

Long Answer Questions

Q.1. What was Soviet System? State any four features of Soviet System.

[CBSE Delhi 2013]

Or

Describe any six reasons that helped Soviet Union to make it a superpower after the end of Second World War.

[CBSE (AI) 2010]

Ans. The union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) came into being after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. The revolution was inspired by the ideals of socialism with the aim to setup egalitarian society. Bolshevik revolution opposed to capitalism and to abolish the institution of private property and consciously design a society based on the principles of equality. Bolshevik party played an important role in formation of an economy that was centrally planned and controlled by the state. No other political party or opposition was allowed. This Bolshevik controlled system was known as 'Soviet System'.

1. Soviet Union had complex communication network. It had vast energy resources including oil, iron and steel.
2. It had complex machinery production system and transport sector that connected its remotest areas with efficiency.
3. There was no unemployment.
4. The Soviet state ensured a minimum standard of living for all citizens and the government subsidised basic necessities including health, education, childcare and other welfare schemes.
5. It had a domestic consumer industry that produced everything from pins to cars, though their quality did not match that of the western capitalist countries.
6. State ownership was the dominant form of ownership: Land and productive assets were owned and controlled by the Soviet state.

Q.2. Describe the role of Gorbachev to reform the Soviet System and the effects of these reforms on the USSR.

[CBSE Delhi 2015]

Ans. Role of Gorbachev to reform the Soviet system.

Gorbachev initiated

- i. The policies of economic and political reforms - Perestroika (restructuring).
- ii. Glasnost-(Openness).
- iii. To stop the arms race with the US.

- iv. The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and Eastern Europe.

Effects of the Reforms on the USSR

- i. Gorbachev promised to reform the economy – catch up with the West –yet Soviet union collapsed.
- ii. The communist party members felt that their power and privileges were eroding.
- iii. His reforms gave rise to nationalism and the desire for sovereignty within various republics (including Russia and the Baltic Republics – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania).
- iv. Even the ordinary people felt alienated from the central Asians and from each other and felt they were paying too high a price to stay within the Soviet Union.

Q.3. Highlight any three positive and three negative features each of the Soviet system in the Soviet Union.

[CBSE Delhi 2016]

Ans. Positive Features

- i. The Government subsidised the basic needs including health, education, etc.
- ii. There were no unemployment.
- iii. Minimum standard of living was ensured for all the citizens.

Negative features

- i. Lack of democracy and absence of freedom in many fields.
- ii. The party did not recognise the aspirations and feelings of people.
- iii. System was very bureaucratic and authoritarian.

Q.4. Explain any six reasons that forced Gorbachev to bring improvement in Soviet Union.

[CBSE Delhi 2012]

Ans. The reasons that forced Gorbachev to bring improvements in Soviet Union are as follows:

1. Reforms were necessary to keep USSR abreast of information and technical revolution taking place in West.
2. Communist party had full control and was neutral towards aspirations of people of 15 countries. Hence, improvements were necessary.
3. Economic and political aspirations of people in USSR were not fulfilled. As a result, dissatisfaction kept on rising. Due to increasing dissatisfaction Gorbachev had to bring out reforms.
4. After the death of Brezhnev, Gorbachev took the leadership of Soviet Union. He was well aware of the fact that revolution of Information Technology had taken place in Western Countries and Soviet Union had taken a back seat in this. He decided to implement these improvements and introduced reform policies of

'perestroika'(restructuring) and glasnost (openness). He decided to improve relations with Western countries along with America on the domestic front.

5. Gorbachev felt that economy had become stagnant. This led to shortage of all consumer goods. A large part of population started having doubted outlook for governing system.
6. The public of Soviet Union was dissatisfied with the bureaucratic and authoritarian system. In spite of similarities among all republics of Soviet Union, people felt neglected and suppressed due to increased domination of Russia. Members and managers at governing state had more facilities as compared to common people. This also led to public outrage.
7. A Coup took place in 1991, which was encouraged by Communist party hardliners. The people had tasted freedom by then and did not want the old-style rule of the communist party. All these factors forced Gorbachev to reform.

Q.5. Describe the loopholes of Soviet System.

