Stalin & the USSR

Dictatorship & Democracy, 1919-45
Elements

- Rise to Power
- Social & Economic Policy
- The Purges & The Show Trials
- Propaganda, The Cult of Personality
- Foreign Policy and World War 2
Questions to Answer

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Joseph Stalin

- Born Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili
  - Gori, Georgia - 1879
- Modest upbringing – son of a cobblcer
- Abandoned study for priesthood to become a political activist.
- 1917 Revolution – Minor Role
- Under Lenin – Slowly built-up his profile – Gen Sec in 1922
- After Lenin – Competed with Kamenev, Zinoviev & Trotsky
- Led USSR to victory over Nazi Germany in WW2
- Leader of USSR for 29 years
- Regarded as one of History’s most brutal dictators
- Died March 1953 following a stroke
Early Life

- Son of a cobbler & a seamstress
- Moved 9 times before age 10
- Father an abusive alcoholic, young Stalin beaten regularly
- Smallpox age 7 leaves him scarred for life
- Won scholarship to religious school - star pupil
- Later joins a seminary
- Discovers Marxism and becomes and atheist
- Joins the Bolsheviks and becomes an important organiser and activist
- Imprisoned many times 1903-1917 for anti-regime activities
- Takes over Pravda in early 1917
Stalin & the Revolution

- Party Congress 1919 – what to you notice about Stalin?
Stalin & the Revolution, Civil War

- Between the Revolutions – Stalin supported Lenin’s appeal for a new, permanent revolution
  - This elevated him to a prominent position within the party
- Took control of hiding and protecting Lenin and takes charge in Lenin’s absence
- After October – he plays a minor role
- Opposes Trotsky’s military command and orders the deaths of Tsarist officers hired by the Reds
- Implements policies of shooting deserters and execution of “counter revolutionaries”
After Lenin – The Power Struggle

- 1920-22: Lenin and Trotsky disagree on policy
- Stalin, Zinoviev & Kamenev ally with Lenin – ‘Ban on Factions’
- Stalin appointed to various important positions as an ally of Lenin, including:
  - Central Committee of the Party
  - Commissar for Nationalities Affairs
  - 1922 – General Secretary
- This allows him place key allies in important roles throughout the regime.
After Lenin – The Power Struggle

- Lenin’s Testament:
  - “Comrade Stalin, having become Secretary-General, has unlimited authority concentrated in his hands, and I am not sure whether he will always be capable of using that authority with sufficient caution…”
  - “Stalin is too rude and this defect, although quite tolerable in our midst and in dealing among us Communists, becomes intolerable in a Secretary-General. That is why I suggest that the comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that post and appointing another man in his stead who in all other respects differs from Comrade Stalin in having only one advantage, namely, that of being more tolerant, more loyal, more polite and more considerate to the comrades, less capricious, etc.”
After Lenin – The Power Struggle

- The Candidates

- Grigory Zinoviev

- Leon Trotsky

- Lev Kamenev
After Lenin – The Power Struggle

- Stalin allies himself with Zinoviev & Kamenev against Trotsky – Lenin’s testament suppressed.
After Lenin – The Power Struggle

- Stalin then proceeds to openly attack Zinoviev & Kamenev
- Z & K ally with Trotsky
- Socialism in One Country vs Permanent Revolution
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opposing Views</th>
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<td>Establish and entrench the Revolution at home first through firm control of industrial and agricultural production. Rapidly industrialise and modernise the country.</td>
<td>Make immediate moves to spread the revolution across Europe and the world by actively encouraging and supporting Revolutionary parties and movements in other countries.</td>
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14th Party Congress, 1925
• Expelled from the central committee in 1927
• Sent in to exile in 1929
• Assassinated on Stalin’s orders in Mexico, 1940

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• Tried and executed in 1936 at the Trial of the Sixteen during Stalin’s Purges

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• Nikolai Bukharin – Stalin’s ally against the others
• Courts Zinoviev & Kamenev after Trotsky’s exile
• Tried and executed in 1938 at the Trial of the Twenty-One during Stalin’s Purges
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Five Year Plans

- Rapidly industrialise the country through a fast-paced and highly organised development of **heavy industry**
- Workers given **targets** for productivity

Why is Stalin’s face in this poster?
Magnitogorsk: Model for the Industrialised City

- Pre-planned and rapidly constructed
- Built with foreign help
  - USA, Germany etc
- Ultimately leads to huge increases in production of steel by 1939
- Conditions?
Programme of Public Works

- Rapid and wide-ranging programme designed to champion, highlight and emphasise the success of the Five Year Plans
- The White Sea-Baltic & Moscow Volga Canals
- The Dnieper Hydro-Electric Dam
- The Moscow Underground
- The Moscow-Donets railway
- Slave Labour
Gulags

- Vast system of prison camps
- Located in most isolated areas
- Kulaks, Dissidents, Old Bolsheviks
- Prisoners used as slave labour
- Millions imprisoned, many never return home.
Alexei Stakhanov: Hero of the Workers!

