THE FALL OF THE SOVIET UNION.

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INTRODUCTION:
In December of 1991, as the world watched in amazement, the Soviet Union disintegrated into fifteen separate countries.
The breakup of the Soviet Union transformed the entire world's political situation.

What led to this monumental historical event? In fact, the answer is a very complex one.

1- REASONS: There were a lot of problems in the U.S.S.R.
- Economic Standstill: Mainly in agriculture. There were no improvements, and Russia had to buy grain from the U.S.A. during the 80's.

Industry was primitive too. They hadn't new machines or technology. The industrial production was not enough and of bad quality.

Despite the successes in the space race, they fell behind at important industries such as robots, computers, laser, communications... They were isolated from the rest of the world in science and technology.
- Ecologic disaster: Soviet economy did not respect or take care of nature. The contamination of lakes, rivers and the atmosphere became a health hazard for the citizens.

For example, the disaster at Chernobyl affected all the world.

- Low quality of life: The life expectancy fell. There were a lot of poor families. This was because the economic efforts were invested in the army.
Most hospitals had old equipment and medical supplies were scarce.

There was a lot of alcoholism because of the living and working conditions. There was also a substantial amount of crime.

There was extreme discrimination against women. There was a strong sexist attitude and women found it hard to find decent employment, and most women were expected to also take care of household duties as well.

The communist country didn't guarantee good conditions for people. This was not a worker's paradise.

- Nationalism: The U.S.S.R. was a federal state, composed of fifteen republics with different features: Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan,
Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Latvia and Estonia.

There were different religions, languages, traditions, wealth levels... and some nationalists wanted independence from the U.S.S.R.

- Military disasters: The U.S.S.R. lost the war in Afghanistan. 15,000 Soviet soldiers died.
2- PERESTROIKA AND GLASNOST:
By the time of he 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev, the last Soviet Union leader, rose to power, the country was in a situation of severe stagnation with deep economic and political problems.
Recognizing this, Gorbachev introduced a two-tiered policy of reform.

A) Glasnost: This means “Openness”. The Soviet people had new rights:
- Thousands of political prisoners were released, including the dissidents.
- People were told about the atrocities committed by the Stalin's government. People knew about the “Gulags” (soviet concentration camps) and the purges (persecutions of dissidents and anyone suspected of disloyalty)
- Free speech was allowed.
- Military conscription was soon abolished.

B) Perestroika: This means Economic Restructuring.
- Gorbachev removed the complete control over production quotas and trade, in the Soviet Enterprises.

- Small private enterprises and workers' cooperatives were allowed.
On the other hand, Gorbachev was the key to end the Cold War.
- He announced the reduction of the army and the number of troops.
- He declared that the U.S.S.R. would no longer interfere in Eastern Europe. Starting with Poland, the Eastern European countries experienced generally peaceful democratic revolutions. The Berlin Wall was destroyed and Germany reunified.

3- CONSEQUENCES:

3.1- The end of the U.S.S.R.:

Nationalist in some republics wanted independence. Gorbachev tried to prevent nationalism sending the army to the Baltic republics, but he started to lose control.
The first region to declare independence was Lithuania, in 1990.

After the initiative from Lithuania, similar movements sprang up all over the former Soviet Union, for example, in Armenia.

3.2- The fall of Gorbachev:

His policy of economic reform did not have good results. The Soviet people used their new freedom of speech to criticize Gorbachev.

Finally, in 1991 a group of "hard-line" Communists kidnapped Gorbachev, and they announced on state television that Gorbachev was very ill and couldn't govern. It was a coup d'etat.

There were massive protests in Moscow, Leningrad, and many of the other major cities of the Soviet Union. The army joined the protests. After three days of massive protest, the coup organizers surrendered.
Anyway Gorbachev resigned in December 25, 1991. The new president of Russia, after winning the elections, was Boris Yeltsin.

3.3- The Yugoslav War:

Yugoslavia was a multi-ethnic state in which the component peoples have a history of hating each other.

While ruled by the strong dictatorship of Josip Broz (Tito), there was peace. Since his death, the hate began again.

The conflict was heightened by the collapse of the communist economy and the resulting unemployment. The northern republics were economically more successful than Serbia and the southern republics.

Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence at the end of June 1991, and Serbia attacked them. Soon, the war spread over all the country.

A peace agreement was signed in Dayton, Ohio in November 1995 to end conflict. This peace was forced by the U.S.A.
The Yugoslav wars are infamous for the war crimes they involved, including mass ethnic cleansing.
EXERCISES:

1- Choose the right answer:

Why was the Soviet industry primitive in the 80's?

a) Because the Soviet people were lazy.
b) Because they had no new machines or technology, such as laser, robots, good computers.
c) Because the U.S.S.R. didn't take care of nature.
d) Because the U.S.S.R. hadn't enough raw materials.

