

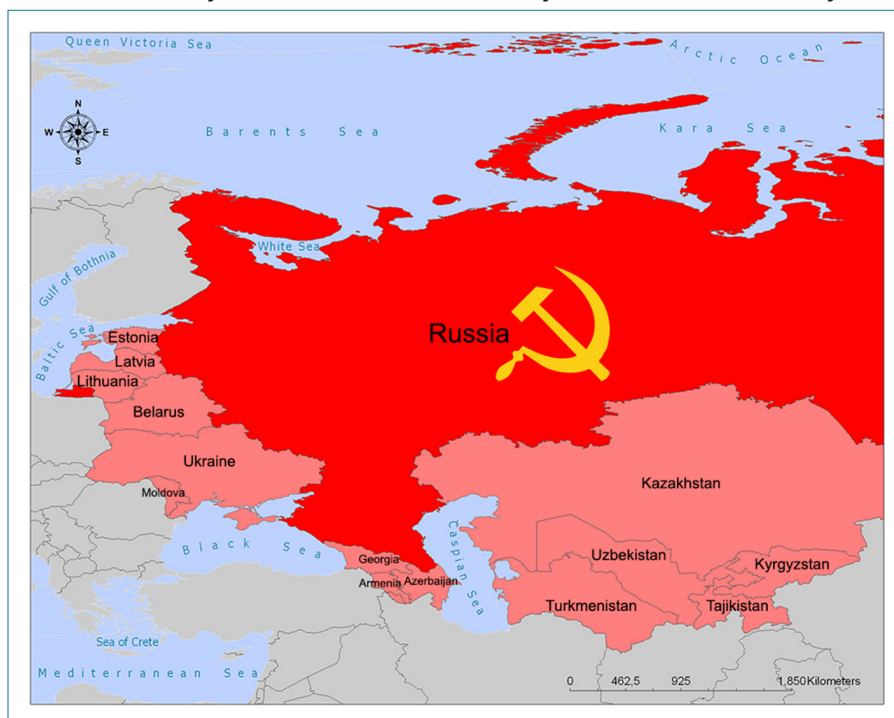
**Subject : Junior Cycle History**  
**Teacher : Niall Lenehan**

**LESSON 18**  
**Life in Communist Russia**

## Learning Intentions

1. Understand life in a Communist Country: The USSR

3.9 examine life in one fascist country and one communist country in the twentieth century



The Communist Russian Empire (USSR)

## Key words - Define these

Cult of Personality

Gulags

Collectivisation

Propaganda

Show Trials

Dictatorship

Communism

## What was Communism?

- A Communist society was a '**classless society**' which had no rich or poor and everyone was to be equal.
- To achieve this, Communist governments achieved **abolished private ownership of land, property and businesses** as they believed this created an unequal society.

## Communist takeover of Russia

- For centuries, Russia had been ruled by a monarchy (One ruling family). The head of the **monarchy** was the Tsar (king).
- Russia's poor performance in the First World War resulted in severe economic hardship. This led to severe anger among Russian people.



The Last Tsar: Tsar Nicholas II and his family

- **Vladimir Lenin** and the **Bolsheviks (Communist Party)** used this opportunity to try a takeover of Russia.
- They achieved this following the **February** and **October** Revolutions of 1917.
- Russia was now a Communist state. The new government seized land, businesses and factories. All other political parties were banned.



The Last Tsar: Tsar Nicholas II and his family

- Challenges to the new government resulted in the **Russian civil war**. (1918-21).
- The Communist army (**The Reds**) were led by **Leon Trotsky**. They defeated the opposition anti-Communist force (**The Whites**).
- In 1922, the Russia and its empire was renamed the **USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)**.

- Communist leader Vladimir Lenin died in January 1924; A power struggle emerged between Communist Party members who wanted to become his successor.
- **Joseph Stalin** emerged from this struggle as the new leader of the USSR.



Joseph Stalin

### Life in Communist Russia

- The USSR became a **totalitarian state** and had total control over every aspect of peoples lives.
- All forms of media were heavily censored, and **propaganda** was used to control the minds of people.
- A cult of personality was created around Joseph Stalin to create a god-like image of him.
- People were spied on by secret police (NKVD). Enemies of the state were thrown into forced labour camps (Gulags).

### Recap exercise 18.1

**Q1.** What was Communism?

**Q2.** Why did Russian people become unhappy with the Tsar?

**Q3.** How did the Communist party get into power?

**Q4.** What was life like in Communist Russia?

### Economic policies

- Soviet agricultural and industrial output was transformed in two ways.
- 1. Collectivisation focused on farming. All land was taken from landowners by the government and reorganized into collective farms state-run farms.
- Many landowning peasants resisted collectivization. Millions were killed or sent to gulags as a result.



