

## RUSSIAN HISTORY – 20<sup>th</sup> Century

**Overview** At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, more than eighty percent of Russia still lived in the countryside. In Russian society literacy was very low, and the economy was still based on agriculture. Industrialization created a new class of wage workers, but it was one of the poorest among the European countries. Rapid industrialization also increased literacy, and for the educated members of society the Russian monarchy was ineffective in governing the country. The autocratic monarchy failed to grant the people a constitution and a parliament. The government's attempts to suppress any opposing ideology, combined with a lack of political dialogue with educated society resulted in a growing social and political crisis. It was clear that Russia was unable to carry out the type of economic and social reforms that would be required to catch up with Western Europe.

Russia's disastrous participation in the Russo-Japanese War and World War I made the Tsar unpopular, and the Tsar was becoming more and more alienated from ordinary Russians. There was increasing discontent throughout the country, and many educated members of Russian society wanted to express their concerns, but there were no legal means to do so, therefore they joined in revolutionary movements. The Bloody Sunday event and the following Revolution of 1905 created a wave of mass political and social unrest in the country. To calm the situation down, the Tsar established the Duma in 1905 and issued the October Manifesto granting basic civil rights. However, it was too late to prevent the fall of the Empire.

### EVENTS

The Great Reforms led to the formation of a number of various opposition movements in the second half of Alexander II's reign; among them were pan-Slavism, populism, terrorism, socialism, and conservative reaction.

Intellectuals who believed that the Russian people—the peasants – would be the salvation of the country were populists known as *narodniki*. Acting on French and British utopian socialist ideas, they would take the lead in the mid-1870s in leading popular movements.

**Revolutionary Movements:** During the 1890's, in response to widespread anger over the famine of 1891-1892, the revolutionary movement revived along two lines.

**Populism (Narodnichestvo):** One was an updated version of populism that in 1901 took the form of a new political party, the Socialist Revolutionaries who clung to the old vision of a peasant revolution and resorted to political assassination through their fearless "combat section."

**Marxism:** The second trend was Marxism. Marxism itself grew out of the thinking of the German philosopher and revolutionary socialist Karl Marx, whose ideas were based on his study of the evolution of capitalism in Western Europe.

**Bloody Sunday:** Defeat in the Russo-Japanese War and problems at home brought the tensions to the breaking point. In light of the government's wartime failure, liberals, moderates, and even members of the nobility realized that there was a need for political change. In defiance of government prohibitions, they organized a series of public meetings to demand reform.

Starting in 1901, the Russian secret police had been organizing workers into unions that it secretly controlled, in order to divert them from political activity that might threaten the regime. The project was abandoned in 1903 after several of these unions joined in the strikes in the southern part of the country. It was revived in St. Petersburg in 1904 by the Orthodox priest, Father Georgy Gapon. In January 22 1905 Gapon marched with a large crowd of workers and their families to the Winter Palace to present a petition to the tsar asking him to enact measures to improve their lives. The crowd, numbering about 200,000, carried banners, pictures of the tsar, and icons. Gapon personally carried the petition on behalf of his

followers that he expected to hand directly to the tsar. But the tsar was not in the palace; and the crowd was met by armed troops who opened fire, killing hundreds of men, women, and children and turning that date into *Bloody Sunday*.

Bloody Sunday was followed by a series of strikes, protests, riots, and other forms of defiance and rebellion that are collectively known as the Revolution of 1905.

**Revolution of 1905:** On October 26, 1905, there was a general strike in St. Petersburg, and the city's workers organized what they called the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies. Led primarily by Mensheviks, the Soviet included workers' representatives from all across the city; it also had members of the radical intelligentsia, the most notable being the young Social Democratic Leon Trotsky.

#### **Government response to the strikes:**

**Duma and October Manifesto:** The Duma was established in response to the 1905 revolution and the results of Bloody Sunday. The freedoms granted in the October Manifesto were soon cancelled.

Smaller uprisings continued to appear elsewhere, but they were ruthlessly eliminated at a considerable cost in lives during 1906. In addition to the army and police, the government enlisted the services of reactionary gangs called Black Hundreds. While supporting national representation and the need to improve the life of peasants and workers, they also upheld absolutism and anti-Semitism.

Russia had a genuine parliament (Duma), but the country continued to experience revolutionary and counterrevolutionary violence.

**Collapsed Economy:** Based on gross production Russia was a major industrial power, but based on per capita production it was outclassed not only by major industrial powers such as Great Britain and Germany, but even by semi-industrialized countries such as Spain and Italy. Meanwhile, as industrial production grew, so did the number of strikes by exploited factory workers. The Stolypin reforms produced a class of well-to-do peasants, but many other peasants sank deeper into poverty.

By early 1917 Russia's major cities, including Moscow and St. