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the soviet union formally known as the union of soviet socialist republics or ussr for short was a country that was composed of 15 different units known as republics among these republics was russia which was the largest most populous and most dominant of the union the soviet union b or u s s r was made up of 15 countries in eastern europe and asia and lasted from 1922 until its fall in 1991 the soviet union b was the world s first marxist communist background 1917 1927 establishment 1927 1953 stalinism 1953 1964 khrushchev thaw 1964 1982 era of stagnation 1982 1991 decline and collapse soviet leadership related topics soviet union portal v t e after the munich agreement the soviet union pursued a rapprochement with nazi germany soviet union revolution communism ussr sometime in the middle of the 19th century russia entered a phase of internal crisis that in 1917 would culminate in revolution its causes were not so much economic or social as political and cultural soviet union leaders a timeline from stalin 39 s reign of terror to gorbachev and glasnost meet the eight leaders who presided over the ussr by becky little updated august 30 2022 original the soviet union was the world 39 s first communist country and had a major influence on 20th century history and still has an influence today a soviet propaganda poster from 1953 showing karl collapse of the soviet union sequence of events that led to the dissolution of the u s s r on december 31 1991 the reforms implemented by president mikhaïl gorbachev and the backlash against them hastened the demise of the soviet state learn more about one of the key events of the 20th century in this article on january 1 1991 the soviet union was the largest country in the world covering some 8 650 000 square miles 22 400 000 square km nearly one sixth of earth s land surface its population numbered more than 290 million and 100 distinct nationalities lived within its borders the history of the soviet union from 1964 to 1982 referred to as the brezhnev era covers the period of leonid brezhnev 39 s rule of the union of soviet socialist republics ussr this period began with high economic growth and soaring prosperity but ended with a much weaker soviet union facing social political and economic stagnation the union of soviet socialist republics lasted from 1922 1991 the union of soviet socialist republics also known as the ussr or the soviet union consisted of russia and 14 surrounding countries the ussr 39 s territory stretched from the baltic states in eastern europe to the pacific ocean including the majority of northern asia and portions sections internal workings of the soviet system the soviet union and the united states relations between the soviet union and the united states were driven by a complex interplay of ideological political and economic factors which led to cooperation and superpower rivalry the soviet union incorporated an area of over 22 402 200 square kilometres 8 649 500 sq mi covering approximately one sixth of earth 39 s land surface it was only slightly smaller in land area than the entire continent of north america 1 and spanned most of eurasia the soviet union officially the union of soviet socialist republics ussr was a transcontinental country that spanned much of eurasia from 1922 to 1991 a flagship communist state it was nominally a federal union of fifteen national republics u in practice both its government and its economy were highly centralized until its final years according to article 76 of the 1977 soviet constitution a union republic was a sovereign soviet socialist state that had united with other soviet republics in the ussr article 78 of the constitution stated that the territory of the union republic cannot be changed without its agreement the soviet union was a charter member of the united nations and one of five permanent members of the security council following the dissolution of the soviet union in 1991 its un seat was transferred to the russian federation one of the many successor states of the ussr the term soviet empire collectively refers to the world 39 s territories that the soviet union dominated politically economically and militarily this phenomenon particularly in the context of the cold war is also called soviet imperialism 1 2 by sovietologists to describe the extent of the soviet union 39 s hegemony over the second world soviet union union of soviet socialist republics u s s r former northern eurAsian empire 1917 22 1991 stretching from the baltic and black seas to the pacific ocean and in its final years consisting of 15 soviet socialist republics the capital was moscow then and now the capital of russia as part of its secret 1939 non aggression pact with nazi germany the soviet union seized the independent baltic states of estonia latvia and lithuania and absorbed them as new republics in the soviet union was officially created in december 1922 as the union of the russian also known as bolshevist russia ukrainian byelorussian and transcaucasian soviet republics ruled by the communist bolshevik parties