• Mined 102 tonnes of coal in a single shift
• Held up as an example for all workers
• A Propaganda Tool
• Stakhanovite Movement
Life in a Soviet City – Social Change

- Housing provided
- More opportunities for women
- Creche and day-care for workers
- Access to education
- Improved healthcare
World View – The Soviet Alternative

- Well known western celebrities and intellectuals visit Russia and extol the virtues of the new system:
  - George Bernard Shaw
  - HG Wells

Does everyone buy it?
Rural Change - Collectivisation

- Small farms reorganised into giant ‘Kolkhoz’
- 50-100 families per collective farm
- Release workers for the cities
- Improve productivity through new methods and modern machinery
- Fiercely resisted by the Kulaks
- Enforcement by NKVD
Enforcing Collectivisation: Famine in Ukraine - *Holodomor*

- Ukrainian Kulaks used as example to the rest of the country
- Production **targets** set unattainably high
- Resulting Famine kills millions
- **Genocide?**
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## USSR NEWS NOW! Moscow
- Magnitogorsk
- Public Works Schemes
- Aleksei Stakhanovite
  - Rewards
- International Reaction
  - The Soviet Alternative
- Living & Housing
- Collectivisation

## BBC LONDON
- Collectivisation
- Famine in Ukraine
- Persecution of Kulaks
- NKVD & The Gulags
  - Sanctions
Five Year Plans

- 1928-32, 1933-37, 1938-41
- Use of Propaganda
- Focus on Heavy Goods
  - Shortage of everyday consumables
- Examples
  - Magnitogorsk
- Programme of Public Works
- Table of Figures
- Targets
  - Rewards & Sanctions
- Social Effects
  - Living Standards, Working & Housing Conditions
  - Deaths
- World View of “The Soviet Alternative”
Collectivisation

- FYP1 – Collectivisation
  - Modernise production & equipment
  - Efficiency – create stockpiles for export
  - Free up workers for industrial cities
- 1 Kolkhoz = 50-100 families
- Resistance – Kulaks
- Ukraine – Man-made famine
- Results
  - Mechanisation
  - Slow progress
  - Huge death toll
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Consolidating Power
The Great Terror: 1934-39

- Important Terms & People:
  - Purge – The Great Purges
  - Sergei Kirov
  - The NKVD
  - Old Bolsheviks
  - Genrikh Yagoda
  - Nikolai Yezhov
  - Levrentiy Beria
  - Kolyma
You are Stalin...

It’s 1934. You are happily ensconced at the *de facto* leader of the Soviet Union. Your 5 year plans are changing the country from an agrarian, medieval-level country into an industrial powerhouse. However, lots of people are concerned and unhappy about their lots in life: their work is hard, their living conditions not as great as they had been promised by the revolution. Against this background, an old friend an ally, Sergei Kirov, receives more votes than you do at the 1934 party congress.

What do you do?
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<td><strong>Call Sergei into your office. Congratulate him on his success at the Congress and tell him that you think it’s time he played a more prominent role in the government. As a key ally and prominent figure, he’ll be promoted to a more senior position and will start to appear as a major figure in your propaganda material.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Arrange for a sustained media campaign to blacken Sergei Kirov’s name so that his popularity is checked. Use this campaign to, slowly and over an extended period of time, weed him out of his important positions until he eventually chooses exile and sets himself up in some South American paradise to live out his days in relative peace and comfort.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Arrange for the immediate murder of Sergei Kirov. Blame his death on ‘counter revolutionary elements’ intent on bringing down the Revolution. Use this to begin a major clamp-down on any and all opponents, both of the party more generally and you personally. Empower the NKVD to arrest, detain, imprison and summarily execute any and all potential trouble-makers.</strong></td>
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What kind of person does this?
The Great Terror / The Great Purges

- Thousands of citizens summarily arrested and/or executed
- Particular targets:
  - Provincial party leaders
  - Leaders of national minorities
  - Senior figures in the government and industry
  - Former nobles and Tsarists
  - Religious (not just priests)
  - Foreigners, or people with foreign connections
  - Old Bolsheviks
- Why these?
NKVD - Tactics

- Arrests at night
- Arrests made in prolific numbers
- Neighbours / Co-workers / **CHILDREN** encouraged to inform on … Neighbours / Co-workers / **FAMILIES**
- Victims tortured and forced to confess to crimes against Stalin and the regime
- Outcomes:
  - Execution
  - Gulags – imprisonment and slave labour
- Effects?
NKVD - Leadership

- Genrikh Yagoda
- Nikolai Yezhov
- Levrentiy Beria
Results

- Death Toll

- Fear

- Loyalty?
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What do you know already?
What are the Characteristics of a Trial?
You’re putting on a TV show...

