



Ch. 11 - COMMUNISM IN RUSSIA

Learning Intentions

In this section, you should understand:

- The progress of the Russian Civil War and why the Reds won.
- The role of Lenin.
- The Russian economy, 1920-24.
- Stalin's rise to power.
- Stalin's dictatorship and his use of purges and show trials.
- Stalin's transformation of the Soviet economy.
- Case Study: Stalin's Show Trials.

T **THE** *RULE* **OF** *LENIN* *n*

Introduction – The Communists Take Over

In 1917, Russia was a huge empire ruled over by Tsar (emperor) Nicholas II, a member of the Romanov family which had ruled Russia for three hundred years. At this time, the Russian Empire was fighting the First World War (1914-18), and the chaos and destruction caused by the war led to two revolutions.

In the first revolution, in March 1917, **Tsar Nicholas II** was overthrown by the Provisional Government drawn from members of the Duma (parliament). Eight months later, in November, **Lenin and the Bolsheviks** overthrew the new Provisional Government. Lenin wanted to introduce **Communism** into Russia, which would mean:

- The abolition of private property.
- Government control of agriculture and industry.
- A one-party dictatorship.

KEY CONCEPT: COMMUNISM

Communism was based on the writings of Karl Marx, a German philosopher who believed that private property should be centrally controlled. Communists believed that the government should own all the land, factories, and banks and use them for the benefit of the people.

KEY PERSONALITY: LENIN

Lenin was born in Russia in 1870. He joined the Social Democratic Party which was the Russian Marxist or Communist party. He wanted to form a small group of elite revolutionaries to plan revolution. This group became known as the **Bolsheviks**. Lenin spent most of his time in exile in England or Switzerland. He returned to Petrograd, the capital of Russia, after the first revolution in March 1917. He began to plan the second revolution.

In the **November Revolution 1917**, Lenin and the Bolsheviks took over Russia but they had little support. They signed a peace agreement with Germany, and then in order to retain power they had to fight the opposition forces - the Whites - in the **Russian Civil War**. The Bolsheviks (now called Communists) were led by Lenin and Trotsky (who organised the Red Army). Lenin was in charge of **War Communism**. He took over the main industries and sent out Communist groups to the countryside to confiscate food from the peasants (farmers). He also set up the Cheka, a secret police, to eliminate opposition. By the end of the Civil War, Lenin had to change his policy. A revolt by the sailors in the **Kronstadt** naval base near Petrograd made him realise the severity of his policies. He now brought in the **New Economic Policy (NEP)** which allowed farmers to sell more of their produce for profit.

KEY PERSONALITY: LENIN

But Lenin's health was declining. In 1921, he had been shot by Dora Kaplan in an assassination attempt. He also suffered from a series of **strokes** which gradually took away his movement and speech. He was worried about who would succeed him. In his Last Testament, he preferred a collective leadership (a group sharing power) and he warned about the dangers of Stalin. He died in 1924. He had founded the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics which was the **first Communist state**. His views about revolution were imitated by others during the twentieth century.

Lenin holds onto Power

Having taken over the country, Lenin's biggest challenge was to hold onto power. He did this by:

- Allowing peasants to take over private land
- Abolishing the Assembly (parliament).
- Setting up the **Cheka** (secret police) to arrest and execute those the Cheka thought were opposed to Lenin and the Bolsheviks (now called Communists).
- Taking Russia out of the First World War by making peace with Germany in the **Treaty of Brest-Litovsk** in which Russia lost:
 - 25% of its land 26% of its population
 - 33% of its farming land
 - 80% of its coalmines
 - 33% of its manufacturing

After Brest-Litovsk, Lenin faced his greatest threat in the Civil War.

- In the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Russia lost:
- 25% of its population
 - 25% of its land
 - 32% of its farming land
 - 33% of its coalmines
 - 33% of its manufacturing industry

The Russian Civil War, 1918-21

In the Civil War, the Whites opposed Lenin and his party, now called the **Communist Party**. Lenin and Trotsky led the Communists or **Reds**. Lenin concentrated on economic and political problems, while Trotsky organised the military. The Whites were composed of many different groups, such as:

- Social Revolutionaries.
- Former Tsarists who wanted to restore the Tsar.
- Supporters of the Provisional Government.
- Landlords.
- Industrialists.
- National minorities such as the Cossacks who wanted independence from Russia.

They were helped by the **Allied powers** (Britain, France, US and Japan) who wanted Russia to continue fighting in the First World War.

The Military Conflict

The Red Army was led by **Trotsky**, Commissar of War. It controlled only the centre of Russia at the beginning of the Civil War. However, this territory included the main cities of Russia (Moscow and Petrograd), the main industrial areas and the best farming land. The Red Army was attacked from all sides by the White armies but it defeated each in turn.

The East: In Siberia, the Communists were threatened by the Siberian army of General **Kolchak**. Kolchak took over territory along the Trans-Siberian railway and advanced through the Ural Mountains towards Moscow. Lenin feared his advance would lead to the rescue of Tsar Nicholas II and his family, who were held in Ekaterinburg. So he ordered their execution. However, Kolchak was defeated and later executed by the Reds (February 1920).

The South: General **Denikin** attacked from the south (the Crimea and the Ukraine) and came within 200 miles of Moscow, which was now the capital of the Soviet Union. But he too was defeated (October 1919). In April 1920, **Denikin** handed over control of this White Army to General **Wrangel**, and left the Crimea for Western Europe.

The Military Conflict

The North-West: General **Yudenich** advanced from the Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) towards Petrograd. In 1919 he reached the suburbs of Petrograd but stubborn resistance by the Reds, encouraged by the presence of Trotsky, led to his defeat.

Allied Intervention: When the Bolsheviks (Communists) pulled Russia out of the First World War, Allied troops were landed in Murmansk and Archangel in the north, in the Crimea in the south, and in Vladivostok in the east. The Allies wanted to bring Russia back into the war. However, when the First World War ended in November 1918, the Allies were not interested in Soviet Russia and gradually withdrew their help.

So, by the beginning of 1920 Trotsky's Red Army had strengthened their position, but it had yet to face one of its greatest threats.

The Military Conflict

The Russo-Polish War, 1920-21: The Russian Civil War was complicated by the intervention of Poland. **Pilsudski**, the Polish leader, took advantage of the chaos in Russia. The Poles defeated the Reds just east of the city in the **Battle of Warsaw**. After this the Poles advanced into Russia, but peace negotiations were soon begun and concluded with the **Treaty of Riga** in March 1921. In this Treaty, Poland gained substantial territory from Russia.

The Last of the White Armies: By this time the Reds were distracted by another attack, the last White attack. After Denikin's failure in the south, General **Wrangel** replaced him. Wrangel took advantage of the Reds' campaign in Poland to advance into the Ukraine. However, after early successes, he was defeated by larger Red forces. Wrangel retreated to the Crimea, evacuating his troops and about 150,000 civilians to Turkey (1920). The Communist Red Army was victorious.

Why Did Lenin and Trotsky Win the Russian Civil War?

(i) Trotsky and the Red Army

Trotsky said he had to construct 'an army all over again'. As Chairman of the **Supreme War Council**, he introduced conscription for all men between 18 and 40. By 1920 the Red Army was five million strong. To train these inexperienced soldiers, Trotsky forced former **Tsarist officers** to join the army. In some cases he took families hostage to ensure the loyalty of officers. But he also appointed **political commissars** (officers) to watch them. The commissars were loyal Communist Party workers who were responsible for the morale of the troops.

Trotsky imposed a harsh discipline on the army but he also won the respect of the soldiers by moving from front to front giving orders and raising the spirit of the troops with political speeches. He used a special armoured train equipped with a printing press for propaganda, a radio station and a telegraph office. Trotsky took advantage of internal supply lines by using the rail system which centred on Moscow and Petrograd. He could move troops around quickly to face each new threat from the Whites. One by one, Trotsky organised the Red Army to defeat the armies of Kolchak, Denikin, Yudenich and Wrangel. In these ways, Trotsky ensured that the Red Army was victorious.

Why Did Lenin and Trotsky Win the Russian Civil War?

(ii) The Weaknesses of the White Armies

The White armies were disunited and poorly led with each group following **different aims**, so they failed to co-ordinate their attacks. Some wanted to restore the Tsar; others wanted the return of the Provisional Government; others again wanted the land returned to the landlords. Their armies were scattered far apart, and attacked at different times. They were also responsible for atrocities in the lands they conquered, including the massacre of Jews. Their soldiers were badly disciplined and were prone to drunkenness and looting. Overall they caused far more suffering to the peasants than the Red Terror of the Communists.

