

After World War One the world itself was going through changes. Every country that was affected by the war was now trying to rebuild. It was through this rebuilding that new forms of government were starting to form. These new governments would lead to the tragic end to peace in Europe and would start a second world war.

Communism

As a political movement, communism seeks to establish a classless society. A major force in world politics since the early 20th century, modern communism is generally associated with *The Communist Manifesto* of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, according to which the capitalist profit-based system of private ownership is replaced by a communist society in which the means of production are communally owned.

Communism was adopted by the Bolshevik Party in Russia under Vladimir Lenin. The birth of communism saved Russia from more loss in World War I. Because of Lenin, the Russians were able to pull out of the war to save the country, but at the same time hurt the country.

Following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 the Communists spent the next several years trying to rebuild Russia and solidify their control over the state. 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.

From the years 1919-1924 Lenin tried to rebuild Russia. First they used a policy known as war communism, which was tight control over the Russian economy. When that did not work Lenin created the New Economic Policy, or NEP. This policy placed the major industries in government hands, but also allowed for private businesses to form. This helped Russia slowly rebuild.

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.

1. What is communism?
2. How did communism both save and hurt Russia after WWI?
3. What is war communism?
4. What was Lenin's NEP?

Trotsky vs. Stalin

Trotsky was the Commissar of War, a hero of the revolution, and victor of the Civil War. Trotsky had quite a reputation. He was a hero to the people, but had angered many inside the party. This man would not be an easy opponent for Stalin. 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 with the help of Zinoviev and Kamenev forced Trotsky from his position as war commissar. Stalin suggested that old party activists like themselves had more right to lead the Bolsheviks than Trotsky, who had only joined the party in 1917. The triumvirate as they were known 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.

After using Zinoviev and Kamenev to gain power, Stalin eventually forced them out of the Communist Party. 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. Why would Trotsky have made a good leader?
2. How would Lenin's letter have helped Trotsky gain power?
3. How did Stalin end the fight over power with Trotsky?
4. How did Stalin build his dictatorial powers?

Stalin's Five Year Plan

When Stalin took full control over Russia, Lenin's NEP was still in place. 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. Every factory had large display boards built that showed the output of workers. Those that failed to reach the required targets were publicly humiliated. Records were kept of workers' lateness, absenteeism and bad workmanship. If the worker's record was poor, he was 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 on the construction of large factories and industries in the name of communism. Another policy 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 forces to form large-scale units. 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.

The Five Year Plan was said to be done for Communism, but in reality it was done for totalitarianism. The people did not get a share in the profits, and had no choices in regard to participation. 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 point of the Five Year Plan?
2. How did Stalin justify rapid industrialization?
3. What was collectivization?
4. What happened to people that did not go along with Stalin's plan?
5. Was it successful?

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 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. In 1936 Nikolai Bukharin, Alexei Rykov, Genrikh Yagoda, Nikolai Krestinsky and Christian Rakovsky were arrested and accused of being involved with Leon Trotsky in a plot against Stalin. These men were prominent members of the Communist Party. The Old Bolshevik men were party activists from the old days and did not like Stalin. 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. They were charged with a wide number of crimes, from counterrevolutionary plots to failure to meet production quotas.

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. Why did Stalin use police terror?
2. What was the Great Purge?
3. Why did he focus on Old Bolsheviks?
4. 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.

Stalinist Quotes

Ideas are more powerful than guns. We would not let our enemies have guns, why should we let them have ideas- Stalin

Death solves all problems - no man, no problem- Stalin