[CBSE Delhi 2010]

Ans. Soviet Union Emerged as a superpower after the Second World War. It developed in all areas but still it had the following loopholes which led to its destruction:

1. The economic, social and political life of Soviet citizens was fully under the control of state. Soviet system became very bureaucratic making life very difficult for its citizens.
2. Communist party of Soviet Union had a tight control over all institutions and was unaccountable to the people. The party bureaucrats gained more privilege than ordinary citizens, which increased in satisfaction among common citizens.
3. Lack of democracy and the absence of freedom of speech stifled people, who often expressed their dissent in jokes and cartoons.
4. The party refused to recognize the urge of people in the fifteen different republic that formed the Soviet union to manage their own affairs including their cultural affairs. Although on paper, Russia was only one of the fifteen republics that together constituted the USSR. But in reality, Russia dominated everything and people from other regions felt neglected and often suppressed.
5. In the arms race, the Soviet Union managed to match the US from time to time, but at great cost. The Soviet Union lagged behind the west in technology, infrastructure (e.g., transport, power) and most importantly, in fulfilling the political or economic aspirations of citizens.
6. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 weakened the system even further. Though wages continued to grow, productivity and technology fell considerably behind that of the West. This led to the shortages in all consumer goods. Food imports increased every year.

Q.6. Explain process of disintegration of Soviet Union during the period of Mikhail Gorbachev.

Ans. Mikhail Gorbachev became president of Soviet Union in 1985. Reforms were necessary to keep the USSR abreast of the information and technological revolutions taking place in West. To resolve this situation, he introduced reform policies of 'perestroika' (restructuring) and 'glasnost' (openness); However Gorbachev's decision to normalise relations with the West and democratise and reforms the Soviet Union had some other effects that neither he nor anyone else intended or anticipated. The people in the East European countries, which were earlier the part of the Soviet bloc started to protest against their own governments and Soviet control. Unlike in the past, the Soviet Union, under Gorbachev, did not intervene when the disturbances occurred and the communist regimes collapsed one after another. These developments were accompanied by a rapidly escalating crisis within the USSR that hastened its disintegration. Gorbachev initiated the policies of economic and political reform and democratisation within the country. The reforms were opposed by leaders within the communist party. This increased the speed of disintegration of Soviet Union. The effect of 'Glasnost' (openness) policy first took place in Lithuania. Movement for the freedom from USSR began. Soon it spread to Estonia and Latvia. But Gorbachev took the favour of Glasnost instead resolving the matter. In October 1989, he declared that Warsaw pact members were free to decide their own future. In the next month, November 1989, citizens of Germany toppled the Berlin Wall. In February 1990, elections held at Soviet Parliament (Duma). Gorbachev stripped the Soviet Communist Party of its 72 years old monopoly owned power by calling on the Soviet Parliament (Duma) to permit multiparty politics. It had surprising consequences. The communist party which ruled for last 72 years lost the elections. Lithuania declared its independence in March 1990. Russian Parliament declared its independence from Soviet Union. Boris Yeltsin played an important role in this process. This was the most deepest indication of disintegration of Soviet Union. The public revolt that occurred to remove of communist party in all the republics of Soviet Union after falling of Berlin Wall in 1989 was so powerful that it wasn't possible to resolve it with the help of military force. In December 1991, under the leadership of Yeltsin, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, three major republics of the USSR, declared that the Soviet Union was disbanded. And in this way, Soviet Union was disintegrated.

Q.7. Explain how did the Cuban Missile Crisis drive the world on the brink of a nuclear war?

[CBSE Sample Paper 2015]

Ans. (i) In April 1961, the USSR was worried that USA would attack Cuba and overthrow the government of Fidel Castro. Therefore, the leaders of Cuba decided to convert the country into a Russian base.

(ii) Consequently, the USSR placed nuclear missiles in Cuba. This strategic move put the USA for the first time, under the fire from close range.

(iii) This move of the USSR made the Americans aware of an imminent danger. The US president J.F. Kennedy was determined to get Nikita Khrushchev to remove the missiles and nuclear weapons from Cuba.

(iv) The American warships were ordered to intercept the Soviet ships heading towards Cuba. The overall situation became tense and volatile.

(v) The prospects of this clash made the whole world nervous, for it would have been no ordinary war. The Cuban Missile Crisis was a high point of what came to be known as the Cold War.

Q.8. How did the Soviet Union suddenly disintegrate? Explain any six reasons.

[CBSE (AI) 2016]

Or

Describe any six factors responsible for the disintegration of USSR.

