

The March Revolution

During WWI the czar stepped down and the Duma set up a provisional government to replace the czar. These men began preparing a new Russian constitution and also kept fighting the war. Russian soldiers had no weapons, no food and no hope. Many soldiers deserted the Russian army and returned home.

Around Russia, workers and soldiers set up councils called **soviets**. Soviet, in Russian means "council"; this served as the elected representatives of the workers and of the peasants. The growth of these soviets led to the appearance of Vladimir Lenin. Vladimir Lenin was a revolutionary leader who came back to Russia after being exiled. His ideas supported Marxism and communism. It encouraged the working class to overthrow of the government. *The Communist Manifesto* written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels was used to help strengthen the communist movement. Communism sought to establish a classless society. Lenin believed that this would break Russia free from capitalism and welcome in a new era of prosperity.

Lenin created a group called the Bolsheviks, which in Russian means the majority to try and help Russia get back on its feet. Lenin went right to work giving speeches and trying to win the support of the people. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, another Marxist revolutionary promised the hungry, war-weary Russians, "Peace, Land and Bread."

In November 1917 the Bolsheviks with the help of squads of Red Guards, armed factory workers, and sailors from Russian fleets began attacking the provisional government. The provisional government had lost all its support and gave up to the Bolsheviks. Following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 the Communists spent the next several years trying to rebuild Russia. For three years the communists were involved with a civil war with men who opposed communist rule. Once they were defeated the Bolsheviks had complete control over Russia.

1. Who was Vladimir Lenin?
2. How did he and the Bolsheviks come to power?

In March 1921, Lenin created his New Economic Policy (NEP) which was a modified version of a capitalist system. By doing this Lenin allowed the peasants to sell their produce openly. Retail stores, as well as small industries could now be privately owned and operated. However heavy industry, banking, and mines remained in the hands of the government.

In 1922, Lenin and the Communists formally created a new state called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which is also known as the U.S.S.R, or as the Soviet Union. By this time a revived market and a good harvest had brought an end to the famine. Agriculture improved over 75% from 1917-1922. The NEP was the plan that saved the Soviet Union from complete disaster. Lenin and other Communists only planned for this to be a short solution to Russia's problems.

Lenin and his ideas would start the foundation of the future Russia. By willingly changing his policies to suit new situations, he implied that the party should follow any course that would ultimately lead to communism. Lenin left his legacy on Russian government and planned to make an even bigger contribution but died in 1924.

1. What did the NEP do to help Russia?

Lenin died in 1924, but his ideas lived on; however he did not choose a successor. There were two candidates for the job, Leon Trotsky and Joseph Stalin. Lenin made it clear in a letter that he did not

want Stalin to lead because of his cruel tactics, but since no selection was made a fight ensued over power.

Trotsky was the Commissar of War, and a hero of the revolution. He was a hero to the people, but had angered many inside the party. Joseph Stalin was the General Secretary and had amassed great power in the communist party. Trotsky was a brilliant speaker, and had the ability to gain people's support. Trotsky knew that the only way he would win power would be to publish the letter that Lenin wrote condemning Stalin, It read:

"Comrade Stalin, having become General Secretary, has concentrated unlimited power in his hands, and I am not sure he will always be capable of using that authority with sufficient caution. Comrade Trotsky, on the other hand, as his struggle against the CC... has already proven, is distinguished not only by outstanding ability. He is personally perhaps the most capable man in the present CC, but he has displayed excessive self-assurance and shown excessive pre-occupation with the purely administrative side of the work..."

Trotsky was certain that this letter would help him win the power in Russia, if he were to release it to the press. But Stalin forced Trotsky from his position as war commissar. Stalin and his supporters also forced out all of Trotsky's supporters. In 1927 Trotsky was expelled from the Communist Party altogether, and was then exiled to Central Asia in 1929. Slowly over the years from 1926-1930 Stalin began to phase out most of his opposition and started to build his own dictatorial powers.

1. What did Lenin's letter say about Stalin?

2. How did he gain power?

Stalin's Five Year Plan

Stalin believed that the NEP was too slow to produce results so he disregarded it. Instead he imposed his Five Year Plan, which called for expedient agricultural production and rapid industrialization.

The first Five Year Plan introduced in 1928, concentrated on the development of iron and steel, machine-tools, electric power and transport. He justified these demands by claiming that if rapid industrialization did not take place, the Soviet Union would not be able to defend itself against an invasion from capitalist countries in the west. If the worker's did not work hard enough, they were accused of trying to sabotage the Five Year Plan and if found guilty could be shot or sent to work as forced labor in the Baltic Sea area or Siberia.

The agricultural part of his Five Year Plan focused was to ruthlessly take over private farms and combining them into state owned enterprises. This process was known as collectivization, this proposal involved small farmers joining farms to form large state controlled farms. Stalin believed this policy would lead to increased production. If any person did not go along with his plan they were exiled, deported and even killed. Thousands of people were executed and an estimated 5 million were deported to Siberia, where 25% died on the way.

During the years of the Five Year Plans thousands of Russians died protecting their farms, many more died due to famines caused by Stalin. However Stalin's plans did industrialize Russia. In 1939, only two countries in the world produced more than Russia, the United States and Germany.

1. What was the purpose of the Five Year Plan?

2. How did Stalin justify rapid industrialization?
3. What was collectivization?

The Great Purge

To keep Russia in check Stalin had to use certain techniques to keep people in line. One was police terror. Stalin used a police force to crush his opposition. The secret police were used to monitor people's activities. They monitored phone calls, read mail and planted informers everywhere. Even children would tell things they heard at home. The secret police arrested and executed millions of so-called traitors. One example of this force was the Great Purge.

Stalin had absolute power but even with that he always felt that rival political parties were plotting against him. From 1936-1938 he launched the Great Purge. In this reign of terror, Stalin and his secret police cracked down on all people who disagreed with Stalin's politics, especially Old Bolsheviks. They were all found guilty and were eventually executed. He soon widened his search to include war heroes, industrial managers, writers and even ordinary citizens.

Stalin used public trials to get men to confess to crimes they didn't commit. These confessions of guilt were made after the prolonged torture or to save a family members life. All confessors were either sent to forced-labor camps or were executed. During the purge at least four million people were purged, with about 800,000 executed.

1. What was the Great Purge?
2. What were some reasons Stalin used this tactic?

Birth of Totalitarianism

Totalitarianism describes modern regimes in which the state regulates nearly every aspect of public and private behavior. Totalitarian regimes mobilize entire populations in support of the state and a political ideology, and do not tolerate activities by individuals or groups such as labor unions, churches and political parties that are not directed toward the state's goals. Some tactics used by totalitarian governments are:

- a. A single mass party, hierarchically organized, typically led by one man.
- b. maintain power by means of secret police
- c. propaganda: distributed through the state-controlled mass media
- d. regulation and restriction of free discussion and criticism
- e. Widespread use of terror tactics
- f. Central control and direction of the entire economy

1. Define totalitarianism.
2. Explain how these tactics can take away a persons freedom.