solidarity. Accessed November 18, 2018. <http://www.enrs.eu/en/articles/1576-revolution-by-song-choral-singing-and-political-change-in-estonia>.

<sup>12</sup> Stranga, Aivars, and Arnold Spekke. "Latvia." Encyclopædia Britannica. November 15, 2018. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Latvia/History#ref418805>.

<sup>13</sup> Furmanavičius, Darius. "Sajūdis’s Peaceful Revolution, Part I." Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences. Accessed November 18, 2018. [http://www.lituanus.org/2009/09\\_1\\_01\\_Furmonavicius.htm](http://www.lituanus.org/2009/09_1_01_Furmonavicius.htm).

<sup>14</sup> Cooper, Anne. "Communists in Baltics Shying From Kremlin." The New York Times. September 02, 1989. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/09/02/world/communists-in-baltics-shying-from-kremlin.html>.

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS

occurred for 18 days and over half a million Azerbaijanis violently protested before being cleared by Soviet forces.<sup>15</sup>

*Armenia.* Coinciding with the previous point, many Armenians protested the violent treatment from their neighbor, Azerbaijan. Additionally, Armenian intellectuals and nationalists created the Karabakh committee to combat Soviet intervention and take relations with Azerbaijan into Armenian hands. In December 1988, Gorbachev arrested the entire committee. The contention between Armenia and Azerbaijan directly opposes the idea of a unified Soviet state.<sup>16</sup>

*Georgia.* In November 1988, Georgians protested for Estonian independence and for Georgian autonomy.<sup>17</sup>

### *Western Soviet States (Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus)*

*Moldova.* The Democratic Movement of Moldova, founded in 1988, mobilized to ensure Moldovan nationalism.<sup>18</sup>

*Ukraine.* In April 1988, many Christian -- specifically Catholic -- Ukrainians gathered to celebrate the Millennium of Christianity. In June 1988, over 6,000 Ukrainians gathered to protest the local list of delegates of the Communist Party conference. On “Bloody Thursday” in August 1988, local authorities violent suppressed a demonstration by Ukraine’s Democratic Front to Promote Perestroika.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> "Nagorno-Karabakh Profile." BBC News. April 06, 2016. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18270325>.

<sup>16</sup> Tharoor, Ishaan. "The Crisis over Nagorno-Karabakh, Explained." The Washington Post. April 5, 2016. Accessed November 18, 2018. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/04/05/how-the-crisis-over-nagorno-karabakh-could-get-worse-fast/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.13981f6f94ad](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/04/05/how-the-crisis-over-nagorno-karabakh-could-get-worse-fast/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.13981f6f94ad).

<sup>17</sup> Uekert, Brenda K. *Rivers of Blood: A Comparative Study of Government Massacres*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995.

<sup>18</sup> UNHCR. "Moldova: Popular Front Political Party." Refworld. November 22, 2005. Accessed November 18, 2018. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/45f147fd2f.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Traynor, Ian. "Ukraine's Bloodiest Day: Dozens Dead as Kiev Protesters Regain Territory from Police." The Guardian. February 21, 2014. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/20/ukraine-dead-protesters-police>.

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS

*Belarus.* The Belarusian Popular Front, modeled after the Baltic Popular Fronts, was established in November 1988 as a political party for democracy and independence. Their public actions almost always ended in clashes with the KGB and local police, which increased publicity.<sup>20</sup>

## *The Berlin Wall*

In June 1989 the Hungarian government began destructing the electrified fence along its border with Austria. By August, many East Germans began escaping from Hungary into Austria. In 1987, US President Ronald Reagan encouraged Gorbachev to destruct the Berlin Wall:

“We welcome change and openness; for we believe that freedom and security go together, that the advance of human liberty can only strengthen the cause of world peace. There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace. General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”<sup>21</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Unless this issue is addressed completely, the USSR could be in mortal danger. Collapse could be eminent. When Gorbachev gained power in 1985, disillusionment with communism was high and the consolidation of the Soviet states weak. The actions of this committee decide whether the USSR can continue to maintain its foothold in the international community and maintains its vast union of states under one centralized communist government, whilst upholding Gorbachev’s ideals.

