

Stalin and the USSR

Getting power

- Returned from exile after February Revolution, became editor of Pravda.
- Commissar for Nationalities, then commander during Civil War, then **General Secretary of the Communist Party**.
- Lenin died – struggle for power between **Leon Trotsky, Lev Kamenev, Gregory Zinoviev, and Stalin**.
 - Stalin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev allied against Trotsky.
 - Lenin's damning comments about Stalin not made public.
- Disagreements about how to industrialise Russia's backward economy.
 - Trotsky believed that the only way was to have Permanent Revolution in other countries.
 - Some believed that rapid industrialisation was impossible.
 - Stalin believed in **Socialism in One Country**.
- Stalin wins, his theory was adopted as party policy.
 - Trotsky removed from power, and later exiled.
 - Kamenev and Zinoviev later expelled, but later again taken back.

Socialism in One Country

- Stalin believed they could no longer rely on worldwide revolution.
- Instead, they had to do 100 years of industrialisation in 10.
- He ended the **New Economic Policy**.
 - Destroyed ALL elements of private enterprise.
 - **Collectivisation**.
 - **Five-Year Plans** (3 – the last was cut short due to German invasion).

Propaganda

- Necessary to achieve rapid change.
- Newspapers, radio, cinema, writers, artists all tightly controlled and all glorified Stalin.
- Five-Year Plan targets declared over-fulfilled, cult of personality developed around Stalin.
 - Towns were named after him.
 - Statues, poems, plays, novels in his honour.
 - Known as '**vohd**', given ridiculous titles like 'Brilliant Genius of Humanity'.
 - History rewritten to give Stalin a bigger role in the revolution esp. at expense of Trotsky.

Industrialisation

- Plans emphasised unrealistic goals for coal and iron (330% expansion in heavy industry).
- New industrial centres were built:
 - Iron and steel works, car and tractor factories, ag. machinery, oil refineries.
 - Massive steelworks at **Magnitogorsk**.
- Public works (hailed as successes, but built using slave labour – lots died):
 - White Sea-Baltic Canal (turned out to be too shallow), railway, hydroelectric dam, Moscow Underground.
- Results:
 - Impressive increase in output of heavy industry (incl. electricity).
 - Widespread shortages of consumer goods and food, rationing.
 - Terror used when targets weren't met.
 - Managers accused of sabotage, workers severely disciplined for minor offences.
 - Also rewarded with high wages, praise of hard work.
 - Bearable because work, schooling, and free basic health care were provided.
 - Diseases (malaria, typhus, cholera) were tackled.
 - More careers were open to women, and day care centres were set up.
 - Many in the West looked to USSR as inspiration.
 - USSR became industrially self-sufficient and one of the most powerful in the world.

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Collectivisation

- Transforming Soviet agriculture from individual farms to large state collective farms (**kolkhoz**), each with 50-100 families working on it.
- Aim was to make farming more efficient – could sustain urban population.
- Man-made famine:
 - Peasants resisted, and Stalin responded with terror (focus on **kulaks** – wealthy peasants).
 - Deported 5 million to **gulags**, defeated peasants with troops, used famine.
 - Raised Ukraine's grain quota by 44%.
 - Members of farms not allowed to have grain themselves before fulfilling the quota.
 - Death toll of about 6 million (although it is disputed).
- Results:
 - Huge human cost – about 10 million.
 - Disaster from ag. point of view – decline in livestock.
 - Increased mechanisation, things eventually recovered.