There was a lot of alcoholism, due to...

a) the poor life and working conditions.
b) the bad sanitation, because hospitals hadn't medicines or good equipment.
c) the stagnation in agriculture. The U.S.S.R. had to buy grain to the U.S.A.
d) the happy life conditions. They wanted to celebrate everyday.

The war of Afghanistan...

a) was a victory for the U.S.S.R.
b) began when Afghanistan destroyed Moscow.
c) killed 600,000 Soviet soldiers.
d) was a complete defeat for the U.S.S.R.

How many states composed the U.S.S.R.?

a) Fifty republics with different features.
b) 50 different states, with different religions, traditions, languages, cultures.
c) Fifteen states, for example, Belarus, Ukraine, Poland or Russia.
d) 15 states. Some of them were Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Latvia.

The Soviet Union (U.R.S.S.) had a lot of problems, for example:

a) Alcoholism, nationalism in the Soviet republics or the war of Afghanistan.
b) Stagnation in agriculture, a small army and ecologic disasters.
c) Crime, low quality of life, discrimination against women and lack of alcohol.
d) The films were very boring and it was very hot in winter.

The end of the U.R.S.S....

a) was in 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell.
b) was in 1991, when Serbia attacked Croatia and Slovenia.
c) was in 1991, when the Soviet Union disintegrated into fifteen different countries.
d) was in 1953, when Stalin died.

2- Fill the gaps:

-The nuclear disaster at _____________ affected all the _____.
-There was extreme __________ against women. It was very difficult for women to find a decent
- In the war of Afghanistan, 15,000 _______ _______ died.
- The Soviet Union was isolated from the rest of the world in ___________ and ___________.
- The U.S.S.R. was a federal state, composed of ___________ with different features.
- All the economic efforts in the U.S.S.R. were invested in the ________.

3- Link with arrows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perestroika</th>
<th>Compulsory enrollment of persons for military or naval service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glasnost</td>
<td>President of Russia in 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulag</td>
<td>The first region in the U.S.S.R. in declaring independence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorbachev</td>
<td>A dictator of Yugoslavia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josip Broz</td>
<td>Soviet concentration camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>Economic Restructuring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boris Yeltsin</td>
<td>The last president of the U.S.S.R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscription</td>
<td>Openness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4- Colour in the map the fifteen republics of the U.S.S.R.
5- Put in order:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serbia attacks Slovenia and Croatia</th>
<th>The war spreads over Yugoslavia</th>
<th>Slovenia and Croatia declare independence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tito's death</td>
<td>Peace agreements in Dayton, Ohio</td>
<td>Slovenia enters the European Union</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6- Read this text and answer the questions:

Here, you can see a Bosnian speaking about the Yugoslav War. Is a real text, from an interview.

6.a) What is a “Chetnik”?

6.b) How was life before the war?

6.c) Yugoslavia was a country very similar to Spain (different traditions, languages, same weather and economy...) and a war started there. Do you think is possible a war in Spain nowadays? Explain your opinion in English (30 words minimum)
7- Link the titles with the pictures:

| Protest for the independence of Lithuania | ![Tank Line](image1) |
| Gorbachev begins the “Perestroika” and “Glasnost” | ![Gorbachev](image2) |
| The Soviet soldiers fight in Afghanistan | ![Cartoon](image3) |
| Boris Yeltsin wins the elections in 1991 | ![Crowd](image4) |
8-Explosion at Chernobyl. Read the article and answer the questions

The Big Blast
On April 26, 1986, at 1:23 a.m., Chernobyl became the site of the world's worst nuclear power plant accident. Operators were shutting down one of the reactors for maintenance when it suddenly exploded. The blast destroyed the reactor and sent radioactive gases and particles three miles into the atmosphere above the Soviet Union. The explosion killed two plant workers. Twenty-nine other people later died from radiation exposure.

Within days, more than 120,000 people were evacuated from an 18-mile radius around the plant. As fires inside the reactor burned, helicopters dumped tons of lead, sand and other minerals on the flames. Despite these efforts, the fires burned for 10 days after the blast, continuing to release radioactive materials into the air.

Where It Went
The explosion resulted in a huge cloud that soon split into two parts. One part of the cloud moved northwest toward Poland and Scandinavia, and then southwest across central Europe. The other part of the cloud moved east across Asia, over Japan and the North Pacific, and eventually reached western North America. And, as the reactor continued to burn, it released radiation that moved south and west of the plant. But, scientists believe that in most cases, the amounts of radiation deposited outside the Soviet Union were relatively low.