[CBSE Delhi 2015]

Ans. Political leaders and ideologists have different methodology on the subject of reasons of disintegration of Soviet Union. Soviet Union was disintegrated due to the following reasons:

1. Leaders of Soviet Union guaranteed respected standard of living after Soviet revolution to common citizens, who were unable to manage square meals during bureaucratic and authoritarian system at the time of establishment of Soviet System. There was an improvement in the standard of living of Soviet citizens after revolution undoubtedly. But the reforms couldn't bring out the improvements to an appropriate level, which raised dissatisfaction among citizens.
2. Communist party had a complete control over Soviet Union. Party failed to accomplish/fulfill the aspirations of public. Public of republics felt neglected and suppressed under the domination of Russia.
3. Soviet Union emerged as a superpower after the Second World War. Due to this, the other superpower, America had to compete. Arms race began after the formation of Soviet Union. It emerged as an atomic power in 1948-49. The US progressed continuously and consistently whereas Soviet Union's resources were wasted in the competition. This affected the development and improvement of economic life of people.
4. Some people believed that Soviet Union had dominated Eastern Europe after the Second World War. Soviet Union had to opt a policy for the development of those countries by sparing a large part of its economic equipments in order to gain an effective control on them.
5. Communist party was the only party that ruled for 72 years after the revolution of 1917. Due to this, the party members became bureaucrats. They were not answerable to citizens. Furthermore, the standard of living of members and

authorities of communist community was not the same as ordinary people. The party bureaucrats gained more privileges than ordinary citizens which increased dissatisfaction among common citizens.

6. Gorbachev implemented policies of 'Perestroika' (restructuring) and 'Glasnost' (openness). Then the citizens of Soviet Union came to know that Soviet Union lagged behind the West in terms of economic and infrastructure. The citizens lost interest in communist system after becoming aware of this fact.
7. Soviet Union created problems for itself by doing military interference in Afghanistan during the period of Brezhnev. It ruined the economy of Soviet Union and Gorbachev declared that Warsaw Pact members were free to decide their own future.
8. There were serious reactions of citizens of Soviet Union over economic reforms and policies of openness. Their aspirations went so high that they demanded more rights and openness. On the Other hand, members of communist party criticised reforms done by Gorbachev by saying that he was moving too quickly. In this 'tug of war', Gorbachev lost support on all sides and divided public opinion.
9. Cooperation within all the republics could not establish even after the rule of a monopolist party for 72 years in Soviet Union. The Russian republics like Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia and Baltic Republics (Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia) always felt that they are not able to develop in the manner in which they should due to MiddleAsian backward union states. A large proportion of their equipments used to spend on these backward republics.

Q.9. Explain any six consequences of disintegration of Soviet Union.

[CBSE Delhi 2012, 2013; (AI) 2014]

Ans. (i) End of the Cold War: Disintegration of Soviet Union led to end of the Cold War confrontations. The ideological dispute over, whether the socialist system would beat the capitalist system was not an issue anymore.

(ii) End of Massive Arms Race: Cold War with Ideological dispute had engaged the military of two blocs, had triggered a massive arms race and accumulation of nuclear weapons, and had led to the existence of military blocs. The end of the confrontation brought a ray of hope to that there will be an end to this arms race and peace would be established.

(iii) Unipolar System: The possibility of disintegration of Soviet Union was expressed as either unipolar international politics with the domination of remaining one superpower on the rapidly changing international stage or European Union, SAARC, ASEAN, etc., could become important players in the international system, thereby bringing in a multipolar system where no one power could dominate. As it turned out, the US became the sole superpower.

(iv) Emergence of New Countries: The end of the soviet bloc meant the emergence of many new countries. All these countries had their own independent aspirations and choices. Some of them, especially the Baltic and East European states wanted to join the European Union and became a part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The Central Asian Countries wanted to take advantage of their geographical location and continue their close ties with Russia and also to establish ties with the West, the US, China and other. Thus, the international stage showed many new players emerge, each with its own identity, interest and economic and political difficulties.

(v) Supremacy of Capitalist Ideology: This was already proved after the disintegration of Soviet Union and conflict between Capitalist and communist ideology was over. India learnt a lesson and released its faith in the mixed economy in 1991. India started following liberal and global policies. Institutions like World Bank and International Monetary Fund were considered as country's prime counsellor.

(vi) Emergence of Single Superpower: India had successfully maintained its relation with America and Soviet Union under the policy of non-alignment. Such stand supported India after the disintegration of Soviet Union and it started improving its relation with the United States. The US also welcomed India's efforts.

Q.10. If the Soviet Union had not disintegrated and the world had remained bipolar, how would that situation had affected the world politics?

[CBSE (AI) 2015]

Ans. If the Soviet Union had not disintegrated, it would definitely had affected the following developments.

(i) Cold War confrontations would not have ended and USA would not have become the only superpower of the World.

(ii) Most of the countries which were part of erstwhile USSR would have never got the independence.

(iii) Accumulation of nuclear weapons would have continued endlessly.