Why Did Lenin and Trotsky Win the Russian Civil War?

(iii) Lenin and War Communism

Lenin was responsible for supplying the army with weapons and food. He also had control of much of the war material produced for use in the First World War. He and Trotsky provided a **united leadership**. While Trotsky was mainly in charge of the Red Army and the military conflict, Lenin took control of economic and political problems. Lenin followed a policy of **War Communism**. With this policy, he ensured that all industry and agriculture within the Communist-controlled territory was geared solely towards the war effort. But he was also putting **Communist ideas** into practice.

Industry: Private trading was banned and factories with more than ten workers were taken over by the government. Production was planned and organised by the government. There was forced mobilisation of workers for industry. Strikes were also banned and strikers were shot. The control of key industries meant the Reds could produce more munitions than the Whites.

Timeline of Revolution and War, 1917-1924

1917 Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd

1918 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk; Civil War Begins: War Communism; End of World War I

1919-1920 White armies defeated

1921 War Communism ended; NEP began

1922 Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) set up

1924 Lenin dies

Why Did Lenin and Trotsky Win the Russian Civil War?

(iii) Lenin and War Communism

Agriculture and food supplies: **Surplus** crops were requisitioned (taken) by the government to feed the workers and the soldiers. Food detachments were sent to the countryside to get the food. Food was rationed and given to people depending on their contribution to the economy. Industrial workers, for example, received three times more rations than professionals, such as lawyers.

War Communism achieved its aim of **winning the war** but it caused great suffering. Industrial production declined. There were severe shortages of fuel, and transport ground to a halt except for the war effort. The peasants cut back in grain production so that Russia experienced famine in 1921. It is estimated that between five and seven million people died of hunger.

Why Did Lenin and Trotsky Win the Russian Civil War?

(iv) Use of Propaganda

The Communists used propaganda more effectively than the Whites. They used posters and leaflets to frighten the peasants and workers that the Tsar and the landlords would return under the Whites. They also appealed to Russian nationalism against the intervention of Allied armies; they were fighting for Russia against foreign invaders. The Whites, on the other hand, alienated non-Russian nationalities by claiming 'Russia One and Indivisible'.

(v) The Attitude of the Peasants

The peasants did not like the Communists but they feared the Whites even more because they would bring back the landlords, as they did in some areas.

KEY CONCEPT PROPAGANDA

Propaganda is spreading information to convince people of your point of view. Governments and politicians use propaganda to achieve or retain power.

Why Did Lenin and Trotsky Win the Russian Civil War?

(vi) The Red Terror

The Communists used the Red Terror to force people to concentrate on the war effort and to eliminate any opposition. The **Cheka**, led by **Felix Dzerzhinsky**, began the **Red Terror**. Any opposition to Lenin and the Communists was dealt with by violence. Peasants, striking workers, former government officials, landlords or anybody accused of co-operating with the White armies could be punished or executed. It was a systematic (organised) terror designed to ensure the continuation of Bolshevik or Communist rule. Some party officials were opposed to it but Lenin encouraged and organised the Red Terror, although he tried to distance himself from it as much as possible. By the end of the Civil War, it was estimated that between 12,000 and 50,000 people were killed by the Cheka and 85,000 prisoners were put into concentration camps, or into the gulag system of labour camps which Lenin introduced.

Why Did Lenin and Trotsky Win the Russian Civil War?

(vii) The Allied Withdrawal

The Allies lost interest in Russia when the First World War was over (November 1918). The Whites lost the sympathy of the Allied governments because of their atrocities, their anti-semitism and their plans to restore the Tsar. Allied armies were withdrawn and supplies of weapons dried up.

Conclusion and Results

The Red Army won the Civil War but at great cost. During the Civil War 10 million people were killed for various reasons. Besides the fighting and the terror, disease also killed many; 2 million were killed by typhus alone. In the famine of 1921, 5 to 7 million died. Compared with 1913, factory production was only one-fifth and food production was halved.

Many of the defeated Whites emigrated from Russia. Some settled in Eastern Europe but others moved to Paris, Berlin and other western cities. Soviet Russia lost many of its educated class - writers, scientists and engineers - and later suffered from a shortage of managerial talent.

Establishing a Communist dictatorship

While the Civil War was in progress, between 1918 and 1921, Lenin established a **Communist dictatorship**:

- The newly named Communist Party grew in membership from about 250,000 in 1917 to 700,000 in 1921.
- All government power was concentrated in the hands of party members.
- All opposition parties were banned, with dissenters imprisoned, exiled or shot.
- The Communist Party controlled the newspapers and radio.
- Only members of the Communist Party could get elected to the Soviets.

In March 1921, Lenin banned all factions or groups within the Communist Party. All decisions made by **Lenin and the Politburo** were binding on all members. As leader of the Communist Party, Lenin wielded great. power. He had created the first **totalitarian dictatorship**.

Questions pg. 162 (Modern Europe, 4th Edition)

1. Who opposed Lenin and the Communists in the Russian Civil War?
2. Who led the Red Army?
3. Why did the Allies pull out of the Civil War?
4. How did Poland threaten Russia?
5. What was War Communism?
6. Was it successful?
7. What role did the Red Terror play in the Civil War?

EXAM QUESTION

1. How and why did Lenin and the Communists win the Russian Civil War?

LENIN AND THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY

Why did Lenin Introduce the New Economic Policy?

In March 1921, Lenin announced the end of War Communism and the beginning of the **New Economic Policy (NEP)**. He was faced with serious discontent which undermined support for the Communist Party:

- There was widespread **famine** which in some cases led to cannibalism.
- There were **peasant risings**, against food requisitioning and the abolition of private trading.
- Workers' discontent increased as factories closed due to shortages of fuel and raw materials.
- Workers' groups demanded higher wages and better conditions.
- Strikes in **Petrograd** in early 1921 led to the imposition of martial (military) law.
- Petrograd was described as 'a city completely dead. No electricity, no heat... people just dying.'

But the **Kronstadt rising** presented the most serious difficulties for Lenin and the Communist Party.

The Kronstadt Rising, 1921

Kronstadt was a naval base on an island near Petrograd. In March 1921 the Kronstadt sailors rose in revolt against the **Communist Party** and **War Communism**. These sailors had played a major role in the victory of the Bolsheviks in the November Revolution, 1917. Now they were very critical of the new regime brought in by Lenin.

Lenin and **Trotsky** took immediate action against the revolt because they saw the danger it posed to their survival. The sailors refused to surrender so Trotsky ordered the Red Army soldiers across the ice to crush the rising. The Kronstadt fortress fell and hundreds of prisoners were killed.

However, Lenin realised the significance of the protest and completely changed his economic policy to revive the Russian economy. The Kronstadt rising, he said, 'illuminated reality like a flash of lightning'.

The New Economic Policy (NEP)

The main points of the New Economic Policy were:

- Requisitions (taking food) from the peasants were ended.
- Requisitions were replaced with a fixed tax in kind (grain).
- Peasants could sell the surplus grain. Private enterprise was allowed in small factories and in trade.
- Heavy industry (coal, iron, electricity, railways) - *'the commanding heights of the economy'*, as Lenin said - were still controlled by the government.
- A new currency was introduced to control inflation.
- Foreign trade was encouraged, which boosted the Soviet economy.
- Lenin encouraged the development of electrical power. 'Soviet power plus electrification equals Communism,' he said.

Some Party members opposed Lenin's policy because they said it was contrary to Communist or Marxist ideas. Lenin justified his policy as a temporary retreat from Communism to give the Russian economy the time to recover and to ensure the survival of the Communist Party.

The Results of the NEP

The NEP lasted until 1928, and it was largely successful. It restored economic production to pre-war levels, and it lifted Russia out of the economic depression caused by World War I, the Russian Revolution and the Civil War.

- By increasing agricultural and industrial production, it helped **Lenin and the Communists survive**.
- In farming, production reached pre-war levels by 1925. Food shortages and the famine of 1921 ended. Peasant unrest declined and the richer peasants (**kulaks**) benefited.
- A new class of merchant or trader developed - **nepmen** - who controlled trade between country and towns.
- Some Communists resented the growth of nepmen, seeing them as greedy and against Communist teaching.
- Heavy industry increased production but in some areas it did not yet reach pre-war levels.
- The economy slowed after 1926 and the Soviet Union needed huge investment if it was going to catch up with Western Europe and the USA.

