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History & Geography



Alpha Omega Publications®

HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY 509

THE END OF THE MILLENNIUM

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Author:

Theresa Buskey, J.D.

Editor:

Alan Christopherson, M.S.

Illustrations:

Brian Ring



Alpha Omega Publications®

804 N. 2nd Ave. E., Rock Rapids, IA 51246-1759

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THE END OF THE MILLENNIUM

The last thirty years of the 20th century was also the end of the second millennium (the second thousand years after Jesus was born). America faced many crises and scandals during those thirty years, both at home and in the world. The Cold War continued after 1970, but it changed because of the Vietnam War. The U.S. was less willing to fight communism for fear of another failure like that, so America and the U.S.S.R. began to work together more. The U.S. accepted Communist China as the government of that land and tried to work with them. However, the Cold War did not end until communism itself ended in Europe in the 1980s. Then, America was left as the only super power as the world moved into the third millennium.

OBJECTIVES

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you should be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFEPAC®.

When you have finished this LIFEPAC, you should be able to:

1. Identify the presidents of this time and their actions.
2. Describe Détente and the Watergate scandal.
3. Describe how the Cold War ended and the changes that came.
4. Describe the Persian Gulf War and the events surrounding it.
5. Describe events in America near the turn of the millennium.

VOCABULARY

Study these new words. Learning the meanings of these words is a good study habit and will improve your understanding of this LIFEPAC.

accurate (ak' yər it). Exactly right; correct

attitude (at' ə tüd). A way of thinking, acting, or feeling

clan (klan). A group of related families that claim to be descended from a common ancestor

coalition (kō ə lish' ən). A temporary alliance of different parties, persons, or nations for joint action

dismantle (dis man' tl). To pull down; take apart

evidence (ev' ə dnəs). Facts; proof; anything that shows or makes clear

innocent (in' ə sənt). Doing no wrong or evil; free from sin or wrong; not guilty

invalid (in val' id). Not legally binding; not having legal force; without value

investigate (in ves' tə gāt). To search into; examine closely

Islam (is' ləm). The religion based on the teachings of the man Mohammed as they appear in the Koran

oath (ōth). A statement that something is true or a solemn promise, which God or some holy person or thing is called to witness

pardon (pär'd n). Forgiveness; to set free from punishment

plot (plot). A secret plan, especially to do something wrong

prestige (pre stēzh'). Reputation, influence or distinction, based on what is known about one's abilities, achievements or associations

productive (prə duk' tiv). Producing, supplying, or bringing about much

shortage (shôr' tij). Lack; too small of an amount

technology (tek nol' ə jē). The use of scientific knowledge to solve practical problems; the practical methods used to solve those problems

tension (ten' shən). A strain; severe or wearing pressure

Note: These words appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used in this LIFEPAK. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, review the definition.

Pronunciation Key: hat, âge, câre, fär; let, êqual, têrm; it, îce; hot, ôpen, ôrder; oil; out; cup, pût, rûle; child; long; thin; /Th/ for then; /zh/ for measure; /ə/ represents /a/ in about, /e/ in taken, /i/ in pencil /o/ in lemon, and /u/ in circus.



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

I. FALL OF A PRESIDENT

Richard Nixon could have gone down in history as one of our greatest presidents. He took America out of Vietnam. Then, he began to work with the communists. He hoped to end the Cold War. He was not able to do that, but he did start a time of better relations between the super powers. He also opened talks with Communist China and accepted them as the government of that land. It was a great accomplishment.

However, Richard Nixon was involved in a huge scandal. It was a complicated mess

named “Watergate.” Because of it, Richard Nixon became the only president in our history to resign from office. He did it to avoid being impeached.

Distrust of the government had grown during the Vietnam War. Watergate made it much worse. The new president, Gerald Ford, quickly became unpopular and was voted out of office in 1976. The next president’s lack of experience made him unpopular. He lost the next election in 1980.

Review these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Identify the presidents of this time and their actions.
2. Describe Détente and the Watergate scandal.
5. Describe events in America near the turn of the millennium.

Restudy these words.

evidence
Islam
shortage

innocent
pardon
technology

investigate
productive
tension

Détente

China. President Nixon was well known for how much he disliked communism. However, he realized America did not have the money, men, and willingness to fight communism everywhere. The Vietnam War showed how difficult it could be to fight like that. Therefore, Nixon and his clever Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, decided to work with the communists as much as they possibly could.

Nixon started with China. Since China had become communist, almost no one from the United States had even visited there. Americans knew very little about the country. However, Nixon realized that China and the U.S.S.R. did not trust each other. He knew that the Soviet Union

would not like to see America and China become friendly. He hoped the Soviets would also become friendly to keep China and the U.S. from working together against them. It worked.

China was willing to talk to the United States. Mao Zedong, the extreme communist leader of China, was getting old. Many people within his government wanted trade and business with the west. Some of the first Americans to visit China since the communist takeover were ping-pong players. Ping-pong was very popular in China, so an American team was sent. It allowed the two nations to contact each other in a non-political way.



PRESIDENT NIXON AND HENRY KISSINGER ON THEIR VISIT TO CHINA

In 1971, the U.S. allowed Communist China to take the Chinese seat in the United Nations. Taiwan was removed from the United Nations completely. The next year, President Nixon shocked the nation by going to China himself! Henry Kissinger had secretly made the arrangements with the Chinese government. The visit was a huge success.

China had been completely closed to the west since 1949. News reports did not cover what happened there because no one knew much. Even such big events as famines or floods in China might not be known in America. The Chinese government did not tell anyone about them and American reporters were not allowed in the country. Many Americans were very curious about this ancient land. They were anxious to see what would happen when President Nixon visited there.

U.S. television covered everything about the president's visit. The president met with the Chinese leaders, including Mao. He toured some of the famous places in the country built by the old emperors. It was the first time Beijing and the wonders of ancient China had been seen on television. The success of the visit encouraged both

sides. They sent representatives to each other's countries to talk more. In 1979, the U.S. accepted the communist government as the *real* government of China.

U.S.S.R. As Nixon had hoped, the Soviet Union was alarmed by the growing friendship between China and America. The new Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev, decided to make things better between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. Communism in the Soviet Union also was in trouble. The communist system could not create new **technology** as fast as the Free World. Americans were building newer, faster computers, telephones, and other things. The Soviets needed to trade with the west to get them, because they could not invent them that fast. Brezhnev agreed to let Nixon visit the Soviet Union in 1972.

Richard Nixon was the first American president to visit the Soviet Union. He and Brezhnev signed several important agreements. The most important was SALT, the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty. It was the first attempt by the super powers to control the atomic arms race. It did not stop the arms race, but it did slow it some.

The new cooperation between the super powers was called *Détente*. The word means