*Directions: Read the paragraph and answer the questions that follow.*

In December of 1991, the Soviet Union officially collapsed and was dissolved. The process began when Boris Yeltsin was elected the first president of the Russian Federation (Russia). The communist party was outraged that a communist was not elected president and attempted to stage an unsuccessful coup of the government. After this, all fifteen Soviet republics declared independence, and these fifteen agreed to form the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as a loose federation (alliance) of former Soviet states. The formation of the CIS was the official end of the Soviet Union in December 1991.

1. Who did the Russians democratically elect as their first president?

2. Why did the communist party attempt to overthrow the government?

3. Who made up the Commonwealth of Independent States?

4. When did the Soviet Union officially dissolve? What caused the official dissolution of the Soviet Union?

As president, Yeltsin adopted a plan known as “shock therapy” which was the abrupt and immediate shift to capitalism. By 1993, the plan led to outrageous inflation rates and hardship. Yeltsin also had to deal with Chechnya as they fought to gain independence from Russia in 1991. A ceasefire was declared in 1996, but war continued even as Vladimir Putin took over as Russian president in 1999 during the first peaceful transition of power in their newly developed democracy.

5. What was Yeltsin plan to immediately change their economy to capitalism? What problems did this cause within Russia?

6. What is the name of the area of Russia refuses to grant independence to?

7. Who was elected president after Boris Yeltsin in a peaceful transition of power?

In Czechoslovakia, the collapse of communism due to economic and political problems led to the eventual split of the nation into two nations: the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993. The two ethnic groups, Czechs and Slovaks, were forced to get along under Communist rule. However, after Czechoslovakia receives independence and elects a democratic government in 1990 in a transition that was so smooth it has been nicknamed the Velvet Revolution, the political and economic differences between the two groups became more obvious. The two parties agreed to peacefully separate the Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and Slovakia However, in Yugoslavia the transition was not peaceful due to political differences, economic concerns, and nationalism. Yugoslavia had a federal system with six republics, home to many different ethnic groups: Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro. In 1945, Yugoslavia came under communist rule, and President Marshal Tito’s government was able to continually stop any desires for democratic reforms. When Tito died in 1980, the stability of the communist government began to falter. Inspired by the communist revolutions in 1989 in Poland and Hungary, the Yugoslavian republics began to push for reform. However, these reforms were often met with violent resistance from police and military. In the 1990s, republics began demanding independence. Slovenia was the first republic to get independence from Yugoslavia, followed by Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia. In Serbia and Montenegro, “ethnic cleansing” led to mass atrocities as local militias within the republics came into conflict with nationalist ethnic minorities within these republics, led by Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic. (Although Serbians are predominantly Orthodox Christians, there are large minorities of Islamic Bosnians and Croats who are Catholic living there, thus the genocide to get destroy the Muslim population in Serbia). Milosevic will be arrested in 2001, charged with “war crimes” and will die in prison in 2006. In 2006 Serbia and Montenegro split into two independent nations. Ethnic violence also occurred in the former Serbian province of Kosovo as Albanians (Muslims) and Serbs (Orthodox Christians) fought for the land.

8. What was the name given to the transition from communism to democracy in Czechoslovakia? Why was it called this?

9. What caused Czechoslovakia to be divided into the Czech Republic and Slovakia?

10. What caused political instability in Yugoslavia beginning in the 1980’s?

11. Where did ethnic cleansing occur? Why did it occur?

12. Who was Slobodan Milosevic? Why was he charged with war crimes?

The European Union (EU) was created in 1993 to promote trade and unify the European nations. One step in this direction was the creation of a single monetary unit, the Euro. Another step in strengthening this union was focusing on non-economic issues such as democratic practices, foreign policy and common defense. With the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, many former communist nations have since joined the EU. In the Americas, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was created in 1994 to encourage trade among Canada, Mexico, and the United States. These trade alliances demonstrate another step to global interdependence and a global economy.

13. What is the purpose of the European Union?

14. What is the monetary unit of the EU?

15. What does NAFTA stand for? Who belongs to NAFTA? What is its purpose?