How a Union Ended

Trace outside pressure, diplomacy, and change within the Soviet Union.

TOT.C.9.7 "Describe the decay and dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, including the effect of the Reagan Doctrine, American support for anti-Communists in Afghanistan and Nicaragua..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline U.S. actions, circle the INF Treaty's effects, and number two developments inside the Soviet Union. Use your marks to trace how these forces contributed to its end.

Pressure, Talks, and Dissolution

1. By the early 1980s, the Soviet Union faced a slowing economy and costly military commitments. Soviet troops had entered Afghanistan in 1979 to support a Communist government, but Afghan resistance kept the war going. Under President Ronald Reagan, the United States expanded aid to Afghan fighters. His broader Reagan Doctrine backed armed opponents of Soviet-aligned governments, including the Contras fighting Nicaragua's leftist Sandinista government. These conflicts increased pressure on Soviet resources and influence, although they did not alone bring down the Soviet Union.

2. Pressure also led to talks, not just fighting. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev tried to reduce military costs while reforming the Soviet economy. He met Reagan, and in 1987 they signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. It required both countries to eliminate their ground-launched missiles with ranges from 500 to 5,500 kilometers and allowed inspections to check compliance. The treaty lowered a major nuclear danger in Europe. It showed how diplomacy could ease Cold War tensions even while rivalry continued elsewhere.

3. Inside the Soviet Union, Gorbachev's reforms failed to end shortages. Glasnost, a policy of greater openness, allowed citizens to criticize the government. Soviet republics demanded greater control, and several declared independence. In 1989, Communist governments fell across Eastern Europe as Moscow chose not to use force to save them. After a failed coup by Soviet hard-liners in August 1991, more republics broke away. In December 1991, the Soviet Union dissolved into independent states. Outside pressure mattered, but internal weakness and independence movements were decisive.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did U.S. support for fighters in Afghanistan and Nicaragua put pressure on Soviet influence?

2. Why might reducing military costs have mattered to Gorbachev when he negotiated the INF Treaty?

3. How did the INF Treaty ease tensions without ending the wider rivalry?

4. How did events inside the Soviet Union help bring about its dissolution in 1991?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence museum label titled “Why a Superpower Ended.” Connect one U.S. action abroad, the INF Treaty, and two developments inside the Soviet Union, making clear which forces added pressure and which drove dissolution.

ANSWER KEY

How a Union Ended

HIGH SCHOOL · TOT.C.9.7

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline U.S. actions, circle the INF Treaty's effects, and number two developments inside the Soviet Union. Use your marks to trace how these forces contributed to its end. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did U.S. support for fighters in Afghanistan and Nicaragua put pressure on Soviet influence?	**The United States aided Afghan fighters resisting Soviet troops and Contras fighting Nicaragua's Soviet-aligned government. Both conflicts challenged Soviet influence.**
2	Why might reducing military costs have mattered to Gorbachev when he negotiated the INF Treaty?	**The Soviet Union faced a slowing economy and costly commitments. The treaty eliminated a class of missiles held by both countries.**
3	How did the INF Treaty ease tensions without ending the wider rivalry?	**It eliminated ground-launched missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometers and allowed inspections, reducing a nuclear danger in Europe while rivalry continued elsewhere.**
4	How did events inside the Soviet Union help bring about its dissolution in 1991?	**Reforms did not end shortages, openness allowed criticism, and republics demanded control. After a failed coup, more republics broke away, and the union dissolved.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Why a Superpower Ended

U.S. aid to Afghan fighters added pressure as Soviet troops fought a long war. The INF Treaty reduced nuclear danger through diplomacy, but it did not solve Soviet problems at home. Economic reforms failed to end shortages, while greater openness helped republics demand control. Those internal struggles and growing independence movements drove the Soviet Union's dissolution in 1991.

Accept other supported connections between outside pressure, diplomacy, and internal change. Responses should not claim that U.S. aid or the INF Treaty alone caused the dissolution.