Purges/Great Terror

- Stalin became paranoid about opposition – also, this way he could blame failures on traitors.
- Triggered by murder of **Sergei Kirov** (ally of Stalin, but he won more votes than him).
 - Almost certainly murdered by Stalin, who then used his murder as an excuse.
- **NKVD** arrested millions (vast majority innocent), led to atmosphere of fear.
 - Informers everywhere – neighbours, your own children.
- Minorities, religious people, industrial managers targeted – but esp. **Old Bolsheviks** (members of party before revolution), whom Stalin saw as rivals.
- Stalin appointed **Yezhov**, who intensified it. Stalin later blamed him, then shot him for it.
- People either shot or (majority) sent to gulags (e.g. **Kolyma**).
 - Gulags provided slave labour to help industrialisation.
 - Public works, mining.
 - Harsh conditions, inadequate food, severe weather, torture.
 - Many died.
- Death toll:
 - Kremlin went to great lengths to cover it up - they concealed censuses by shooting entire board of staff.
 - But even the revised census showed 15 million deaths.
 - Mass graves are still found to this day.

Stalin – an assessment

- He made Russia a world power (both industrially and by his success in war).
- Many Russians today still see him as a great war leader.

Case Study: Show Trials (see other notes)

Stalinist State at War

- Stalin initially feared Hitler's growing power and looked for allies against him. However, France and Britain were wary of communism and thought the USSR was weak.
- The Germans took advantage and offered a deal.
 - **Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact** state that the two countries wouldn't attack each

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- other.
 - It divided Poland between them, and promised the USSR land it had lost in 1918.
- Germany invades Russia – **Operation Barbarossa**.
 - Hitler decided to do this as he failed in the Battle of Britain.
 - 3 million German soldiers.
 - Initially a success as purges had depleted the Red Army – in some places, Germans were welcomed as liberators.
- Stalin refused to believe that Hitler would attack, despite being warned – he was shocked.
 - He appealed to traditional Russian patriotism.
 - Eased persecution of the Orthodox Church to get its support against the Germans.
 - **Scorched earth** policy.
 - **Partisan units** were formed behind German lines to wage guerilla campaign.
 - **Order No. 270** prohibited surrender – punishment: killed on the spot, families subject to arrest and gulags.
 - NKVD waited behind and shot anyone retreating.
- Total war – all resources directed towards victory.
 - Millions of workers and 2,500 factories were moved to the east, out of German reach.
 - **Tankograd** – used to make tractors, now tanks.
 - Conditions for ordinary Russians were very harsh.
 - Men, 18-50, were conscripted (also 1 million women).
 - Women made up half of factory workers and 3/4 of collective farmers.
 - Workers lived in poorly constructed, cold barracks.
 - Very small food rations.
 - All holidays and leave were cancelled – offenders sent to gulags.
- Russians motivated by cruelty of Germans – shot 100,000s POWs, attacked civilians.
- Russians begin to win.
 - Germans couldn't deal with the cold, Stalin stopped interfering in military decision-making – good generals developed better tactics.
 - Turning point: Russians win at **Stalingrad**.
 - Then, at **Kursk**. Then they went on the offensive.
 - They drove the Germans out and continued into Europe.
 - In Germany, they behaved with great brutality. They captured Berlin by May.
- Stalin's crimes.
 - He deported anyone of suspect nationality, carried out wide-scale executions (**Katyn Forest** – killed Polish officers).
 - Declared the 1 million recovered Soviet POWs as traitors – shot or sent to gulags.
- Contribution to Allied success:
 - This decided the outcome of WWII – made Allied invasion of France and Germany possible.
 - Russia had 26 million dead (10 million were soldiers).

USSR NOW A LEADING WORLD POWER. NEXT... THE COLD WAR.

Exam Questions:

- 2013: How did Stalin transform the Soviet economy and/or use show trials to consolidate his power?
- 2012: What were the main characteristics of Stalin's rule in Russia?
- 2011: To what extent did Lenin and/or Stalin bring about social and economic change?
- 2010: How effective were the internal and external policies of Josef Stalin?
- 2009: How did dictators use propaganda and/or terror to maintain their power?
- 2008: What did Lenin and Stalin contribute to communism in Russia?
- 2007: How significant was the role played by the Soviet Union in World War II?
- 2006: To what extent did Stalin transform the society and economy of the Soviet Union?

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- Sample Paper: How successful were Stalin in Russia and/or Mussolini in Italy in using the personality cult as an instrument of propaganda?