- What do you need?
Three “Trials”

- Trial of the Sixteen
  - Zinoviev & Kamenev
  - ‘Trotsky-Zinoviev Centre’

- Trial of the Seventeen
  - Radek, Pyatakov
  - ‘Anti-Soviet Trotskyist Centre’

- Trial of the Twenty-One
  - Bukharin, Yagoda
  - ‘Bloc of Rights and Trotskyists’
The Prosecutor – Andrey Vyshinsky
I now conclude, comrades judges. The last hour is approaching, the hour of reckoning for these people who have committed grave crimes against our great country. It is the last hour of reckoning for these people who took up arms against our dearest and most beloved, against the beloved leaders of our Party and our country, against Stalin, Kaganovich, Voroshilov, Orjonikidze, Zhdanov, Postyshev, Kossior and other leaders of our land of victorious, growing and flourishing, new, socialist society. A sad and shameful end awaits these people who were once in our ranks, although they were never distinguished for either staunchness or loyalty to the cause of socialism.

You, however, a handful of downright counter-revolutionaries, representatives of the vanguard of the international counterrevolution, you took up arms against the vanguard of the world proletarian revolution! You took up arms against the liberty and happiness of the peoples....Before us are criminals, dangerous, hardened, cruel and ruthless towards our people, towards our ideals, towards the leaders of our struggle, the leaders of the land of Soviets, the leaders of the toilers of the whole world!

The enemy is cunning. A cunning enemy must not be spared. The whole people rose to its feet as soon as these ghastly crimes became known. The whole people is quivering with indignation and I, as the representative of the state prosecution, join my anger, the indignant voice of the state prosecutor, to the rumbling of the voices of millions!

I want to conclude by reminding you, comrades judges, of those demands which the law makes in cases of the gravest crimes against the state. I take the liberty of reminding you that it is your duty, once you find these people, all sixteen of them, guilty of crimes against the state, to apply to them in full measure those articles of the law which have been preferred against them by the prosecution.

I demand that dogs gone mad should be shot - every one of them!
**The President:** Accused Krestinsky, do you plead guilty to the charges brought against you?

**Krestinsky:** I plead not guilty. I am not a Trotskyite. I was never a member of the bloc of Rights and Trotskyites, of whose existence I was not aware. Nor have I committed any of the crimes with which I personally am charged, in particular I plead not guilty to the charge of having had connections with the German intelligence service.

**The President:** Do you corroborate the confession you made at the preliminary investigation?

**Krestinsky:** Yes, at the preliminary investigation I confessed, but I have never been a Trotskyite.

**The President:** I repeat the question, do you plead guilty?

**Krestinsky:** Before my arrest I was a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) and I remain one now.

**The President:** Do you plead guilty to the charge of participating in espionage activities and of participating in terrorist activities?

**Krestinsky:** I have never been a Trotskyite, I have never belonged to the bloc of Rights and Trotskyites and have not committed a single crime.

**Krestinsky 2**

**Krestinsky:** Yesterday, under the influence of a momentary keen feeling of false shame, evoked by the atmosphere of the dock and the painful impression created by the public reading of the indictment, which was aggravated by my poor health, I could not bring myself to tell the truth, I could not bring myself to say that I was guilty. And instead of saying, "Yes, I am guilty," I almost mechanically answered, "No, I am not guilty."

**Vyshinsky:** Mechanically?

**Krestinsky:** In the face of world public opinion, I had not the strength to admit the truth that I had been conducting a Trotskyite struggle all along. I request the Court to register my statement that I fully and completely admit that I am guilty of all the gravest charges brought against me personally, and that I admit my complete responsibility for the treason and treachery I have committed.
The First Show Trial - 1936

- **Accused:** Kamenev, Zinoviev

- **Charges:** Murdering Kirov, plotting to murder Stalin, working with Trotskyites.

- **Trial:** Forced confessions, Learning off lines, Confessions as evidence, guilty pleas, executed.
The Second Show Trial - 1937

- **Accused:** Radek, Pyatakov, 15 others.

- **Charges:** conspiring with Germany and Japan against the USSR, sabotage of the Five Year Plans.

- **Trial:** They confess and are found guilty. 13 executed, 4 sent to labour camps.
The Third Show Trial, 1938

- **Accused:** Bukharin, Rykov, Yagoda, 18 others.

- **Charges:** membership of the "Anti-Soviet Block of Rightists and Trotskyites", economic sabotage, plotting to murder Stalin.

- **Trial:** All plead guilty and are executed. Bukharin pleads guilty to save wife and children.
Effects...
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Propaganda

- What is propaganda?

- What types of media were at Stalin’s disposal to use for propaganda purposes?

- Goals:
  - 5 year plans…
  - Cult of personality
    - Why?
The ‘gardener of human happiness’

• Stalin was portrayed as God-like, infallible

• All 5 Year Plan goals heavily over-achieved
  • => Stalin a genius
  • => Stalin a great strategic thinker

• History re-written
  • Prominent role in revolution
  • At whose expense…?
  • Why?
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