Resistance to collectivisation

## 2. The Five-Year Plans focused on increasing industrial output.

- c. The first **Five-Year Plan (1928-32)** focused on steel, coal and oil output.
  - d. The second **Five-Year Plan (1933-37)** focused on industry, transport links and consumer goods.
  - e. The third **Five-Year Plan (1938-41)** ended up focusing on the production of arms following the Nazi invasion of the USSR.
- Holidays were used as an incentive for workers. However, working conditions were terrible and those who did not meet their quotas were severely punished.



## Terror

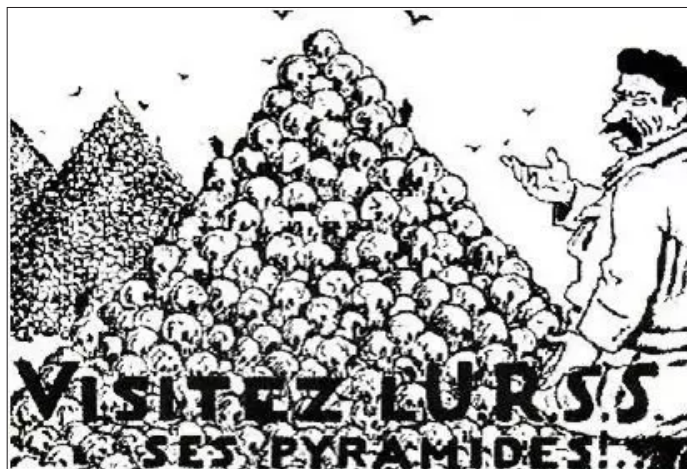
- ♦ **Stalin used various forms of terror to eliminate political opponents and to keep the population under control.**
  1. **The Show Trials** were used by Stalin to trial political opponents who could potentially take power.
- ♦ **Suspects were accused of outrageous crimes and admitted to these under brutal torture.**
- ♦ **Most suspects were executed. Many were members of Stalin's own Bolshevik Communist party.**
  2. **Gulags** were forced labour camps that were used to imprison enemies of the state.
- ♦ **There were 30,000 gulags throughout the Soviet Union.**
- ♦ **Life in a Gulag consisted of hard labour, horrible living conditions and a lack of food. Two million would die in gulags.**



Prisoners in a gulag



3. **The Purges** were extreme methods of eliminating Stalin's political and military opponents.
- After the assassination of a Communist party member, Stalin had an excuse to purge Communist party members he suspected of overthrowing him.
  - Thousands of Communist party members and Red Army commanders were executed or sent to gulags. Stalin used his secret police (NKVD) to carry out the purges.



Cartoon of Stalin's Purges

### Healthcare in Communist Russia

- **Healthcare** improved dramatically under Communism.
- **Free universal government funded healthcare** was made available for all Soviet citizens.
- Healthcare was unavailable under the previous Tzarist regimes. Life expectancy increased from just 33 years of age in 1890 to 69 years of age in the 1950's as a result.



New hospitals were built throughout Russia

### Education in Communist Russia

- **Education** was either unavailable or out of reach for Russians during the Tzarist regime.
- This resulted in extremely high illiteracy rates among Russians.
- Education became compulsory for all children in 1919. By the 1970's, 99% of all adults could read and write.

## Women in Communist Russia

- ♦ **The Life of women** improved under Communism. The Bolsheviks believed that women had a big part to play in the Soviet workforce.
- ♦ Women were encouraged to work and provided with incentives such as **maternity leave, wage equality and paid leave.**
- ♦ Organisations such as **Zhenotdel** were set up to campaign for equal rights for women in the home and in the workplace.



Women working in Russian factories

### 18.2 Exam Prep

**Q1.** Explain one way in which Communist States used terror against their civilian populations

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**Q2.** Explain one way in which propaganda was used in Communist Russia

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**Q3.** What was meant by the term collectivization?

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**Q4.** What was life like for women living in Communist Russia?

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### 18.3 Homework Correction

**Q. Write an account of life in a fascist country you have studied. In your answer, refer to at least two of the following:**

- How Fascists came to power
- Propaganda
- Use of terror
- The life of young people
- The Role of Women
- The economy
- Racial policies

**Answer:** Hitler and the Nazi party came to power in 1933 when President Hindenburg appointed Hitler as Chancellor. Due to the economic hardship experienced after WW1, many Germans turned against the weak Weimar government. People began to support the Nazi party as they promised to fix many of the problems in Germany. Once in power, Hitler enacted the Enabling Act which gave him the power to ban all other political parties and create a dictatorship.

The Nazis made sure to heavily influence young people to indoctrinate them. Groups such as the Hitler Youth were set up to brainwash young German boys. They were also taught how to fire weapons as they were being prepared to be the soldiers of the future. German girls joined the League of German maidens where they were taught to be good housewives and mothers.

The German economy grew under Nazi leadership. Public work schemes were set up to get rid of unemployment. Hitler also commissioned the development of the Volkswagen car which was meant to be affordable to everybody. He rearmed the military which also created many new jobs in both industry and the military. By the late 1930's unemployment was almost non-existent.