

Detente, 1971-1979

By the end of this spread you should be able to describe:

- 1 the reasons for detente, 1971-1979
- 2 its achievements
- 3 attempts to deal with a arms control b human rights issues

Particular Soviet reasons

- 1 A breakdown of relations with China meant it was important to **reduce** tension with the USSR's other potential enemy, the USA.
- 2 Now that the USSR had caught up in the arms race it felt more confident.
- 3 In 1969 West Germany had agreed with East Germany not to acquire nuclear weapons. This removed a potential threat.
- 4 The need to increase trade with the West.

Reasons in common

- Try to reduce
- 1 the risk of nuclear war
 - 2 the high cost of the arms race.

Why did the Superpowers want detente in the 1970s?

What was detente?

- 1 Detente is a French term (*détente*) meaning relaxation. It is used to describe periods of 'thaw' in the Cold War when tensions between the Superpowers lessened and relations improved.
- 2 It is particularly applied to the years between 1971 when the first Nixon-Brezhnev Summit Conference was planned and 1979 when the USSR invaded Afghanistan causing a 'Second Cold War' (page 86).
- 3 Detente was restored after Gorbachev became Soviet leader in 1985 (page 87).

Particular American reasons

- 1 Failure in Vietnam. Nixon changed the direction of American foreign policy and set out to **improve** US relations with both China and the USSR.
- 2 Public pressure to reduce the risks of war.
- 3 The USSR had caught up in the arms race.



Superpower contacts

Summit Conferences

- 1 Five were held between 1972 and 1979, the first three between Nixon and Brezhnev (1972-1974).
- 2 They led to
 - a agreements about procedures to reduce the risk of confrontation and nuclear war
 - b a joint space mission (1975)
 - c increased trade links
 - d cultural exchanges.

The European Security Conference, 1973-1975

Delegates from Canada, the USA and thirty-three European countries met in Helsinki. In 1975 they signed the Helsinki Accords:

1 Security

- a They recognized
 - i the frontiers of Eastern Europe
 - ii Soviet control over the region.
- b West Germany recognized East Germany.

2 Co-operation

- They agreed to co-operate through
- a trade links
 - b cultural exchanges
 - c exchanges of technological information.

3 Human rights

- They agreed
- a to respect human rights
 - b to allow people to travel freely across Europe.

Human rights

- 1 Many in the West believed the Helsinki Accords marked a break-through in persuading the USSR to allow human rights, such as the freedoms of belief and expression, both at home and in Eastern Europe.
- 2 The USSR made little effort to improve human rights:
 - a It continued to suppress critics such as Andrei Sakharov.
 - b In Czechoslovakia members of the Charter 77 group were suppressed.
 - c When the West criticized the USSR's human rights record, Brezhnev said it was interfering in its internal affairs.
 - d When a US Congressman tried to have a trade agreement linked to the improved treatment of Soviet Jews, Brezhnev cancelled the deal.

Arms control

- 1 **Nuclear weapons** In 1969 talks began about a Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT). The Superpowers signed two treaties:
 - a In SALT I (1972) they agreed i to reduce their anti-ballistic missile systems ii limits on the numbers of their offensive missiles and bombers (see photo).
 - b In SALT II (1979) they agreed further limits on missiles but the talks were less successful than hoped. In 1980 US President Carter refused to ratify the treaty because of Soviet aggression in Afghanistan (page 86).

- 2 **Conventional forces** Talks to reduce these made very little progress. The USSR
 - a refused to reveal the size of Warsaw Pact forces
 - b made it clear it intended to maintain its superiority over NATO in this area.

Attitudes to detente

- 1 Brezhnev made it clear that detente did not mean an end to the struggle between Communism and Capitalism.
- 2 Western critics of detente said that
 - a the USSR was interested only in the benefits of detente to itself such as trade links and reduced arms expenditure.
 - b it was not interested in the improvement of human rights.
 - c the West had, therefore, made a mistake at Helsinki in accepting Soviet control of Eastern Europe.
- 3 Western supporters hoped that increased contact with the West would change attitudes in the East.
- 4 Despite detente, Superpower rivalry continued in the Arab-Israeli War (1973) and Angola (1974-1975).

- 1 What did a the USSR b the USA hope to gain from detente?
- 2 What did detente achieve between 1971 and 1979?
- 3 In what respects was detente a failure?