The Death of Lenin

Lenin did not live to see the full effects of the New Economic Policy. He suffered a series of strokes in 1922 and 1923 and died in January 1924, at the age of fifty-three. His body lay in state for a week as thousands of Russian people marched past in the freezing cold.

Afterwards, his body was embalmed and placed in a special mausoleum in Moscow.

Petrograd was renamed Leningrad in his honour.

A cult of Lenin was developed after his death, but it is unlikely he would have wanted this. His widow, Krupskaya, said, 'Do not build memorials to him, name palaces after him, do not hold magnificent celebrations in his memory. All of this meant so little to him.' However, the Communist Party used this **cult of personality** as a propaganda weapon to tighten their grip on the Soviet Union.

Assessment of Lenin

Lenin created the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and led it to the first Communist revolution and Communist state. He showed how a small group of dedicated revolutionaries could win a revolution. He ensured the survival of Communism in Russia after the revolution and he created a **one-party Communist dictatorship** which others later imitated.

But, he left many problems for his successor(s). Russia was still a peasant society with 80 per cent of its people earning their living from the land. It was still relatively poor compared to France, Britain and Germany. Since manufacturing industry was not fully developed it had a small working class. It was far from being a Communist society, even though it had a Communist party in charge.

Questions pg. 164 (Modern Europe, 4th Edition)

1. Why did Lenin introduce the New Economic Policy (NEP)?
2. What were the main points of the New Economic Policy?
3. How successful was NEP?
4. How did Lenin die?

THE RULE OF STALIN – THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER

Why did Stalin win the Struggle for Power?

In December 1923, a month before he died, Lenin drafted his **Testament**. He was worried about the future leadership of the Communist Party and of the Soviet Union. In it, he wrote about the **exceptional abilities** of Comrade Trotsky. But he was critical of Trotsky's **over-confidence**. However, Lenin was more concerned about Stalin. 'Comrade Stalin, having become General Secretary, has concentrated an enormous power in his hands, and I am not sure he always knows how to use that power with sufficient caution.' Lenin was hoping that some of the leaders would share power together. But this did not happen. Instead there was a **struggle for power**.

Trotsky Versus Stalin

The contest for Lenin's successor rested between Trotsky and Stalin. Many thought Trotsky would become the new leader because he had clear **advantages** over Stalin. He had commanded the Red Guards in the November Revolution, 1917. He had also created and led the Red Army in the Civil War. He was a great organiser and a very able speaker. But he also suffered certain **disadvantages**. He was personally arrogant and some feared he might use the army to take over Russia. He also suffered from poor health and consequently missed some important meetings where key decisions were taken. But his greatest weakness was his failure to understand where real power in the Communist Party lay.

Stalin, on the other hand, was like a **grey blur** - nobody was sure what he stood for. Stalin formed alliances with other key Politburo leaders. He initially joined two other Communist leaders, **Zinoviev** and **Kamenev**, in opposition to Trotsky. All were members of the Politburo, the main ruling body of the party, and they had a strong influence over the party organisation in other ways. Zinoviev was dominant in Petrograd (Leningrad) and Kamenev was strong in Moscow. Stalin was not only **Commissar of Nationalities**, he was also **General Secretary** of the party. This gave him great influence over party membership, including organising the **Lenin Enrolment** which increased party membership with many of his own supporters. He was also able to appoint many of his supporters to key positions in the party, and to expel others. Further, he drew up a list of candidates to be sent to the Party Congress which controlled election to the Central Committee.

Trotsky Versus Stalin

Stalin deliberately spread the cult of Lenin, beginning with the stage-management of Lenin's funeral. He was able to promote his own image as the best, **the staunchest, the truest comrade-in-arms of Lenin**. He also highlighted earlier disagreements between Lenin and Trotsky before the 1917 Revolution, thereby questioning Trotsky's loyalty to Lenin and his ideas.

Stalin was also helped by the mistakes of others. Trotsky failed to attend Lenin's funeral and also attacked Lenin's New Economic Policy. Zinoviev and Kamenev helped Stalin by refusing to publish Lenin's Testament, with its damaging verdict on Stalin.

Stalin's early victories

Stalin joined with Zinoviev and Kamenev to stop Trotsky. They agreed to keep Lenin's Testament secret because he had criticised all three, but above all Stalin. They claimed Stalin had now changed and that he should remain as General Secretary. The three also accused Trotsky of 'Bonapartist' tendencies - that like Napoleon Bonaparte, he would set up a **military dictatorship**. They also accused him of **disloyalty** to 'Leninism'. These attacks weakened Trotsky and he had to resign his position as **Commissar of War**.

KEY PERSONALITY: STALIN

Stalin was born in Georgia, in the southern part of the Russian Empire, in 1879. He joined the **Bolsheviks** and was a follower of Lenin. He did not come to prominence until after the November revolution in 1917. He took part in the **Russian Civil War**, being involved in the defence of **Tsaritsyn**, which was later called **Stalingrad** (modern-day Volgograd).

After the Bolshevik (Communist) Revolution, he began a slow rise to power. He became **General Secretary** of the Communist Party. He used this position to put loyal followers in power. When Lenin died, there was a **struggle for power** between **Trotsky, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Stalin** and **Bukharin**. By 1928, Stalin was the most powerful person in the Soviet Union.

KEY PERSONALITY: STALIN

He now set about the huge transformation of Soviet society, through **Five Year Plans** and **collectivisation**. He also made Russia into a **totalitarian state** by controlling press and radio, creating a cult of personality and suppressing any criticism. He organised the **Great Purges** and the **Moscow Show Trials**.

By 1939, Stalin was aware of the dangers posed by Hitler. He signed the **Nazi-Soviet Pact** to give himself time to prepare for war. In 1941 Hitler invaded Russia. Stalin organised the defence of the country in the **Great Patriotic War**. The **Battle of Stalingrad** was one of the turning points of the war. After that, the Russian army pushed back the German army to Berlin. Stalin took part in the **wartime conferences** with Churchill and Roosevelt. He was able to take credit for playing a big part in defeating Hitler. He continued in power until his death in 1953.

Permanent Revolution and Socialism in One Country

But the major battle between Trotsky and Stalin was fought over the future of Communism and the development of Soviet Russia. Trotsky supported the idea of **permanent revolution** in which workers in other countries would be encouraged to revolt and set up Communist states. He took the view that Communism was weak in Russia and could not be developed unless Communism was spread to other countries, particularly in western Europe.

Stalin, on the other hand, believed in '**socialism in one country**'. He said. Communism should be developed in Russia first, so that the country would be a modern, powerful state, rather than encouraging world revolution.

Stalin was supported by **Bukharin**, editor of *Pravda*, the main Communist newspaper, and **Rykov**. They both favoured NEP and slow industrialisation. Stalin's policy was also supported by party members who felt that Russia had suffered enough through war and revolution from 1914 to 1921. This policy also appealed to **Russian nationalism** by aiming to make the Soviet Union into one of the greatest economic powers.

Victory for Stalin

When Zinoviev and Kamenev joined Trotsky to oppose Stalin, it was too late. The three were voted out of the Politburo in 1926, and Trotsky and Zinoviev were expelled from the party, along with 75 supporters. Trotsky was then exiled to Siberia before he was eventually banished from the Soviet Union (1931) and later assassinated in Mexico (1940) on Stalin's orders.

By the end of the 1920s, Stalin had filled all positions in the Politburo with his own supporters. He was now fully in control of the Soviet Union. He was also now in a position to radically change policy, drop Lenin's New Economic Policy and implement the rapid industrialisation and collectivisation of the country.

Victory for Stalin

Struggle for power	Stalin forms alliances	Stalin's Opponents	Issues	Outcome
Stage 1:	Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev	Trotsky	To publish Lenin's Testament	Lenin's Testament kept Secret Trotsky weakened
Stage 2:	Stalin	Trotsky	Socialism in One Country or Permanent Revolution	Wider support for Socialism in One Country
Stage 3:	Stalin, Bukharin and Rykov	Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotsky	NEP or rapid industrialisation	Trotsky, Zinoviev expelled from Politburo and 3 of them from the Party
Stage 4:	Stalin	Bukharin, Rykov	Rapid industrialisation, collectivisation or NEP	Five Year Plans and collectivisation

Questions pg. 162 (Modern Europe, 4th Edition)

1. What did Lenin's Testament say?
2. What strengths and weaknesses did Trotsky have in the leadership struggle?
3. What advantages did Stalin have?
4. What roles did Zinoviev, Kamanev and Bukharin play in the leadership struggle?
5. What were Permanent Revolution and Socialism in One Country?
6. What happened to Trotsky?

