

Unit 11: Organizing texts (3) Developing texts
Task: 9
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The Impact of Brezhnev

Leonid Brezhnev died in 1982. In looking back over his period as President of the Soviet Union -1965 to 1982- we ask ourselves what impact his years in office had on the ordinary citizens of the Soviet Union. The figures in the table, at the beginning of his Presidency and towards its end, permit a comparison of living standards.

Soviet Living Standards, 1965 and 1980

Indicator	1965	1980
Monthly wage	96.5 roubles	168.5 roubles
Families with TV sets	24 per cent	85 per cent
Families with refrigerators	11 per cent	84 per cent
Living space per person in towns	10 sq. m.	13.2 sq. m.
Consumption of meat per person	41 kilos	57 kilos
Consumption of vegetables per person	72 kilos	93 kilos
Consumption of potatoes per person	142 kilos	120 kilos
Consumption of bread per person	156 kilos	139 kilos

The figures in the table can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, when examining both columns, it becomes clear that most figures show an increase. Soviet economists can say that the economy has benefited by the Brezhnev administration. Many Soviets now have a TV set, a fridge and some earn twice as much as twenty years ago.

When looking at the numbers in a 'Western way', the numbers become quite depressing. 'Living space per person in towns has increased from 10 to 13.2 square metres'. This is a sad figure: it means that the average Soviet family of four persons has a living space of 52.8 square metres. Does this look large? ~~It's~~ ^{it's} a square room of 7.3 by 7.3 metres!

The monthly wage in the Soviet Union has increased with 174 per cent since 1965. The average European citizen is now earning 3 to 4 times as much since the middle of the sixties. That's a whopping 300 - 400 per cent.

That the Soviet economy is ~~a~~ badly structured and controlled ~~one~~ becomes clear, even for the Soviets themselves. One of the main reasons for the widespread disarmament negotiations is the need to decrease the spending on arms. They need money to inflate their economy else their people will walk away, just as is happening in Eastern Germany.