COLD WAR

PERESTROIKA & GLASNOST

Directions: Read the following information related to Perestroika and Glasnost and then complete the related activities.

Glasnost

Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the Soviet Communist Party in the Soviet Union (USSR) in 1985. He believed in communism but also knew their government system could only survive by ending the Cold War. At the time Russia had been involved in a losing war in Afghanistan and in the Cold War rivalry with the United States. The Soviet Union was spending half of its yearly country’s budget on its own military and could not afford the cost. The government system had survived on secrecy and censorship of information. The people did not know the truth about what their government was doing. Gorbachev knew that change was needed but it was also impossible without more open debate and discussion about its own problems. While Gorbachev wasn’t trying to introduce free speech completely, he did order his government to allow more openness, or what he called “glasnost”.

As glasnost, or openness, developed in the Soviet Union, the controlling government body, the Communist party, lost some control over the news media. This lead to more news being made available to the people’s attention, some of which was not reported before under the more restricted news reporting. This included more information being reported on topics such as poor housing, food shortages, pollution, alcoholism and little rights for women. Glasnost allowed the people to learn about the past and learn that
their country was not as great as they were lead to believe. This resulted in people feeling betrayed for many years.

Mikhail Gorbachev’s policy interpretation of “glasnost” is best be summarized in English with one word: “openness.” While “glasnost” is associated with freedom of speech the main goal of this policy was to make the country’s management more transparent and open to the general population.

**Perestroika**

Perestroika means restructuring or rebuilding of Soviet Union’s political and economic systems. Perestroika was viewed as a political movement for the purpose of rebuilding the ruling Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the 1980s. It followed Gorbachev’s glasnost policies. As more openness happened, everyone realized that the Communist government required change or rebuilding.

Perestroika is also believed to be the cause of the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the beginning of revolutions in many other countries in Eastern Europe including East Germany, Romania and Czechoslovakia. In December of 1989 the people of Romania revolted against the Romanian Communist President and the President was assassinated. As more people in Eastern Europe realized real change was needed to their basic government structures violence did happen to the point of uprisings against governments.

The goal of perestroika was initially to make socialism work better for the people but it worsened the political, social and economic tensions already present within the Soviet Union. Some historians now believe that this lead to the end of the country known as the Soviet Union.

**Results of Glasnost and Perestroika**

After Gorbachev began the process of glasnost and perestroika events got out of his control. Governments of Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and East Germany fell due to the people of those countries rising against their own governments after they had become more aware of what had happened in the past. These population uprisings also happened in the Soviet Union itself resulting in its own breakup. The new countries of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and
Kyrgyzstan were all formed. What remained was a new country of Russia. This is now known as the breakup of the USSR. The communist governments of the east European countries disappeared and areas inside the USSR split from the USSR forming their own countries. Many different ethnic groups (based on culture, history and language) inside the USSR formed their own countries.

Boris Yeltsin then became the first president of the new Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In summary, glasnost and perestroika are often referred to as the cause of the break-up of the Soviet Union, the revolutions of 1989 in Eastern Europe resulting in the end of the Soviet Bloc of nations and the end of the Cold War.
PERESTROIKA & GLASNOST
QUESTIONS

Directions: Complete the following questions based on the previous reading.

1. Who was the leader of the Soviet Union that put glasnost and perestroika in pace?

2. Why did he believe it necessary to promote glasnost and perestroika?

3. What is the definition of Glasnost? (In your own words)

4. What is the definition of Perestroika? (In your own words)

5. How did glasnost impact life for people in the Soviet Union?

6. How did perestroika impact life for people in the Soviet Union?
7. What were the results of Glasnost and Perestroika for the Soviet Union as a nation?

8. How many countries were formed from the breakup of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics? Name them.

9. Who was the first President of Russia after it was created from the collapse of the Soviet Union?

10. Besides the impact it had on the people and country of the Soviet Union, what was a larger significance of the introduction of glasnost and perestroika?
PERESTROIKA & GLASNOST
DEFINITIONS

Directions: Use your textbook, a dictionary or an online dictionary tool/website to find the definitions for the following terms.

1. Communism –

2. Socialism –

3. Soviet Bloc –

4. Soviet Communist Party –

5. Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) –

6. The Cold War –