EXAM QUESTION

1. How and why did Stalin emerge as leader of the Soviet Union by 1928?

THE STALINIST STATE IN PEACE

The Stalinist State in Peace

Stalin controlled the Soviet Union through various means:

- He **controlled** the Communist Party.
- The Party **controlled** the Soviet government, the secret police and the army.
- Stalin used **propaganda**, and controlled press, radio and cinema.
- He controlled the **economy**.
- He used **terror**.

Creating a Totalitarian State

In Stalin's Russia, all adults had the right to vote. They elected the local soviets (councils) who in turn selected representatives for the higher soviets at district and provincial level. At the top there was the Congress of Soviets. The Soviet Constitution of 1936 guaranteed freedom of speech, freedom of the press and the right to work and education. However, even though this had the appearance of a democratic structure, real power lay with the Communist Party, the secret police and the army. Stalin created **a totalitarian state** where the party controlled all the people and the state.

The Party: The Communist Party grew in size from 1.3 million members in 1928 to 3.3 million in 1933. It became less a party of workers and more a party of **intelligentsia** (the educated class). The Party was controlled by the **Politburo** which was dominated by Stalin. The Party then controlled press, radio and industry through members who were in positions of power in each of these.

The secret police: The Party used the OGPU, later called the NKVD, to enforce Party policy and to ensure conformity to the Party's wishes. It supervised some of the major projects of the Five Year Plans, purged the Party in the 1930s and controlled the labour force of the prison camps (gulags).

The Soviet army: The army also came under the direct control of the party. Most of the army commanders were party members. At any rate, military commanders worked alongside political commissars who ensured party policy was followed.

KEY CONCEPT: CULT OF PERSONALITY

In politics, the **cult of personality** is the worship of a leader. This involves the use of propaganda to create an image of the leader who is all-wise and powerful.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How was the Soviet Union a totalitarian state?
2. What role did propaganda play?
3. How was the cult of Stalin developed?

Stalin's Use of Propaganda

Stalin saw the role of propaganda as **strengthening** the control of the Soviet state, and his own control. He used propaganda to promote the benefits of his **policies** of collectivisation and industrialisation. He also used propaganda during the Purges and Great Terror to justify the Show Trials and the persecution of 'enemies of the people'. He believed that **all systems of communication** should be used to get his message across. This included newspapers, radio and cinema, but also art, especially posters, theatre and literature. Also, **education** was used to teach communist ideals and to glorify Stalin as leader.

Stalin's Use of Propaganda

An important feature of Stalin's totalitarian state was the **cult of personality**. Stalin and the Communist Party deliberately promoted this worship of Stalin.

History was rewritten to make Stalin a hero of the November Revolution and the Civil War. Posters, photographs and statues of Stalin were everywhere. Cities (e.g. Stalingrad) and streets were named after him. Music, art and poetry were used to praise him. Propaganda made him the equal of Lenin; 'Stalin is the new Lenin of today.' Soon he was exceeding Lenin in importance he was the 'most learned of men', 'the fount of all wisdom'. He was treated like a god.

THE SOVIET ALTERNATIVE - TRANSFORMING
THE SOVIET ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

The Five Year Plans

Why did Stalin Introduce the Five Year Plans?

In 1928, Stalin introduced the first **Five Year Plan**. This meant that the New Economic Policy was abandoned and a **centrally planned economy** was put in its place. This would ensure forced economic growth. This huge change in Soviet economic policy was due to a number of factors:

- Stalin believed that **communism** could only be developed properly in a fully industrialised society.
- The NEP had **failed** to industrialise the Soviet Union.
- Stalin wanted to get greater control of the economy so that he would have greater control of the Soviet Union.
- He wanted to **overcome** the failure of agriculture to produce enough grain for the towns.
- Stalin wanted to **modernise Russia** so that it would match the economies of the western world as quickly as possible. *'We are 50 to 100 years behind the advanced countries. Either we make good the difference in 10 years or they will crush us.'*

The Operation of the Five Year Plans

Industry: The First Five Year Plan, 1928-32

The economic planning was directed by the **Central Planning Commission (Gosplan)**. In industry, Gosplan decided on production targets in manufacturing, transport and raw materials. These targets were set for the regions and the factories.

The first Five Year Plan concentrated on **heavy industry** - coal, iron, gas, and electricity. Their expansion formed the basis for future industrial growth.

Overall, the targets were too high but yet by the end of 1932 significant progress was made:

- Machinery production increased by four-fold.
- Oil production doubled.
- Electricity almost trebled.
- New towns such as Magnitogorsk were constructed.

But there was also **poor quality or faulty production** because of the concentration on quantity. Workers' living and working conditions worsened; food was short and there were long queues.

The Operation of the Five Year Plans

The Second (1933-37) and Third (1938-41) Five Year Plans

In the second Five Year Plan (1933-37) there was still concentration on heavy industry. But efforts were made to develop new metalworking industries and transport, particularly the railways. It was during the second plan that the **Moscow Underground** was built. More consumer goods - radios, washing machines etc. - were also promised.

However, during the progress of the second Five Year Plan, the troubled state of Europe resulted in more investment in armaments, and this led to a cutback in consumer goods. Production of armaments became even more important in the third Five Year Plan (1938-41) as Europe headed for the Second World War. The German invasion in 1941 shortened the life of the plan.

What were the Results of the Five Year Plans?

By 1941, the Soviet economy was **transformed**. A backward, mainly agricultural country was changed into a leading industrial power. The Russian economy grew far more rapidly than the western economies of the US, Britain and France. Russia was now the second largest economy in the world, after the US:

- Production of industrial goods almost **trebled**.
- Iron, oil and electricity production grew even faster.
- The **urban working class** grew from 11 million in 1928 to 33 million in 1938.
- The Soviet Union did not experience the Depression suffered by the West; instead there was full employment.
- Russia had a **better educated workforce** as illiteracy was wiped out and the numbers in secondary schools grew six times between 1928 and 1938.

The changes in the economy meant that Russia was now **better prepared** to face the German invasion when it came in 1941. Indeed, it can be argued that Stalin's industrialisation and modernisation saved the Soviet Union.

How was this achieved?

1. All the authority and power of the state was used to force through industrialisation rapidly.
2. **The Workers:**
 - a. Much of Stalin's success was due to the hard work and reduced living standards of the workers. Working conditions were severe and there was the risk of punishment as a wrecker, if targets were not met. **Absenteeism** from work was punished by loss of job, food rations and housing.
 - b. An **internal passport** system was introduced to prevent workers moving from job to job.
 - c. There was a large increase in **women workers**. By 1940, forty per cent of industrial workers were women as the government set up crèches and day care centres.
 - d. There were also incentives for workers. There were **bonus payments** for those who exceeded targets and holidays were paid for by the state.
 - e. Workers were encouraged by **propaganda**. The work of **Stakhanov** is an example of this. He along with his colleagues produced 102 tonnes of coal in one shift. He became the **Hero of Socialist Labour**, and the **Stakhanovite movement** encouraged workers to follow his success.
3. **Labour Camps:** Many opponents of Stalin's rule ended up in **labour camps** or **gulags**. Here, as many as 10 million were used as **slave labour** in building roads, bridges and canals. The greatest project was the building of the 500 km canal from the White Sea to the Baltic Sea.

THE STAKHANOVITE MOVEMENT – PROPAGANDA

Industrial workers were often inefficient and ill-disciplined so the government used the work of Alexei Stakhanov during the Second Five Year Plan in a propaganda campaign to encourage harder work. Stakhanov mined 102 tonnes of coal in one shift. Later, he mined 227 tonnes in a single shift. His exploits were publicised in the press and radio, and he was on the cover of *Time* magazine. He was given a new apartment and a month's wages. Factory meetings were held throughout the Soviet Union to encourage workers to follow Stakhanov's example. Stakhanovites who exceeded production targets got better housing and free holidays. But Stakhanov's success was a set-up. He was given the best of equipment and two helpers to achieve his targets.

Summary of the Five Year Plans		
First Five Year Plan	Second Five Year Plan	Third Five Year Plan
1928-32	1933-1937	1938-1941
Heavy Industry	Heavy Industry New metalworking industries Transport Some consumer goods Electricity (Some rearmament)	Heavy industry Rearmament

Collectivisation - THE REVOLUTION IN *Agriculture*

What was Collectivisation?