The Baltic Republics are now leaning towards independence, the Caucasus is now descending into civil war and extreme violence, and the Westernmost Soviet states are continually protesting against centralized power. Gorbachev’s administration must decide how to increase control over these regions to ensure domestic stability.

---

<sup>20</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Belarusian Popular Front." Encyclopædia Britannica. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Belarusian-Popular-Front>.

<sup>21</sup> Reagan, Ronald. "Speech at the Brandenburg Gate." Speech, Germany, West Berlin, June 12, 1987. Accessed November 18, 2018. [http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/speeches/reagan\\_berlin.htm](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/speeches/reagan_berlin.htm).

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS

The Conservative Party sees Gorbachev's administration and power as unruly and against traditional communist ideals. The Conservative Party also holds control over the *KGB*, the "Committee for State Security": the USSR state security agency. The KGB's jobs include but are not limited to: foreign intelligence, counter-intelligence, operative-investigative activities, guarding the State Border of the USSR, guarding the leadership of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Soviet Government, organization and ensuring of government communications as well as combating nationalism, dissent, and anti-Soviet activities. While the KGB plays an important job within the state, Gorbachev's administration must note the power that this agency holds as well as their general political alignment against Gorbachev. The committee must note the political discourse against Gorbachev and how to address it accordingly.

There are massive domestic problems in the USSR at this time. In granting social liberties, such as freedom to speak out against the government causing disillusionment, the USSR's consolidation is becoming shakier. With loyalty to the administration and to communism in general increasingly weak, Gorbachev's administration must ensure that states do not secede or break off from the USSR. The Cabinet must combat the notion that Gorbachev's policies hold no enforcement by ensuring that each policy can be directly and effectively enforced throughout the USSR. It is up to delegates in Gorbachev's Cabinet to decide the future of the USSR and whether it can stand.

### **Questions to Consider**

1. How can we motivate Soviet workers and eliminate Soviet worker discontent?
2. How can we target the political uprisings across the USSR in Satellite nations without repressing the goals and ideals of Gorbachev's socio political freedoms, including freedom of the press and freedom of speech?
3. How can Gorbachev's cabinet combat the political dissonance that is especially rampant in the Westernmost parts of the USSR? How can we prevent protests from collapsing Soviet infrastructure?
4. The Conservatives of the USSR are not especially fond of Gorbachev or his policies. The KGB is included in this. How shall we address this discourse and prevent a coup d'etat?

