Stalin and the USSR

Getting power
- Returned from exile after February Revolution, became editor of Pravda.
- Commisar for Nationalities, then commander during Civil War, then General Secretary of the Communist Party.
  - 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.
Stalin and the USSR

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
Stalin and the USSR

- 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?
Stalin and the USSR

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