Effects of the Explosion
The first few weeks following the Chernobyl blast were filled with confusion. Some European countries ordered the destruction of millions of dollars worth of contaminated produce, milk and livestock. Farmers suffered huge financial losses when countries in other parts of the world refused to import produce from Europe. A significant portion of the released radioactive material has a very long half-life. Radiation, even at low levels, can increase the incidence of cancer.

Particularly sensitive are the effects on the digestive system, blood pressure and the heart. The explosion also strained relations between the Soviet Union and other nations. Many countries were angered by the Soviet Union's delay in reporting the accidents.

Chernobyl's Legacy
The damaged reactor at Chernobyl is now buried with concrete and steel, while the other reactors at the same plant are again producing energy.

But, the disaster is still taking its toll. Some scientists predict that within the next few decades, thousands of people who were exposed to the radiation could develop cancer.

Questions
a) How long were the fires burning?
b) Which materials were used to bury the reactor?
c) Which continents were affected by the radioactive cloud?

d) Why were the farmers so economically damaged?

e) What can be the effects of radiation in human health?

f) Why were the countries angered with the Soviet Union?

9- The spread of the radiation. Read the information in the table below.

**Pollution Points**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Tracking Locations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>April 26</td>
<td>Explosion at Chernobyl (origination spot)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>April 27</td>
<td>1. Winds blow radioactive cloud northwest over Gdansk, Poland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>April 29</td>
<td>4. Radiation detected in Copenhagen, Denmark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Winds carry radioactive cloud to Prague, Czechoslovakia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>April 30</td>
<td>6. Cloud moves over Munich, West Germany.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7. Radioactive cloud reaches Geneva, Switzerland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>8. Cloud travels to Rome, Italy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>May 2</td>
<td>10. Small amounts of radiation measured near Reykjavik, Iceland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>out when it rains north of London.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>May 3</td>
<td>12. Radioactive cloud reaches Glasgow, Scotland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13. Radioactive particles detected in Ankara, Turkey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>15. Radiation detected in Damascus, Syria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>May 6</td>
<td>16. Radioactive particles reach Kuwait, the capitol of Kuwait.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17. Radioactive cloud moves over Xian, China.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>May 7</td>
<td>18. Radioactive particles reach Tokyo, Japan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>19. Slight amount of radiation detected in Richland, WA, in the U.S.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With the previous page information, mark the towns affected with the Chernobyl radiation in this map.

10-Answer the questions.

10.a) Who kidnapped Gorbachev, and why?

10.b) How did the civil war in Yugoslavia start?

10.c) What is “ethnic cleansing”?

10.d) What do you think was the main problem in the U.S.S.R.? Why?

10.e) How many years was Russia a communist country?
* You can use Internet or a Encyclopedia for this one.
GLOSSARY:

Agreement: Acuerdo.
Amazement: Asombro.
Amount: Cantidad.
Attitude: Actitud.
Breakup: Disolución, desmembramiento.
Conscription: Reclutamiento, conscripción. (Hace referencia al reclutamiento forzoso para el servicio militar.)
Cour d'etat: Golpe de estado.
Deep: Profundo.
Despite: A pesar de.
Disloyalty: Deslealtad, traición.
Dissidents: Disidentes, con una opinión contraria al gobierno.
Duty: Deber, tarea.
Effort: Esfuerzo.
Enough: Suficiente.
Entire: Entero/a.
Fact: Hecho. // In fact: De hecho.
Feature: Característica.
Former: Anterior.
Free speech: Libertad de expresión.
Hard line: De la línea dura, de los más radicales.
Hatred: Odio.
Hazard: Peligro, riesgo.
Household: (De) Casa
Infamous: Infame, tristemente célebre.
Isolated: Aislado.
Quota: Cuota.
Life expectancy: Esperanza de vida.
Mainly: Principalmente.
Major: Mayor, importante, principal.
No longer: No más.
Policy: Política.
Scarce: Escaso.
Space race: Carrera espacial.
Stagnation: Estancamiento.
Success: Éxito. No significa suceso, ¿vale?
Supply: Suministro.
Trade: Comercio, intercambio.
Two-tier: En dos niveles.
Wealth: Riqueza.

Verbs:

To fall behind: Rezagarse, quedarse atrás.
To hate: Odiar.
To heighten: Aumentar, destacar, realzar.
To invest (in): Invertir en.
To join: Unirse.
To kidnap: Secuestrar.
To lead/led/led: Guiar, dirigir, llevar.
To spring/sprang/sprung up: Surgir.
To release: Soltar, liberar.
To remove: Quitar.
To resign: Renunciar, dimitir.
To rise/rose/risen: Subir.
To spread/spread/spread: Espaciar, extender, desplegar.