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS

## Works Cited

- Arbess, Daniel J. "Moscow's Puzzle Is How to Motivate the Soviet Worker." *Los Angeles Times*. March 13, 1989. Accessed November 18, 2018. [http://articles.latimes.com/1989-03-13/local/me-302\\_1\\_worker](http://articles.latimes.com/1989-03-13/local/me-302_1_worker).
- Aron, Leon. "Everything You Think You Know About the Collapse of the Soviet Union Is Wrong." *Foreign Policy*. June 20, 2011. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/06/20/everything-you-think-you-know-about-the-collapse-of-the-soviet-union-is-wrong/>.
- Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Belarusian Popular Front." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Belarusian-Popular-Front>.
- Reagan, Ronald. "Speech at the Brandenburg Gate." Speech, Germany, West Berlin, June 12, 1987. Accessed November 18, 2018. [http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/speeches/reagan\\_berlin.htm](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/speeches/reagan_berlin.htm).
- Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Command Economy." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. September 28, 2018. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/command-economy>.
- Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Congress of People's Deputies." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. September 28, 2018. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Congress-of-Peoples-Deputies>.
- Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Mixed Economy." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. September 28, 2018. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mixed-economy>.
- Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Perestroika." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. September 28, 2018. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/perestroika-Soviet-government-policy>.
- Cooper, Anne. "Communists in Baltics Shying From Kremlin." *The New York Times*. September 02, 1989. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/09/02/world/communists-in-baltics-shying-from-kremlin.html>.
- "Estonians Campaign for Independence (The Singing Revolution), 1987-1991." *Global Nonviolent Action Database*. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/estonians-campaign-independence-singing-revolution-1987-1991>.
- Furmanavičius, Darius. "Sajūdis's Peaceful Revolution, Part I." *Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences*. Accessed November 18, 2018. [http://www.lituanus.org/2009/09\\_1\\_01\\_Furmonavicius.htm](http://www.lituanus.org/2009/09_1_01_Furmonavicius.htm).
- "History of the Soviet Union (1985-1991)." *New World Encyclopedia*. Accessed November 18, 2018. [http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/History\\_of\\_the\\_Soviet\\_Union\\_\(1985-1991\)](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/History_of_the_Soviet_Union_(1985-1991))
- Jaworowska, Jagna. "Revolution by Song: Choral Singing and Political Change in Estonia." *European Network of Remembrance and Solidarity*. Accessed November 18, 2018. <http://www.enrs.eu/en/articles/1576-revolution-by-song-choral-singing-and-political-change-in-estonia>.
- McNair, Brian. "Glasnost, Perestroika, and the Soviet Media." *Monoskop*. Accessed November 18, 2018. [https://monoskop.org/images/5/55/McNair\\_Brian\\_Glasnost\\_Perestroika\\_and\\_the\\_Soviet\\_Media.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/5/55/McNair_Brian_Glasnost_Perestroika_and_the_Soviet_Media.pdf).
- "Nagorno-Karabakh Profile." *BBC News*. April 06, 2016. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/>.
- Stranga, Aivars, and Arnold Spekke. "Latvia." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. November 15, 2018. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Latvia/History#ref418805>.
- Tharoor, Ishaan. "The Crisis over Nagorno-Karabakh, Explained." *The Washington Post*. April 5, 2016. Accessed November 18, 2018. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/04/05/how-the-crisis-over-nagorno-karabakh-could-get-worse-fast/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.13981f6f94ad](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/04/05/how-the-crisis-over-nagorno-karabakh-could-get-worse-fast/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.13981f6f94ad).
- Traynor, Ian. "Ukraine's Bloodiest Day: Dozens Dead as Kiev Protesters Regain Territory from Police." *The Guardian*. February 21, 2014. Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/20/ukraine-dead-protesters-police>.
- Uekert, Brenda K. *Rivers of Blood: A Comparative Study of Government Massacres*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995.
- UNHCR. "Moldova: Popular Front Political Party." *Refworld*. November 22, 2005. Accessed November 18, 2018. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/45f147fd2f.html>.
- United States of America. Central Intelligence Agency. Director of Central Intelligence. *Whither Gorbachev: Soviet Policy and Politics in the 1990s*.

## Topic B: Economic Stability

### Introduction

Since the 1970s, the USSR economy has been unable to keep up with its Western rivals in measurements of economic growth and a quality standard of living. Due to these trends, the Soviet people have had to endure long lines at grocery stores, a low supply of resources from which to choose from, and it has even forced many Soviet citizens to resort to a barter system of purchasing goods.

### History

Before the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 that created the Soviet Union, the Russian Empire under the Tsar was an agricultural-based economy with over approximately two-thirds of the population employed in the agricultural sector. At this time, agriculture was so crucial to the economy that it accounted for half of the national income that the Russian Empire would acquire over the years. This would go to show how necessary Russian peasants - who consisted of 85% of the population - were to the stability of the Russian economy.

Beneath the surface, though, tensions mounted for more than one reason. For not only was there a growing migration towards cities where a growing manufacturing base was expanding, but there was a lack of capital investment and technological advancement within the agricultural sector. This would ultimately lead to massive inefficiencies within the market, a backwards-looking livestock system, and even famines within various parts of the nation.

