

Life in Communist Russia

Headings	Notes
COMMUNISM AND THE BOLSHEVIKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In February 1917, Tsar (Emperor) Nicholas II (Romanov Dynasty) was forced to step down. The provisional government that replaced the Tsar was overthrown in the October Revolution of 1917 by Vladimir Lenin and his followers, the Bolsheviks.
COMMUNISM TAKES ROOT IN RUSSIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bolshevik Party believed in the communist ideas of Karl Marx; that the working class should stage revolutions to end private ownership & distribute wealth, making society 'classless'. Communism is a system of government where the state controls all aspects of the economy (property, business and jobs) and of society, with limited rights for individuals. Religion was discouraged. Russia was the first communist state. Lenin's government banned all other political parties, took control of the banks and factories and negotiated a peace treaty with Germany to end Russia's involvement in World War I.
THE RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 1917, civil war broke out between the Bolshevik Red Army (led by Leon Trotsky), and the White Army (an alliance of anti-communist groups). In July 1918, Tsar Nicholas II, his wife and their five children were executed by the Bolsheviks. In 1922, the White Army was fully defeated and Russia was officially renamed the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), commonly known as the Soviet Union.
STALIN'S RISE TO POWER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 1922, Lenin suffered two strokes and wrote his Testament, a document outlining his vision for the future of communism. He was very critical of Josef Stalin, who was General Secretary of the Party from 1922.
LENN'S DEATH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the 21st January 1924, Lenin died. A power struggle immediately began between the senior members of the Party: Lev Kamenev, Grigory Zinoviev, Nikolai Bukharin, Leon Trotsky and Josef Stalin. Leon Trotsky was well liked by the ordinary Party members and had successfully led the Red Army during the Civil War. Lenin had thought him the 'most capable'; other leaders worried that he would have too much power.

Keywords	Summary
Tsar Nicholas II	Karl Marx
Romanov Dynasty	
October Revolution	
Vladimir Lenin	USSR
Bolsheviks	Soviet Union
Communism	Testament
Red Army	Leon Trotsky
White Army	Josef Stalin

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STALIN'S RISE TO POWER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stalin seized control of Lenin's funeral arrangements and gave the main speech there. He had Kamanev and Zinoview expel Trotsky from the Party and from the Soviet Union. Then he forced them out of their government positions and replaced them with his supporters. Socialism in One Country was Stalin's plan to first strengthen communism in the Soviet Union before spreading it further afield. By 1928, Stalin had become the absolute ruler of the Soviet Union, creating a dictatorship.
DAILY LIFE IN STALIN'S RUSSIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 1927, Stalin introduced collectivisation: the joining of small, unproductive farms together to create large, state-owned farms.
ECONOMIC POLICIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many farmers refused to surrender their farms. Over 2.5 million kulaks (wealthy independent farmers) were removed and sent to gulags (forced labour camps) or executed. By 1936, 90% of farmland had been collectivised. Stalin launched three Five-Year Plans to boost industrialisation. Each was a set of targets (and policies designed to meet them over a period of five years. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The First Five-Year Plans (1928-1932) focused on heavy industry and the production of coal, oil, steel and electricity. Its targets were unrealistic, but improvements were made. The Second Five-Year Plan (1933-1937) focused on industry, transport and the production of consumer goods. The Moscow Underground was built, as were canal and rail links. The Third Five-Year Plan (1938-1941) was cut short due to World War II. Production of arms and ammunition became the focus. Shortages of everyday goods were common and food was rationed. Severe famines followed. Many works received an apartment, free schooling and free basic healthcare. The most productive workers received rewards or were used as poster figures in propaganda.
TERROR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stalin was a dictator – someone who has gained almost complete control over their country and uses a variety of means (particularly terror and propaganda) to hold onto power. In 1934, the Cheka (secret police) were reorganised and renamed the NKVD. They arrested (and sometimes tortured/executed) 'enemies of the state'.

Keywords	Summary
Socialism in One Country	
Absolute Ruler	Dictator
Collectivisation	Cheka
Kulaks	NKVD
Gulags	
Five Year Plans	
Shortages	Enemies of the state
Famine	

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TERROR	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The NKVD ran the gulags. Around 30,000 gulags existed throughout the Soviet Union.• The violence, extreme weather, hard labour, poor food rations and unsanitary conditions led to high death rates. Over 1 million people died in the gulags between 1934 to 1953.• In 1934, Stalin began a purge of his party, removing all those who he believed were challenging his authority. He used show trials (a staged trial held in public to influence popular opinion; it was also a method of propaganda) in order to remove his enemies. Defendants in the show trials had been tortured for their confessions while their families were threatened with arrest/torture.• The Trial of the Sixteen (August 1936): Sixteen Communist Party leaders (including Zinoviev and Kamenev) were tried for the assassination of a man called Sergei Kirov and for attempting to overthrow the government.• The Trial of the Seventeen (January 1937): Seventeen current and former leading Bolsheviks were tried. Thirteen were executed and the rest were sent to the gulags.• The Trial of the Twenty-One (March 1938): Stalin used it to get rid of his last potential rivals who were accused of plotting to assassinate both Lenin and Stalin. Eighteen were executed.• 1937 also saw Stalin purge the Red Army as he mistrusted anyone who had served under Trotsky. Almost 30,000 Red Army officers were either fired or executed.
PROPAGANDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Communist Party published its own newspaper called Pravda (<i>Truth</i>).• Posters and works of art all presented the idea of the greatness of the Soviet Union, a happy workforce and the success of communism.• Stalin was a godlike figure and was referred to as '<i>the Brilliant Genius of Humanity</i>' and '<i>the Father of Nations</i>'.• Cities and streets were named after Stalin, for example Stalingrad (Volgograd) and Stalinsk (Novokuznetsk). Statues and posters of him were displayed everywhere.• Enemies of the state of those killed in purges were sometimes airbrushed out of photographs or removed from records, as if they had never existed.
Keywords	Summary
Purge	
Show Trials	
The Trial of the Sixteen	
The Trial of the Seventeen	
The Trial of the Twenty-One	
Purge of the Red Army	
Propaganda	
Pravda	

