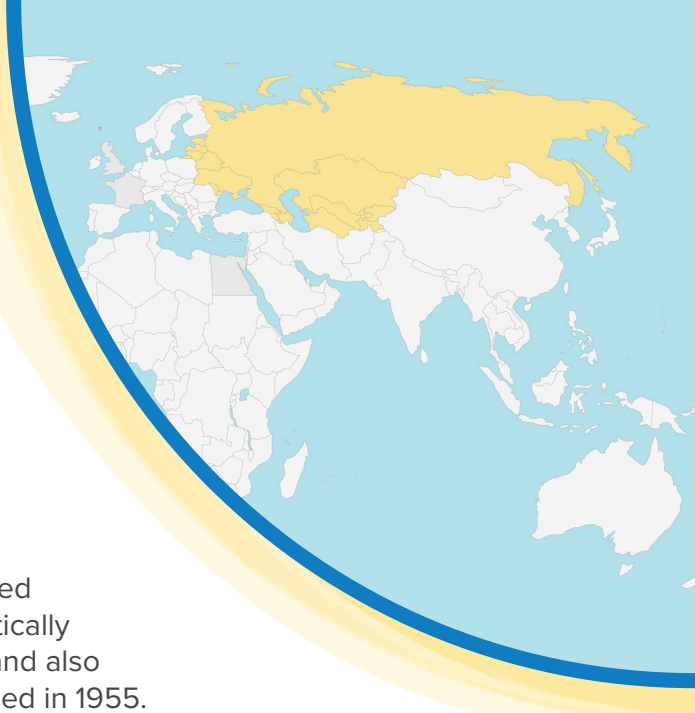

The Soviet Union

The Soviet Union was founded following the victory of the Bolsheviks over their rivals the Mensheviks in 1922. This victory resulted in a union between the communist republics of Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia, and the Transcaucuses. Initially, the Soviet Union was isolated from the rest of the world and developed its own resources and industries. During World War II, it allied with Great Britain and the United States against Nazi Germany. After the war ended in 1945, the Soviet Union emerged economically weak but politically and militarily powerful. It grew to 15 Soviet Socialist Republics and also controlled most of Eastern Europe under the Warsaw Pact formed in 1955.

Two superpowers emerged from the war: the Soviet Union and the United States. For their part, the Soviet Union sought to encourage the spread of communism against the capitalist system of the West. A Cold War developed between the Soviet Union and the United States as each attempted to spread its philosophy and ideology around the world.

Compared to the United States, Great Britain, and France, the Soviet Union had very little influence in the Middle East. As a result, the leadership of the Soviet Union sought to increase their influence and the Suez Crisis provided that opportunity. When Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal and placed the canal under the control of the Egyptian government, the Soviet Union was caught off guard. Several days passed before the Soviet Union issued a statement in support of Egypt's action. The statement criticized Great Britain and France for threatening world peace and asserted President Gamal Abdel Nasser actions were legal and justified.

Questions to Consider:

- What influence did the Soviet Union have in Egypt before the Suez Crisis?
- Why was it important for the Soviets to gain influence in the Middle East?
- How could the Soviet Union benefit from conflicts between Israel and neighboring countries in the Middle East?
- How concerned was the Soviet Union about a possible confrontation with the United States?

Soviet Union's Positions:

- Support Egyptian nationalization of the Suez Canal.
- Maintain political strength against the U.S., Great Britain, and France.
- Use the crisis as a chance to become a major player in the Middle East.

What can the Soviet Union negotiate with?

Remember that you don't have to offer these right away in a negotiation.

- Decrease military aid to Egypt.
- Agree to not support Egypt in a military conflict.
- Help Egypt pay for the Aswan Dam.