The changes in industry were accompanied by equally huge changes in agriculture. Indeed the changes in agriculture contributed to the success of industry. A new policy - collectivisation - was introduced. In **collectivisation**, individual farms were taken over by the government and combined into **collective farms** in which the land was jointly owned and worked by the peasants. The **collectives** hired machinery from the **Machine Tractor Stations** run by the government and they had to sell quotas to the state at low prices. Some farms were combined into **state farms** where the peasants were paid as labourers. Initially Stalin encouraged voluntary collectivisation, but in 1929 he insisted on forced collectivisation.

KEY CONCEPT COLLECTIVISATION

This was the policy of Stalin's government force the peasants (farmers) to give up their farms and form large collective farms. The work, machinery and the profits were shared.

Why did Stalin Introduce Collectivisation?

Stalin introduced collectivisation for economic and political reasons.

(i) Economic Reasons: Stalin wanted to increase the output of grain to feed the workers in the industrial cities. He believed that more grain would be produced in larger farms run by the state. With larger farms, tractors and other machinery could be shared to improve efficiency. Stalin also wanted to export food to buy industrial machinery and raw materials needed for industrialisation.

(ii) Political Reasons: Many Communists disagreed with the New Economic Policy because it created a rich farming class (kulaks) who owned their own land. These Communists wanted to put their ideas into practice and this meant state control of agriculture. They supported Stalin's proposal for collectivisation.

Collectivisation in Progress

There was huge resistance to Stalin's collectivisation among the **kulaks** (or rich peasants). They slaughtered their animals and burnt or hid their grain rather than hand it over to the collectives. Food production fell and there was a **famine** throughout the grain-growing regions of Soviet Russia and Kazakhstan from 1931-1934 1932-3, which killed over five million people. In **Ukraine**, the situation was particularly dire due to the **Holodomor**, a man-made famine that convulsed the **Soviet Republic of Ukraine** from 1932 to 1933, peaking in the late spring of 1933. The Ukrainian famine was made deadlier by a series of political decrees and decisions that were aimed mostly or only at Ukraine. Feeling threatened by Ukraine's strengthening cultural autonomy, Stalin took measures to destroy the Ukrainian peasantry and the Ukrainian intellectual and cultural elites to prevent them from seeking independence for Ukraine. Stalin responded with harsh measures - he said the kulaks must be **eliminated** (dekulakisation). He sent out groups from the towns to the countryside to seize grain. He had kulaks rounded up and killed or sent to labour camps (gulags). By the middle of the 1930s the whole kulak class (about five million people) had been wiped out. But the strong resistance against collectivisation forced Stalin to make concessions. He allowed the peasants to hold onto **small private plots** around their houses.

What were the results of Collectivisation?

- Stalin's harsh methods meant that by 1940, **97 per cent** of the farms were collectivised.
- But the **cost in lives** was very great. About 10 million people died as a result of collectivisation, either because of famine or the labour camps.
- In spite of the changes, the collectives were still **inefficient**. Indeed, by the end of the 1930s, most of the country's milk and meat and half of its wool was produced on the private plots.
- Collectivisation helped the **growth of industry** - 17 million people left the countryside to work in the towns; industrial workers were sold cheap grain by the government.

The **PURGES** *and* **SHOW TRIALS** – *Stalin's*
USE OF TERROR

Why did Stalin Begin the Purges?

Stalin's policies of forced **industrialisation** and **collectivisation** led to increased opposition to him in the Communist party. He was worried that his enemies were plotting against him so he wanted 'to destroy the men who might form an alternative government.' (I. Deutscher, Stalin, 1949) Criticisms by **Trotsky**, who was now in exile outside of Russia, angered Stalin. Stalin claimed that Trotsky was plotting with others in the country to overthrow him. In the early 1930s, Stalin began a series of **purges** (cleaning out) of all opposition to him. He was able to create a new class of leaders loyal to him, as well as terrorise the general public. Once the purges were begun they were difficult to stop as some Party members were determined to show their loyalty and to blame others.

KEY CONCEPT COLLECTIVISATION

This was the policy of Stalin's government force the peasants (farmers) to give up their farms and form large collective farms. The work, machinery and the profits were shared.

Early Purges

The early purges were aimed mostly at those who criticised or delayed the policies of the Five Year Plans and collectivisation, or who blamed the famine of 1932-33 on these policies. **Wreckers** and **saboteurs** in factories were accused of destroying the Five Year Plans; kulaks were imprisoned, killed or exiled to Siberia for opposing collectivisation and ordinary Party members who questioned Stalin's policies were also purged. But these early purges didn't match the scale of the **Great Purge** or **Terror** begun in the middle of the 1930s.

The Assassination of Kirov

The assassination of **Kirov** was a major factor in the intensification of the purges. Stalin was suspicious of Kirov, who was leader of the Communist Party in Leningrad. Kirov had opposed Stalin's policies in the Politburo and won votes against Stalin. But, historians are divided on whether he ordered the assassination of Kirov in December 1934. Recent evidence from the Soviet archives suggests that the assassin did it on his own.

However, Stalin took **advantage** of Kirov's death and used it as an excuse to begin purging his enemies. The assassin and thirteen of his colleagues were shot, and over 100 others unconnected to Kirov's death were also executed. Over the next year, there was a witch hunt throughout the Party, thousands were expelled from it and hundreds were arrested, including Zinoviev and Kamenev. But this was nothing like the Great Purge which began one year later in 1936 and lasted for two years.

The Great Purge

The Great Purge or Terror began with the trial of Zinoviev, Kamenev and others - Old Bolsheviks in August 1936. They were tried in Moscow in the first of the public trials (called **Show Trials**) and were executed. After this Stalin purged his enemies in the main institutions of the country, beginning with the Communist Party.

The Party: Members at all levels in the Party were accused of plotting against Stalin and spreading **Trotskyite** propaganda. One historian writes:

*'The records of all members were scrutinised for dangerous tendencies.... Their fate was the same; they were unmasked by one or other of their colleagues, invited to confess before a mass meeting, were rarely found not guilty, lost their jobs, were usually deported to work camps... and their families and associates were next to be **unmasked**.'*

Thousands of members were expelled from the Communist Party and over 300,000 were convicted of being 'enemies of the people' between 1934 and 1938. Also, about 70 per cent of the Central Committee of the Party was executed during the Great Purge.

The Great Purge

The Army: Stalin next purged the Soviet Red Army. The Commander-in-chief, Tukhachevsky, an old-enemy of Stalin's during the Civil War, and 35,000 officers - half the officer corps were either shot or jailed. These included most of the army commanders and generals. The army was the last organisation that could have stopped Stalin. Now it was weakened considerably as the Second World War approached.

The Secret Service: Not even the secret police, the NKVD, were safe. Yagoda, the head of the secret police, and responsible for the interrogation and execution of all the accused at the First Show Trial, was tried and executed. Stalin was dissatisfied with Yagoda's handling of the Kirov Affair and the First Show Trial. Yagoda was replaced by **Yezhov** and targets were set for executions and exiles. Then the NKVD was purged in 1937 and newer, more sadistic agents were recruited. The Great Purge reached its peak in 1937-38 but that did not save Yezhov who was deposed in 1938 and executed in early 1940.

Minorities: Stalin also treated minorities harshly. In relation to the Jews, he continued Lenin's policy of closing synagogues and made serious efforts to Russianise Jews as he did with other minorities. He also punished them during the Great Terror (Purge), including some of the Old Bolsheviks who were Jewish, such as Kamenev and Zinoviev.

Many other groups, particularly the smaller nationalities, were targeted by Stalin at this time; thousands of Poles, especially, and ethnic Germans, but also even Stalin's own Georgians were arrested and shot.

Trotsky: Trotsky, who was blamed by Stalin for inciting opposition to him, was assassinated in his house in Mexico in 1940 by an agent of Stalin's.

More Trials and Purges

During this time also, there were **two further Show Trials**. In January 1937, a further 17 Communist leaders were tried and executed. This was followed in March 1938 by the last of the trials when **Bukharin, Rykov and Yagoda** along with 18 others were either shot or jailed.

But the Purges went far beyond the leaders and the main organisations. They reached into all areas of Soviet life. Nobody was safe. Quotas of arrests and executions were imposed by Stalin on the regions. As a consequence, millions of ordinary Russians were arrested by Stalin's secret police, the NKVD. Some were tried, some were executed, and many ended in the **slave labour camps (gulags)** in Siberia and other areas of the Soviet Union. Very often family members never heard from them again.

