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# Range



It's hard to find anyone who still thinks communism is a good idea. The notion of a government-run economy has little credibility these days.

Yet there was a time, not so long ago, when the Soviet Union and the United States vied with one another in a global competition to determine which economic system could provide a better life for its people. And every U.S./Soviet encounter, no matter how minor, took on a symbolic importance that seemed to reflect on the merits of one system or the other.

One of the more curious Cold War

confrontations — the Kitchen Debate — took place in 1959 at the American National Exhibit in Moscow, where Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev engaged in a bit of (surprisingly good-natured) ideological jousting. The two Cold Warriors bantered nonstop as they made their way past displays that showcased the latest American consumer goods, and at one point Khrushchev turned to ask Nixon a question:





# Wars:

**Khrushchev:** How long has America existed? Three hundred years?

**Nixon:** One hundred and fifty years.

**Khrushchev:** One hundred and fifty years? Well then we will say America has been in existence for 150 years and this is the level she has reached. We have existed not quite 42 years and in another seven years we will be on the same level as America. When we catch you up, in passing you by, we will wave to you.

Well, that never came to pass. By the end of the 20th century the Soviet Union had disintegrated; communism had all but disappeared; and Nikita Khrushchev's son, Sergei, had emigrated to the United States, where he taught international relations at Brown University.

**Note:** The CNN web site has a complete transcript of the Kitchen Debate, and it's definitely worth looking at — if for no other reason than to get a sense of how much Nixon and Khrushchev enjoyed sparring with each another. <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/14/documents/debate/>