As we all know, the proletariat would not stand for this incredibly unequal system of governance, and so overthrew it with their own, led by the revolutionary Vladimir Lenin. Immediately withdrawing from the inglorious war of World War I, Lenin and his comrades got to work to completely reform the Soviet economy. However, such a task would prove to be more difficult than it seemed.

After first attempting to initiate legislation that would allow for a peaceful coexistence with capitalist and commercial private property with state regulation, Lenin would have no choice but to abandon this path and gear up for a massive civil war on the horizon. This would lead to the creation of War Communism, a necessary, but

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS

temporary economic program to help the Red Army in its struggle against the counter-revolutionary forces. This constituted in more centralization and a tighter grip on the Bolshevik's political power over the country through actions like the confiscation of farm surpluses to feed the workers in the cities and the soldiers on the front lines. When this proved to be extremely unpopular, Lenin would try again with his New Economic Policy (NEP) which would liberalize the Russian economy.

While this policy shift led to some contentment among the Russian populace, it wasn't meant to last. Within a year of its implementation, Lenin became ill and it became apparent that he wasn't going to be around much longer. His successor would wind up becoming the now infamous leader of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin.

After viewing the NEP as a concession towards capitalism, Stalin brought back War Communism and instilled major instability within the Soviet economy once again. What contributed to this even more would be Stalin's Five-Year Plan to modernize the Russian economy through the collectivization of agriculture and the heavy investment in industrialization in places like the Ural mountain region.

Looking back on Stalin's Five-Year Plan, it could be clearly seen as both a success and a failure. Because while famine did ensue after agricultural output dropped from 1932-1933, starving 3-4 million people, it also made the Soviet Union the economic and industrial powerhouse that it is with an increase in capital goods production, consumer goods production, and total industrial output.

### **Current Issues**

As the Nazis were defeated and WWII was coming to a close, a new one would begin to brew: The Cold War. An ideological battle between the Soviet Union and the United States, the Cold War would define many of the actions of political leaders all over the world. For the United States and the Soviets, that would include a monstrous increase in military defense spending. Even when the country was struggling economically, the Soviet Union was still spending massive amounts of its budget on defense. 9% of its GNP to be exact according to a statement by Gorbachev. That's about 50% more than what the United States is spending in terms of its own GNP at this time.

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS

In addition to the defense spending, the USSR was discovered to have had a deficit of \$58 billion that was getting worse and worse. Government subsidies of mismanaged industry and agriculture were the primary culprits according to the Finance Minister of the Soviet Union. And as the budget deficit has increased, inflation has continued to worsen as well, although it is very difficult to measure that inflation without any retail price index to measure changes in what consumers actually pay for their goods.

Another huge source of concern is within the Soviet shadow economy, also known as the “second economy.” A hidden network of exchanges that distanced itself as far from the Soviet government’s view, this network has become increasingly powerful. Every country has one, but they’re usually not as large as the Soviets. In the Soviet Union’s second economy, it’ll usually generate something to the tune of \$150 billion, or about 11% of the Soviet GDP. It is so large and popular that a whole 83% of Russian people wind up participating in it. This second economy covers all aspects of life, including half of the apartment repairs, 40% of auto maintenance, a third of appliance repair, and 40% of all tailoring and shoe repair in the cities alone. In addition, it’s estimated that due to backups in the hospitals, 4-8 million women have illegal abortions. Not to mention the 15% of housing construction that is done without informing the government.

Finally, there is the issue of how much foreign investments we should be allowing Western business to collaborate within our country’s borders. For so long, our country has isolated itself from the rest of the world, but with the help of some foreign aid and investment, we might have a shot at reviving our economy for the better.

### **Conclusion**

So far, Mikhail Gorbachev has attempted to prioritize our \$790 billion budget to modernize the consumer products industry, housing and health, education, and environmental protection. Such an investment is a good start but is not nearly enough to patch up the complex web of the Soviet economic system.