Statistics of the Great Purge

Arrests, 1937-38 – About 8 million

Executed – About 1 million

Died in camps – About 2 million

In prison, late 1938 – About 1 million

In camps, late 1938 – About 7 million

The **gulags** (or slave labour camps) expanded hugely between 1929 when Stalin had established his power until his death in 1953. About 18 million went through the camps and another six million were exiled to remote places in Siberia. The camps were used both as a punishment system for what Stalin classified as **enemies of the people** but also to **provide forced labour** to work in logging, mining and construction to exploit the resources of Siberia.

Why were the Purges So Cruel?

At the end of 1938, the Purges ended almost as suddenly as they began when Beria replaced Yezhov. There had been other purges in Russia during Lenin's life and earlier in Stalin's rule.

But historians disagree on how to explain the **savagery and cruelty** of the Great Purge:

- Some historians say that Stalin was suffering from **paranoia** (suspicious of everybody).
- Others suggest that he was **corrupted** by great power.
- Others blame the structures laid down by **Lenin** with a one-party state and a secret police under its control. They said that it was inevitable that a totalitarian state could only operate in this way by maintaining fear amongst its people. They point to the use of gulags from early in the communist system and their continuation into the 1940s and 1950s. It was largely due to Stalin's personality and the imposition of radical changes in Soviet Russia that led to the enormous expansion during his regime.
- One historian has concluded: *'The Terror was not just a consequence of Stalin's monstrosity but it was certainly formed, expanded and accelerated by his uniquely overpowering character, reflecting his malice and vindictiveness. "The greatest delight," he told Kamenev, "is to mark one's enemy, prepare everything, avenge oneself thoroughly and then go to sleep." It would not have happened without Stalin. Yet it also reflected the village hatreds of the incestuous Bolshevik sect where jealousies had seethed from years of exile and war.'* (Simon Sebag Montefiore, Stalin, The Court of the Red Tsar, 2003)

The Results of the Purges

1. There was now no challenge to the leadership of Stalin.
2. Stalin had destroyed the remaining leaders of the November Revolution - the **Old Bolsheviks** - and replaced them with a new generation of leaders.
3. The Red Army took time to recover from its purging. Not surprisingly, the army performed badly in the early stages of the Second World War.
4. Many skilled workers, scientists and engineers were killed. This slowed down the expansion of the economy and the progress of the Five Year Plans.

THE PURGES AND SHOW TRIALS - STALIN'S USE OF TERROR
1936 - 1938

Introduction

During the Great Purge, three show trials were held in Moscow, where senior Communist party leaders were tried in public. They were often called **Old Bolsheviks** because they had been involved in the growth of the Bolshevik or Communist Party and in the success of the Russian Revolution in 1917. These trials were part of Stalin's efforts to ensure **greater power** for himself and to condemn critics of his collectivisation and industrialisation.

The First Show Trial, 1936

Background

There was an investigation of the Leningrad Communist Party after Kirov's assassination in December, 1934. As a result of this investigation, Stalin concluded that he needed to **eliminate opposition** within the Communist Party leadership. This led to the series of **Show Trials in Moscow** from 1936 to 1938.

The First Show Trial, 1936

The Trial

The first show trial - **the Trial of the 16** - was held in August 1936. **Zinoviev, Kamenev** and 14 other leaders were tried. Later trials followed a similar pattern to the first trial:

- accusations of treachery and plotting,
- written confessions,
- a bullying prosecutor,
- no rules of evidence, and
- a final judgment, usually of execution.

Show Trial: These are public trials held by governments for political purposes. They are used for propaganda purposes. When the government establishes the guilt of the accused, it is sending out a message to its own people and foreign observers that it is following the law.

WHO WERE ZINOVIEV AND KAMENEV?

Industrial workers were often inefficient and ill-disciplined so the government used the work of Alexei Stakhanov during the Second Five Year Plan in a propaganda campaign to encourage harder work. Stakhanov mined 102 tonnes of coal in one shift. Later, he mined 227 tonnes in a single shift. His exploits were publicised in the press and radio, and he was on the cover of *Time* magazine. He was given a new apartment and a month's wages. Factory meetings were held throughout the Soviet Union to encourage workers to follow Stakhanov's example. Stakhanovites who exceeded production targets got better housing and free holidays. But Stakhanov's success was a set-up. He was given the best of equipment and two helpers to achieve his targets.

SOURCE 1 - BREAKING THE DEFENDANTS

'From the start, the rigging of the [Zinoviev] trial was closely planned by Stalin in person.. Stalin would shout that Zinoviev and Kamenev were to be given the works until they came crawling on their bellies with confessions in their teeth. Zinoviev was influenced by threats to his family, being also subjected to the physical ordeal of a cell deliberately overheated in the height of the summer, which was additionally troublesome in view of his poor health.'

R Hingley, Joseph Stalin: Man and Legend

SOURCE 2 - ZINOVIEV ON TRIAL

Zinoviev, looking worn and haggard, only the shadow of his former self after his long imprisonment, slowly described details of the unsuccessful plot to kill Stalin two years ago... Without any effort to defend himself, he confirmed all the prosecutors allegations, explaining that the chances of a coup seemed best in 1932 because of the unfavourable economic conditions within the country.

Reuter's Correspondent, Moscow, The Irish Times 21 August, 1936

QUESTIONS

1. According to W.T. Cosgrave, what advantages did de Valera have as a negotiator?
2. What did Cosgrave mean by the words 'keeping their ablest player in reserve'?
3. How did de Valera regard his own role as 'symbol of the Republic'?
4. In his view, what was a 'shirking of duty'?

The First Show Trial, 1936

The Trial

In the first trial, Zinoviev, Kamenev and the others were accused of the **murder of Kirov**, the leader of the Communist Party in Leningrad, and **planning to kill Stalin**.

Even though **Trotsky** was in exile, he was as much on trial as they were. They were branded as *'terrorist groups of Trotskyites and Zinovievites'*. They were also accused of conspiring with Nazi Germany.

The secret police, the NKVD, interrogated (closely questioned) the accused and forced confessions from them.

The NKVD had a great variety of ways to ensure **Zinoviev** and **Kamenev** confessed. They used forced confessions from minor Party officials against the two; they were held in isolation; they were regularly interrogated and deprived of sleep; they were subjected to beatings and threats were made against family members; The heating was turned up in their cells in midsummer; Kamenev was threatened that his son would be shot.

Zinoviev broke first and then he was used to get a confession from Kamenev. Once the confessions were signed, the defendants had to **memorise** their lines for the trial. Confessions were very important because these 'proved' that there was a conspiracy and that Stalin was right in prosecuting the offenders.

The First Show Trial, 1936

The Trial

At the trial, three judges sat facing the selected audience of about 200. These included ordinary workers and international observers including journalists and diplomats. The accused sat on four rows of chairs, behind a low wooden barrier. Armed soldiers escorted the accused to their seats.

Across the room from them was the prosecutor's table. **Vyshinsky** was the prosecutor for all three trials. There were no lawyers for the defence and there was no jury. Very often the daily court sessions lasted eight hours. The only evidence produced at the trial were the **confessions** of Zinoviev, Kamenev and their co-accused. Each of the defendants was cross-examined and they made public statements admitting their guilt. (See Sources 2 and 3.)

During the trial, some defendants said that the Trotskyists planned their opposition with the help of Nazi Germany. One of the defendants said: 'My connection with the Gestapo (German Secret Police) did not form any exception. This was the line of policy of the Trotskyists in accordance with Trotsky's instructions.' (The Irish Times, 20 August 1936)

The prosecutor, Vyshinsky, took the defendants through their pre-arranged testimony and bullied them. All the accused were found guilty and they were shot early the next morning. The first trial had been successful from Stalin's point of view.

Timeline of the Show Trials		
1934	1 December	The assassination of Kirov in Leningrad
1936	19-24 August	<p><i>Trial of the 16</i></p> <p>Trial of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre' Among the sixteen sentenced to death were Zinoviev and Kamenev</p>
1937	23-30 January	<p><i>Trial of the 17</i></p> <p>Trial of the 'Parallel Trotskyist- Zinovievist Centre' Among those sentenced to death were Pyatakov and Radek</p>
	11 June	<p><i>Trial of the Military Leaders</i></p> <p>The case of the Trotskyist Anti-Soviet Military Organisation is heard by the Supreme Court. Eight military leaders, including commander-in-chief, Mikhail Tukhachevsky, were sentenced to death and executed the following night.</p>
1938	2-13 March	<p><i>Trial of the 21</i></p> <p>Trial of the Anti-Soviet Right-Trotskyist Block. Among those sentenced to death were Alexey Rykov, Bukharin, Kretinsky and Yagoda.</p>

SOURCE 3 - VYSHINSKY'S CROSS-EXAMINATION OF KAMENEV

Vyshinsky: 'What appraisal should be given of the articles and statements you wrote in 1933, in which you expressed loyalty to the Party? Deception?'

