**BBB Fall 2017**

**Worksheet #1**

**due Tuesday 9/5 [pts]**

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

Союз Советских Социалистических Республик (СССР)

The constitution of the Soviet Union united 15\* (\*for most of the latter half of the 20th century) quasi-autonomous, ethically based republics under one highly centralized federation (USSR). The constituent republics constituted lands that had previously been part of the vast Russian Empire.

It’s easiest (and logical) to group the republics into roughly these geographical categories (although be aware: some of the fiercest conflicts have been between linguistically and geographically neighboring republics):

A. Slavic (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus) *linguistically and historically connected as East Slavic peoples; Christian Orthodox and Catholic faiths*

B. Trans-Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbajian) *ancient civilizations occupying the mountainous region between the Black and Caspian seas – sharp ethnic and linguistic separation from each other; Christian Orthodox (Georgia, Aremenia) and Muslim (Azerbajian) faiths*

C. Central Asia (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kirghizstan) *distantly related linguistically (Turkic language group), Muslim (and/or Buddhist) faiths*

D. Baltic (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) *forcibly annexed to USSR after 1940. linguistically and ethnically distinct (Estonian is related only to Finnish; Latvian and Lithuanian are part of an ancient Prussian linguistic branch; late adoption of Catholic and Lutheran faiths to pagan cultures*

E. Romanian/East European (Moldova) *once part of greater Romania, linguistically romance language group*

**Note**: Soviet passports listed both citizenship (Soviet) and nationality (e.g. Uzbek, Russian, Armenian). **Jew** was the only officially listed “nationality” identification that did not correspond to its own federal-level republic. In other words, a Russian Jew and/or an Armenian Jew would both carry a passport identifying her as “Soviet” “Jew” (советский; еврей); whereas their non-Jewish neighbors would be identified as Soviet/Russian Soviet/Armenian.

**On Tuesday, you will turn in your individual 500-word report (see below). As a team, you will have 5 minutes to present slides (photos) that best represent the most striking things you want to convey about the former Republic and its monuments.**

**Assignment Guidelines:**

*Using credible library and Internet sources, including maps, encyclopedic references, official country websites, and relevant news articles, construct your “Republic Report” by answering the following questions:*

1. Describe the geographical parameters of the Republic. What are the major natural features of the area – does it have natural boundaries dividing it from neighboring countries and/or Republics? Is there a major mountain range or river? What are the salient climatic characteristics? What natural resources (crops, minerals, other) does the Republic have?

2. Describe the historical/cultural parameters to the best of your ability: what are the features of the ethnic/cultural groups that have inhabited this territory -- *religious and linguistic affiliations, pre-modern way-of-life (nomadic tribes? agricultural people?), any mention of “origin stories” for this particular group?*

3. When did this Republic become part of the USSR? For full (A) credit, describe any salient issues that accompanied the incorporation of this Republic into the Union, e.g. what did each side have to gain (or lose) in the Union?

4. Monuments. What are the major monuments boasted by the former Republic (now an independent country) today, in post-Soviet times? For full (A) credit, use your research skills to determine whether (and what) controversies have ensued over “monuments” in the transition of former Soviet identity to independent, post-Soviet national identity.

5. Status of post-Soviet country: identify the greatest challenges and areas of potential/growth facing this former Soviet republic today.

**• Turn in a 500 word report (about 100 words per question, above) *in your own words* about “your” Republic. Your imagined audience is a friend who suddenly found out that they got a Peace Corps placement in a medium-sized town in “your” Republic. In short, this is a briefing about historical, cultural, and geographical context, designed to help your friend sound less-than-ignorant and respectfully curious about history-battered society to which he/she is traveling. For maximum points, this is neither a “squishy” tourist pitch nor a dry paraphrase of Wikipedia. Instead, try to convey accurate factual information in an engaging framework, i.e. choose an angle (“thesis”) to help unify your assessment of this republic’s past and future.**