The downturn of the Soviet economy cannot be continued to be ignored as our economic instability has been viewed by Western observers as a sign that the Soviet Union will eventually be forced to succumb to Western economic pressures. Continuing to do so will only mean the risk of destroying our great nation. It is up to each and every one of you, the various representatives of Gorbachev’s Cabinet, to decide how we go about resolving

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS

these key economic issues, and if necessary, to take drastic steps to reform our economy to establish it more along the lines of those of our Western neighbors.

### **Questions to Consider**

1. What are the root causes of our economic issues? Can they be resolved through slight modifications in Soviet policy or will it come down to altering the structure of our entire economy?
2. How can we go about in curbing the second economy that's become more and more prevalent within Soviet society?
3. If the Soviet Union cannot handle resolving some of these economic issues alone, should we attempt to ask for assistance from foreign countries? If so, which ones? And how should we go about doing so?
4. What is a proper amount of money to spend on defense? Welfare distribution? Economic incentives?

## Topic C: Foreign Isolation

### Introduction

The effort to maintain secrecy and mystery to keep power has come at a hefty cost for the USSR. Going as early as the potshots across the Berlin border in the late 1940s, to the War in Afghanistan, Chernobyl, and even after the implementation of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, this nation has never been more isolated from the rest of the world.

For decades, the Soviet Union has not only stood as a visage of indomitable strength, but also as a symbol of enigmatism, deception, and suppression. While this has certainly made the nation reputable, it has also evoked the ire of the international community, and has caused the USSR to alienate both the enemies it should maintain relations with and its own neighbors and allies. As the country faces this pressure-head on, members of the Cabinet must begin to devise solutions both to keep the country's status and maintain a strong, communicative member of the global discourse.

Since the heavy sanctions and accusations levied against the Union, and the edges to nuclear war not seen since the removal of missiles from Cuba, a period of stagnation has ensued, and the USSR has become heavily separated from the goings on of the rest of the world. In order to combat this, it is important for the cabinet and other members adjoining this meeting to consider the effects of both entering, embracing the global community, or to further isolate and draw from it.

### History

On April 26th, 1986, a safety test to reduce the power generation of Reactor Number Four of Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station turned disastrous when the sudden drop of power lead to a violent steam explosion.<sup>22</sup> What ensued was the worst nuclear disaster on record, as the graphite-built core of the power plant turned molten and

---

<sup>22</sup> Tetsuji Imanaka, Noryiuku Kawano, *Radioactive Contamination and Social Consequences Caused by the Chernobyl Nuclear Accident* (Hiroshima, Hiroshima Peace Science, 2009), 70-73.

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS

burned into the Earth. The reactor ejected  $1.4 \times 10^{19}$  Becquerels of radioactive material into the atmosphere, blanketing the entire Northern Hemisphere within a week.<sup>23</sup>

What made matters worse, however, was not the devastating incident in itself, but rather the following cover-up and suppression of information. For 36 hours, the residents of the monopolistic city of Pripjat were completely unaware of what had happened, with police refusing both to give information and to forbid those knowledgeable from releasing information.<sup>24</sup> By then, the damage was done, and the international community very soon came down upon the Soviet government for waiting so long amid a disaster whose effects are still ongoing three years later.

With lips as tightly shut as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and borders just as strong, information is difficult to seep out. However, this ability to repress information has come at great public, social, economic, and environmental costs. For decades, the Union has isolated itself more and more. This bifurcation between the USSR and its former allies in Europe and the United States started as early as 1947, when the cutting off of supply lines in Berlin created massive tensions before the blockade was lifted in 1949.<sup>25</sup> The cost of this was the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and what ensued was a now-40-year cold war.<sup>26</sup> In 1961, this division became a tangible one, when the construction of the Wall began to divide the USSR's cut of Berlin from the West's. This 96-mile wall came to be emblematic of the Cold War, and the Soviet Union's division and separation from the rest of the world.

This Cold War has, in effect, pitted the Union and fellow Warsaw Pact powers against the United States and their NATO allies. Through multiple conflicts and proxy wars, the USSR has been made out to be a "Red Octopus" of sorts.<sup>27</sup> This has, over time, painted the Soviet Union as a domineering superpower, and, although this may emit a feeling of strength, has also alienated many supporters in the past. In one respect, this brought the

---

<sup>23</sup> Imanaka, Kawano, *Radioactive Contamination*, 73.