Kamenev: 'No, worse than deception.'" Vyshinsky: 'Perfidy?' [Treachery]

Kamenev. 'Worse.'

Vyshinsky: 'Worse than deception, worse than perfidy - find the word. Treason?'

Kamenev: You have found it.'

Vyshinsky's summing-up speech: 'The entire people rose to their feet at the first announcement of this villainy. The entire people is trembling with rage. And I, too, as a representative of the State Prosecutor's office, add my indignant and outraged voice of a State Prosecutor to the roar of the millions! I demand that the mad dogs be shot - every single one of them!'

Transcript of the Trial

QUESTIONS

1. According to W.T. Cosgrave, what advantages did de Valera have as a negotiator?
2. What did Cosgrave mean by the words 'keeping their ablest player in reserve'?
3. How did de Valera regard his own role as 'symbol of the Republic'?
4. In his view, what was a 'shirking of duty'?

SOURCE 4

An American newspaper cartoon from the 1930s.

SOURCE 5 - BOLSHEVIK 'OLD GUARD', KILLED BY MACHINE THEY MADE, FIRING SQUAD FINISH TO MOSCOW TRIAL

This is the first time that members of the Bolshevik 'Old Guard' have met death at the hands of the Soviet executioners... The world may never know how Zinoviev and Kamenev and the fourteen others met their deaths. Details of executions are not published by the Soviet authorities, as they consider the spectacle of capital punishment as barbarous. Executions which are followed by cremations are, therefore, carried out secretly... All the property of the condemned men has been confiscated. Their execution was announced in an inconspicuous paragraph in Pravda this morning, and described by did people that paper as 'enthusiastically approved' by thousands of workers.

Reuter's Correspondent, Moscow, The Irish Times, 25 August 1936

QUESTIONS

1. According to W.T. Cosgrave, what advantages did de Valera have as a negotiator?
2. What did Cosgrave mean by the words 'keeping their ablest player in reserve'?
3. How did de Valera regard his own role as 'symbol of the Republic'?
4. In his view, what was a 'shirking of duty'?

The Second Show Trial, 1937

Background

In late 1936, Germany and Japan formed the Anti-Comintern Pact, which represented an external threat to Soviet Russia. At the same time, a number of industrial accidents in Russia questioned the progress of the Five Year Plans.

WHO WERE RADEK AND PYATAKOV?

Radek and Pyatakov were both supporters of Trotsky in the struggle for power in the 1920s. Both were expelled from the Communist Party but were allowed back in later after they admitted their 'errors'. Radek contributed to the writing of the 1936 Soviet Constitution, while Pyatakov was Deputy Head of Heavy Industries in the Five Year Plans.

The Second Show Trial, 1937

The Trial

At the second Show Trial - **the Trial of the 17** - which lasted eight days, the defendants included **Radek, Pyatakov** and 15 others. These were all former supporters of Trotsky but they did not hold positions of great power. They were described as members of the **Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre**.

They faced similar accusations as Zinoviev and Kamenev faced in the first trial (See Source 6).

The trial followed a similar pattern with Vyshinsky demanding the death penalty and the defendants confessing their guilt. At this trial, 13 were executed and four were sent to labour camps, including Radek. Radek was killed in the camp by the NKVD.

SOURCE 6 - THE CHARGES IN THE SECOND TRIAL

'They were accused of conspiring with Germany and Japan to divide the U.S.S.R. between those two powers. Pyatakov (who had been deputy commissar for heavy industry) was also accused of wrecking and sabotage; he was a convenient scapegoat for the shortcomings of the industrialisation programme.'

JN Westwood, *Endurance and Endeavour: Russian History 1812-1971*

SOURCE 7 - SOVIET NEWSPAPER HEADLINES

'We demand the spies' execution!'

'No mercy for the Trotskyite degenerates, the murderous accomplices of Fascism!'

(Note: degenerate immoral person)

QUESTIONS

1. According to W.T. Cosgrave, what advantages did de Valera have as a negotiator?
2. What did Cosgrave mean by the words 'keeping their ablest player in reserve'?
3. How did de Valera regard his own role as 'symbol of the Republic'?
4. In his view, what was a 'shirking of duty'?

The Third Show Trial, 1938

Background

There was increased **international tension** with Japan expanding in the East and Germany becoming more aggressive in the West. In the Soviet Union, the **army purges of 1937** created greater tensions, and **Yezhov**, leader of the NKVD, intensified the purges generally.

WHO WERE BUKHARIN, RYKOV AND YAGODA?

Bukharin and Rykov worked with Stalin against Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev in the struggle for power in the 1920s. Bukharin put forward the idea of 'Socialism in One Country', which Stalin claimed as his main idea in the struggle with Trotsky. Stalin and the others defeated Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev. But Stalin later changed his mind and demanded rapid industrialisation and collectivisation. Bukharin criticised Stalin and lost his seat in the Politburo. He was later forced to withdraw his views. He contributed to writing the 1936 Soviet Constitution.

Rykov also lost his place in the Politburo but held onto other positions in the Communist administration until his arrest during the Great Purge.

Yagoda was the former head of the NKVD and organiser of the First Show Trial.

The Third Show Trial, 1938

The Trial

The last of the three Show Trials - **the Trial of the 21**- was held in March 1938. **Bukharin, Rykov, Yagoda** and 18 others were tried. This trial is sometimes called the **Great Show Trial** because Bukharin and Rykov had been members of Lenin's Politburo. In Yagoda's case, this was a man who knew more about the Purges than most other people except Stalin. They were accused of:

- being members of the 'Anti-Soviet bloc of Rightists and Trotskyites'
- **wrecking** and **sabotage** to weaken the economy
- attempting to **assassinate** Stalin.

Some doctors in the group were accused of assisting in the murders of Party members.

Before the trial, the newspapers demanded a clear verdict.

Vyshinsky questioned the defendants about their plotting. They admitted a plot involving Fascist circles (Germany). Some defendants moved away from the lines they had learnt, but they were quickly brought back. Bukharin denied he was guilty of individual charges. However, as part of an agreement to save the lives of his wife and child, he still pleaded guilty to the charges in general terms. All the defendants, except three minor officials, were executed.

SOURCE 8 - VYSHINSKY'S CROSS-EXAMINATION

Vyshinsky: 'Can the conclusion be drawn from this that Karakhan, with your knowledge, engaged in negotiations with Fascist circles regarding support for your treasonable activity on definite conditions? Was that the case?'

Rykov: 'Yes.'

Vyshinsky: And what were the conditions?'

Rykov: 'First, a number of economic concessions, and secondly the so-called dismemberment [break-up] of the USSR.'

Vyshinsky: 'Allow me to ask Bukharin. Did you know?'

Bukharin: 'I did.'

Transcript of the Trial

SOURCE 9 - STATEMENTS ON THE TRIALS

The International Association of Lawyers' Statement on the Zinoviev-Kamenev Trial

'We consider the claim that the proceedings were unlawful to be totally unfounded... We hereby categorically declare that the accused were sentenced quite lawfully.'

Report of the US Ambassador, Joseph E Davies, to the State Department

'I have talked to many if not all of the members of the diplomatic corps here, and with possibly one exception, they were all of the opinion that the proceedings established clearly the existence of a political plot and conspiracy to overthrow the government.'

QUESTIONS

1. According to W.T. Cosgrave, what advantages did de Valera have as a negotiator?
2. What did Cosgrave mean by the words 'keeping their ablest player in reserve'?
3. How did de Valera regard his own role as 'symbol of the Republic'?
4. In his view, what was a 'shirking of duty'?

Reaction to the Trials

Stalin had to ensure that the trials were accepted by people, both inside and outside Russia, as legal and properly conducted. Prior to the trial, the Soviet newspapers carried full reports of the indictment (charges) of the accused. During the trials, the newspapers carried daily reports and their headlines demanded severe punishment for the accused (Source 7). By the time the trials ended there was a sense of panic in Russia. The trials indicated that there was a widespread conspiracy with links to foreign countries, including Germany and Japan.

International observers were invited to the trials. These included the US Ambassador, British diplomats and reporters from the New York Times. They believed that the Show Trials were legal and fair (Source 9).