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EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School was made compulsory and exams were brought back, which improved literacy rates.• Propaganda played an important part in spreading communist and Stalinist doctrine. Textbooks were rewritten to make Stalin's role in the October Revolution and the Civil War look more impressive while others' roles were downplayed or erased.• Children learned how to be of the greatest possible service to their country while youth groups such as the Young Communists and the Komsomol were founded.
WOMEN'S LIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Under Lenin, the status of Russian women had improved. They got the vote and an education; they could access contraception and divorce; legally, they could be head of the household; all jobs were open to women (in theory).<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cheap dining halls, laundries and childcare had been provided by the state in workplaces.• Under Stalin, some of these rights were removed, particularly to do with reproductive choice. Contraception and abortion were both made illegal by 1936 and divorce was also strongly discouraged as Stalin wanted a high birth rate to provide the Soviet Union with many children for its workforce and army. Married parents received a child allowance from the state while women were rewarded for having six or more children.• By 1937, women made up 50% of the workforce.
Keywords	Summary
Education	
Textbooks	
Young Communists	
Komsomol	
Contraception	
Divorce	
Child allowance	

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A LEADER IN COMMUNIST RUSSIA: JOSEF STALIN (1878 – 1953)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Josef Stalin was born near Tiflis in Georgia. His father was a cobbler and his mother was a housemaid. At 16, he was training to be a priest but was expelled for his radical Marxist ideas. • Stalin was arrested for joining the Bolsheviks and was sent to Siberia in 1904. He played a minor role in the October Revolution of 1917. • During the Russian Civil War, he organised the 'Red Terror' and gained a reputation for brutality. • In 1922, Stalin became the general secretary of the Communist Party. In 1924, following the death of Lenin, Stalin was ready to seize power. In 1928, he had Trotsky expelled from the party and exiled. • Stalin believed that the Soviet Union was 50-100 years behind other industrialised countries. He organised the combination of small farms into larger 'collective farms' (collectivisation). Better-off farmers (kulaks) resisted and were persecuted or eliminated. • In the purges of the 1930s, Stalin targeted anyone he felt to be a threat. Show trials were propaganda intended to frighten his opponents. He later also purged the Red Army. • In August 1939, Stalin signed a 'non-aggression pact' with Hitler's Nazi Germany. However, in 1941, Germany broke this pact and invaded the Soviet Union. Stalin appealed to the patriotism of Soviet Citizens to defend 'Mother Russia' during the 'Great Patriotic War'. He joined the Allies to defeat the Germans. While the Soviet Union suffered significant losses due to the war, its entry helped to defeat the Germans and its emergence as a post-war superpower. • After the war, Stalin and the Soviet Union retained control in the Soviet zone of Berlin and also imposed communist governments on the satellite states of East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. • Stalin had hoped to keep post-war Germany weak while the Western Allies wanted an economically revived Germany to serve as an obstacle to communism. Tensions over this led to Stalin cutting off all road, rail and canal links to West Berlin in June 1948. This event became known as the Berlin Blockade, often seen as the beginning of the Cold War Era. • Stalin's health had begun deteriorating from as early as 1945. By the time of his death in 1953, the Soviet Union was investing heavily in its nuclear weapons programme and had created its own atomic bomb. The Cold War arms race had begun.

Keywords	Summary
Josef Stalin	
Non-Aggression Pact	
Bolshevik	
Red Terror	
Collectivisation	
Kulaks	
Purges	
Show Trials	
Propaganda	Cold War

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Keywords	Definition
Bolshevik Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russian communists who seized power in October 1917. The leader of the Bolsheviks was Vladimir Lenin.
Cheka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lenin's secret police.
Collective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A farm worked as a unit by a community or village under the supervision of the state as in Soviet Russia.
Collectivisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking agricultural land into state ownership and dividing it into collective or group farms.
Communism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The belief that all property is owned by the community. People work for the benefit of the community and benefits are received as needed.
Cult of personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When propaganda is used to glorify a political leader, to create a god-like image of a political leader.
Communist Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bolshevik Party was renamed the Communist Party after Lenin came to power.
Dictator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A ruler with full power over a country.
Dictatorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A country being ruled or governed by a dictator.
Five-Year Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stalin's plans aimed at rapidly increasing industrial output.
Gulag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced labour prison camp.
Komsomol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communist youth group.
Modernising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing to modern ideas and ways.
Kulak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wealthier class of peasant farmers.
New Economic Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NEP replaced War Communism and allowed small business to remain in private ownership and peasant farmers to sell spare crops for profit.
NKVD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stalin's secret police.
Red Army	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lenin's government army during the Russian Civil War. It was commanded by Leon Trotsky.
Purges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To remove people by lawful or unlawful means from society in order to eliminate opposition.
Rationing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of coupons and ration books to control the amount of food, clothes, footwear and petrol given to each person.
War Communism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A policy of directing the means of the state towards the army and factory workers. This policy was employed during the Russian Civil War and involved forcibly taking food from peasant farmers.
White Army	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Communist army during the Russian Civil War. It was commanded by Alexander Kolchak.
Show Trials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A staged trial of opposition figures in Soviet Russia, organised by Stalin, held in public to influence popular opinion.
Socialism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A political and economic theory of social organisation which advocates that the means of production, distribution, and exchange should be owned or regulated by the community as a whole.