<sup>24</sup> Serhii Plokhyy, *The Chernobyl Cover-Up: How Officials Botched Evacuating an Irradiated City*, (History, 2018).

<sup>25</sup> Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, *The Berlin Airlift, 1948-1949* (D.C., US Department of State).

<sup>26</sup> Office of the Historian, *The Berlin Airlift*.

<sup>27</sup> Oliver Starr, Jr., MGen Henry Mohr, *The Red Octopus* (St. Louis, St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 1980).

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS

USSR--at a point--closer with the United States. When Premier Josef Stalin passed away in 1953, then-chairman Mao Zedong of the People's Republic of China believed he should step in, especially among Premier Khrushchev's comments denouncing Stalin, which were made much to Mao's chagrin.<sup>28</sup> Khrushchev's 1959 meeting with US President Dwight Eisenhower, his refusal to help China develop nuclear weapons, and his open disagreement with Communist Party official Peng Zhen, led to a severance in relations between the USSR and China in 1960.<sup>29</sup>

This amelioration, however, would be short-lived. 1962 remains one of humanity's darkest years, as the immeasurable might and foreboding power of the atom was almost unleashed from the waters surrounding Cuba. The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis pitted the global community against the Soviet Union, despite the fact that it was a bilateral agreement when the Americans removed their PGM-19 Jupiter intermediate-range ballistic missiles from Turkey in exchange for the USSR's missiles to be removed from Cuba.<sup>30</sup> However, the geopolitical damage was neigh irreparable, and overall political tensions increased as the wars in Vietnam and then Afghanistan carried on into the 1980s, which brings the cabinet to the modern day.

### Current Issues

Through both truths in the shortcomings of the Union, especially recently, and the demonization of the West, the nation has evolved into a pariah of the global community. Protests rage across the country, especially at the physical measures such as the Berlin Wall<sup>31</sup>. Premier Gorbachev has taken measures to help correct this in certain ways, particularly with the introduction of the doctrines of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*. *Glasnost* was enacted four years prior in 1985, and has been set to be more open, especially in regards to the government's dissemination of information.<sup>32</sup> While the doctrine itself has good intentions, as does perestroika, the importance focuses on

---

<sup>28</sup> Royal Air Force Museum, *Sino - Soviet Split* (London, Royal Air Force, 2013)

<sup>29</sup> RAF Museum, *Sino - Soviet Split* (2013).

<sup>30</sup> Benjamin Schwarz, *The Real Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston, The Atlantic, 2013).

<sup>31</sup> Marc Fisher, 'Let there be light: The fall of the Berlin Wall and how fear dies' (D.C., The Washington Post, 2018).

<sup>32</sup> Lewis Siegelbaum, *Perestroika and Glasnost* (East Lansing, Michigan State University & McCalester College).

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS

how it should be applied in-writ as policy documents. International pressure has caused a massive upset, especially in areas such as Berlin, and it is possible that the work being done has to be more than words and promises alone.

The consequence of this openness and reform is that the once positive, happy image of the USSR and its citizenry began to erode alarmingly quickly. Because of more open media coverage, and the lack of restriction once implemented by state media, the issues plaguing the nation that were able to be kept down began to resurface and grew to extraordinary proportions. This exposure may not just highlight this information to fellow Soviets, but also to the world community at large. This will bring concerns for the people and warrant more criticisms against the government, including examples such as the spending that went to fund projects such as Buran, while many suffer as the poverty rate has reached a staggering 20%.<sup>33</sup> What this raises a question of, is whether or not the USSR should accept economic support from outside actors, or take means to fund these changes domestically. To allow external support may also mean to form ties and connections that may prove to harm the nation economically, as such with Vietnam or Afghanistan.