But other international observers did not believe in the trials. They thought they were set up by the Soviet government. The Economist, an influential British magazine, believed that the trials were an attempt to hide the failings of Stalin's government from the people. Some in Western Europe believed that the trials showed up weaknesses in Stalin's rule and they doubted if Soviet Russia would be capable of facing up to the growing threat from Hitler (see also Source 15).

SOURCE 10 - REACTION TO THE SECOND SHOW TRIAL

In Moscow, 200,000 people, bedazzled by propaganda, massed in Red Square, despite temperatures of -27°C , bearing banners that read: 'The court's verdict is the people's verdict.' Khrushchev addressed them denouncing the Judas-Trotsky 'By raising their hand against Comrade Stalin, they raised their hand against all the best that humanity has, because Stalin is hope... Stalin is our banner. Stalin is our will, Stalin is our victory.'

Simon Sebag Montefiore, Stalin, The Court of the Red Tsar, 2003

QUESTIONS

1. According to W.T. Cosgrave, what advantages did de Valera have as a negotiator?
2. What did Cosgrave mean by the words 'keeping their ablest player in reserve'?
3. How did de Valera regard his own role as 'symbol of the Republic'?
4. In his view, what was a 'shirking of duty'?

Stalin's role

Stalin directed the Purges and Show Trials. He took a close and detailed interest in the interrogations of the accused and in the trials themselves. He directed actions within the Politburo against his enemies. He instructed **Yagoda** first, and after him **Yezhov**, to torture some to obtain confessions. *'Don't come to report to me until you have in this briefcase the confession of Kamenev,'* was one of his threats. He took pleasure in hearing the details of his opponents' reaction and suffering. He wrote some of the scripts which the defendants had to learn off, admitting their guilt, and even on occasions the summing up of the prosecutor, Vyshinsky. He signed many of the lists in the purges which authorised thousands of executions.

But that role was disguised from the people and even from those who were arrested. Instead the Purges were known in Russian as the **Yezhovshchina**, after Yezhov, the head of the NKVD (Sources 11, 12).

SOURCE 11-YEVTUSHENKO, THE POET, REMEMBERS

'Many genuine old Bolsheviks who were arrested at this time simply refused to believe that this had happened with his [Stalin's] knowledge, still less on his personal instructions. They wrote to him. Some of them, after being tortured, inscribed "Long Live Stalin" in blood on the walls of their prison.'

SOURCE 12 - VYSHINSKY SPEAKING DURING BUKHARIN'S TRIAL, 1938

'Time will pass. The graves of the odious traitors will be overgrown with weeds, covered with the eternal contempt of Soviet people, of the whole Soviet nation. But over us, over our happy country, our sun will shine with its bright rays as clearly and joyfully as before. We, our nation, will walk as we did before, on a road cleansed of the last impurity and vileness of the past, following our beloved leader and teacher - the great Stalin - forward and ever forward, to Communism!'

Transcript of the Trial

QUESTIONS

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Assessment

The Show Trials have a special place in the general history of the Purges.

- Stalin used them to **discipline** the Soviet population, as well as close associates in the Party who feared they could be next. The Trials left him in **complete charge** of the Party and the country. He had strengthened the totalitarian system that Lenin had created.
- Stalin had eliminated the **Old Bolsheviks** in the Party and the army and replaced them with a new leadership which would be loyal to him.
- He also used the Trials as **propaganda** because, for example, various problems in Russian society could be blamed on **wreckers** or outside agents (Source 6).
- These internal and external enemies were used to create **unity** in the Soviet Union and support for Stalin as leader (Sources 6, 8).
- The Show Trials were used to increase the **intensity** of purges in the Soviet Union so that the numbers arrested, sent to gulags and killed increased during the Great Purge (or Terror) from 1936 to 1938.
- The Show Trials created a **veneer of justice** which allowed Western supporters of Stalin and the communism system to argue that a real threat and conspiracy existed.

Assessment

During Stalin's lifetime, one view was expressed in Russia about the Show Trials. While speaking during the Bukharin Trial, Vyshinsky passed his judgment on 'the odious traitors' and on the future of the Soviet Union, and praised 'our beloved leader and teacher - the great Stalin'. Soviet history books provided similar views about what happened (Sources 12, 13).

In 1953, Stalin died and **Khrushchev** took over as leader of the Soviet Union. He set up a Commission to investigate the Purges. At the twentieth Party Congress he condemned Stalin in a wide-ranging speech, which included the findings of the Commission on the Purges and Show Trials (Source 14).

SOURCE 13 - HISTORY BOOK

'The chief instigator and ringleader of this gang of assassins and spies was Judas Trotsky. Trotsky's assistants and agents in carrying out his counter-revolutionary instructions were Zinoviev, Kamenev and their Trotskyite underlings [assistants]. They were preparing to bring about the defeat of the USSR in the event of attack by imperialist countries; ... they had become despicable tools and agents of the German and Japanese Fascists.'

History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1939)

SOURCE 14 - KHRUSHCHEV'S SPEECH TO THE TWENTIETH PARTY CONGRESS, 1956

'The Commission has become acquainted with a large quantity of materials in the NKVD archives and with other documents, and has established many facts relating to false accusations and glaring abuses of Soviet law which resulted in the death of innocent people. Many Party, Soviet and economic activists who were branded in 1937-8 as enemies were actually never enemies, spies, wreckers etc., but were always honest Communists. Often, no longer able to bear barbaric tortures, they charged themselves with all kinds of grave and unlikely crimes.'

Quoted in N Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers

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SOURCE 15-BRITISH CARTOON ON STALIN

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Present-day controversy

The Stalin Purges and Show Trials still cause controversy. Historians differ on their interpretations concerning what happened in the 1930s. Present-day admirers of Stalin and Trotsky also differ on what happened then.

One of those who experienced the gulags (labour camps), Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who was neither a supporter of Stalin or Trotsky, took a very different view of the Show Trials, regarding them as 'three plays'.

'Dumbfounded, the world watched three plays.. in which the powerful leaders of the fearless Communist Party .. confessed to crimes they could not in any way have committed.'

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SUMMARY OF STALIN'S SHOW TRIALS, 1936-8

- Stalin organised the Show Trials because he wanted to get rid of his enemies, ensure his own power and blame others for the problems of industrialisation and collectivisation.
- The Show Trials were sparked off by the assassination of Kirov. Stalin blamed it on enemies of the people.
- In each trial, the accused were forced to confess to crimes; they learned off a prepared text or script that they followed in court.
- Stalin controlled the Show Trials - he ensured that the NKVD got written confessions; he wrote some of the script; he decided who was to be arrested and tried; and he decided the punishment.
- Many foreign observers believed the trials were legal and that there was a conspiracy against the Soviet Union.
- Soviet newspapers and radio gave huge coverage to the trials and people believed in the conspiracy.
- Results: Stalin had a greater control of the country; he got rid of likely opponents and installed younger leaders; the Show Trials were part of the Great Purge which resulted in millions of people being arrested and sent to gulags (labour camps), including Party members, Soviet army officers and ordinary people.

SUMMARY OF STALIN'S SHOW TRIALS, 1936-8

<p><i>First Show Trial (Trial of the 16)</i></p>	<p>Zinoviev, Kamenev and 14 others</p>	<p>Murder of Kirov, planning to kill Stalin, plotting with Trotsky, members of Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre</p>
<p><i>Second Show Trial (Trial of the 17)</i></p>	<p>Radek, Pyatakov and 15 others</p>	<p>Conspiring with Germany and Japan, wrecking and sabotage of industry, plotting with Trotsky, members of Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre</p>
<p><i>Third Show Trial (Trial of the 21)</i></p>	<p>Bukharin, Rykov, Yagoda and 18 others</p>	<p>Attempting to assassinate Stalin, wrecking and sabotage of the economy, members of the Anti-Soviet Bloc of Rightists and Trotskyites</p>

WEB RESOURCES

- Stalin's Terror - <http://www.johndclare.net/Russ12.htm>
- The Great Purge - <http://spartacus-educational.com/RUSpurge.htm>
- Moscow Trials http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscow_Trials
- Great Purge - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Purge
- Stalin's Purges - http://www.gendercide.org/case_stalin.html
- Animal Farm - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animal_Farm Search
- YouTube under 'Stalin's Show Trials' and 'Stalin's Purges'.

EXAM QUESTION

1. How did Stalin use the Purges and Show Trials to consolidate his power in the Soviet Union?
2. How did Stalin use propaganda and terror to stay in power? (2015)