

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# The Fall of the USSR

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. In 1922, after years of conflict and tumult, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was officially declared a **communist** state. The Russian Empire and its tsarist **regime** had been firmly left in the past, replaced by a system purportedly based on equality and classlessness. In this new world order, all property and resources were to be communally owned. A **command economy**, in which prices and salaries would be set by the government, would render corruption obsolete. With no ruling class, humanity would flourish. Or so Vladimir Lenin and his comrades claimed. To say it didn't work out that way would be a massive understatement. Lenin and his successor Josef Stalin were tyrants who severely punished, often with death, anyone suspected of **dissent**. As anti-Stalinist Leon Trotsky put it, "The old principle: who does not work shall not eat, has been replaced by a new one: who does not obey shall not eat."

What is the main idea of this passage?

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| A. The USSR did not live up to its supposed ideals.         | B. Had it not been for communism, the USSR would have flourished. |
| C. Massive unemployment contributed to the USSR's failures. | D. The loss of the tsarist regime was a tragedy.                  |

2. Under Stalin, millions of political prisoners were sent to the Gulag, a brutal system of forced-labor concentration camps. At the time of Stalin's death in 1953, the rest of the world remained largely unaware of the Gulag and its atrocities. Under Stalin's successor Nikita Khrushchev, however, **censorship** lessened—an outcome of what was known as the "Khrushchev Thaw." In 1962, the Soviet government allowed the publication of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's explosive novel, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, which shed light on the camps' harsh conditions. The USSR soon reversed course, banning the work. But Solzhenitsyn, who had himself been imprisoned in the Gulag, kept writing. In 1973, portions of his expose, *The Gulag Archipelago*, were published in Paris. Unlike *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, it was nonfiction. In fact, *The Gulag Archipelago* was so shocking and comprehensive that it could not be ignored. As a result, the world became fully aware of what had occurred in the early decades of the Soviet Union.

Based on this passage, what inference can you make?

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| A. <i>One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich</i> downplayed the Gulag's brutality. | B. Under Khrushchev, the USSR did not engage in censorship of its citizens.               |
| C. <i>The Gulag Archipelago</i> damaged the USSR's worldwide reputation.           | D. The USSR wanted the Gulag to serve as a worldwide demonstration of communist practice. |

3. **\*\*Excerpt from President John F. Kennedy’s Remarks, News Conference 13, June 28, 1961\*\*** The “crisis” over Berlin is Soviet-manufactured. The Soviets illegally blockaded the city in 1948 and lifted the **\*\*blockade\*\*** in the spring of 1949. From that time until November 1958—almost a decade—the situation in Berlin was relatively peaceful. The peoples of West Berlin developed a thriving and vital city. We carried out our responsibilities and exercised our rights of access to the city without serious incident, although we were never completely free from irritating difficulties that were put in our way. In November 1958 the Soviets began a new campaign to force the Allied powers out of Berlin, a process which led up to the abortive **\*\*Summit\*\*** Conference in Paris of May last year. Now they have revived that drive. They call upon us to sign what they call a “peace treaty” with the regime that they have created in East Germany. If we refuse, they say that they themselves will sign such a “treaty.” The obvious purpose here is not to have peace but to make permanent the partition of Germany. The Soviets also say that their unilateral action in signing a “peace treaty” with East Germany would bring an end to Allied rights to be in West Berlin and to free access to that city. It is clear that such unilateral action cannot affect these rights, which stem from the surrender of Nazi Germany. Such action would simply be a repudiation by the Soviets of multilateral commitments to which they solemnly subscribed, and have repeatedly reaffirmed, about the exercise of the rights of the principal powers associated in World War II.

According to Kennedy, what was the purpose of the USSR’s proposed peace treaty?

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| A. To allow for the coexistence of capitalism and communism | B. To adhere to Allied agreements following World War II |
| C. To develop a thriving economy in Berlin                  | D. To force Western influence out of Berlin              |

4. **\*\*Excerpt from George H.W. Bush’s 1988 Republican National Convention Acceptance Address\*\*** We have a new relationship with the Soviet Union: the INF [Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces] Treaty, the beginning of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the beginning of the end of the Soviet **\*\*proxy war\*\*** in Angola and, with it, the independence of Namibia. Iran and Iraq move toward peace. It’s a watershed. It is no accident. It happened when we acted on the ancient knowledge that strength and clarity lead to peace; weakness and ambivalence lead to war. You see, weakness tempts aggressors. Strength stops them. I will not allow this country to be made weak again, never. The tremors in the Soviet world continue. The hard earth there has not yet settled. Perhaps what is happening will change our world forever and perhaps not. A prudent skepticism is in order, and so is hope. But, either way, we’re in an unprecedented position to change the nature of our relationship—not by preemptive concession but by keeping our strength, not by yielding up defense systems with nothing won in return but by hard, cool engagement in the tug and pull of diplomacy.

Based on this passage, which best describes Bush’s attitude toward the USSR?

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| A. Benevolent paternalism | B. Guarded optimism  |
| C. Reactive aggression    | D. Trusting openness |

5. **\*\*Excerpt from Mikhail Gorbachev's Resignation Speech, December 26, 1991\*\*** I am aware of the dissatisfaction with the present hard situation, of the sharp criticism of authorities at all levels including my personal activities. But once again I'd like to stress: radical changes in such a vast country, and a country with such heritage, cannot pass painlessly without difficulties and shake-up. The August **\*\*coup\*\*** brought the general crisis to its ultimate limit. The most damaging thing about this crisis is the breakup of the statehood. And today I am worried by our people's loss of the citizenship of a great country. The consequences may turn out to be very hard for everyone. I think it is vitally important to preserve the democratic achievements of the past years. They have been paid for by the suffering of our whole history, our tragic experience. They must not be given up under any circumstances or any pretext, otherwise all our hopes for the better will be buried. I am saying all this straight and honest. It is my moral duty.

With which statement would Gorbachev most likely have agreed?

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| A. It was inevitable that the USSR would eventually fall apart.       | B. The dissolution of the USSR constitutes a tremendous loss.           |
| C. Democratic ideals are incompatible with the existence of the USSR. | D. Radical change is easiest in large countries with strong traditions. |