Another object of consideration is the immense military and its power, and the costs that are associated with its existence. While the USSR's defense budget was frozen in 1987, defense spending and industries accommodated for 9% of the nation's gross domestic product.<sup>34</sup> Regards should be made whether these expenditures should be scaled back, or if they should be kept because of the impending threat of revolution. The Soviet Union boasts a proud history of military achievements, especially the development of the first intercontinental ballistic missile, the R-7 *Semyorka*, which contributed to plethora developments not only in rocketry, but also technology and various sciences.<sup>35</sup> However, does this necessitate the exorbitant costs that come with it?

Military action as a whole is a large part of foreign affairs, especially in terms of isolation. The ten-year conflict in Afghanistan has further pitted the US against the USSR, and has also caused further strain in Central

---

<sup>33</sup> Esther Fein, *Soviet Openness Brings Poverty Out of the Shadows* (New York, The New York Times, 1989).

<sup>34</sup> *Soviet Military Budget: \$128 Billion Bombshell* (New York, The New York Times, 1989).

<sup>35</sup> John Logsdon, *R-7* (D.C., Encyclopedia Britannica, 2009).

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS

Asia and the Middle East. The Cabinet must look at the effects these decisions, and act on the best courses of action moving forward.

## Conclusion

The most important component to keep in mind is that this is done to keep the nation from collapse. Foreign pressures have mounted more so than ever, but to remain diplomatic in the face of this pressure will secure the means to maintain stability and to emerge more powerful, more peaceful than the country ever has before.

To remove the vision of the Soviet Union as a villainous empire is one of the most important actions to take moving forward. This will not only allow the nation to maintain power and respect, but also brings dignity to the Motherland, and keeps the storied heritage and culture alive. This world is not the one that Josef Stalin created, and not even the one that Vladimir Lenin once envisioned. This should be considered moving forward in these trying times.

## Questions to Consider

1. What are the greatest threats that are propagating and furrowing this isolation?
2. What international bodies (IAEA, UNEP, Human Rights Watch, etc) are the nexuses between isolation and joining the international community? What core areas that have alienated the country can be addressed through these bodies?
3. What have the consequences of rapid industrialization and militarization been?
4. What are the key countries that are galvanized against the Soviet Union? What can be done to improve relations with them?
5. What elements of *glasnost* can be incorporated into groups that have suppressed free speech and action?
6. How much should the media be able to release, and how should it be monitored to allow both freedom of speech and press, while also keeping defamatory statements to a minimum?

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL UNITED NATIONS

## Works Cited

- Benjamin Schwarz, *The Real Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston, The Atlantic, 2013).
- Esther Fein, *Soviet Openness Brings Poverty Out of the Shadows* (New York, The New York Times, 1989).
- Imanaka, Kawano, *Radioactive Contamination*, 73.
- John Logsdon, *R-7* (D.C., Encyclopedia Britannica, 2009).
- Lewis Siegelbaum, *Perestroika and Glasnost* (East Lansing, Michigan State University & McCalester College).
- Marc Fisher, 'Let there be light: The fall of the Berlin Wall and how fear dies' (D.C., The Washington Post, 2018).
- Office of the Historian, *The Berlin Airlift*.
- Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, *The Berlin Airlift, 1948-1949* (D.C., US Department of State).
- Oliver Starr, Jr., MGen Henry Mohr, *The Red Octopus* (St. Louis, St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 1980).
- RAF Museum, *Sino - Soviet Split* (2013).
- Royal Air Force Museum, *Sino - Soviet Split* (London, Royal Air Force, 2013)
- Serhii Plokyh, *The Chernobyl Cover-Up: How Officials Botched Evacuating an Irradiated City*, (History, 2018).
- Soviet Military Budget: \$128 Billion Bombshell* (New York, The New York Times, 1989).
- Tetsuji Imanaka, Noryiuku Kawano, *Radioactive Contamination and Social Consequences Caused by the Chernobyl Nuclear Accident* (Hiroshima, Hiroshima Peace Science, 2009), 70-73.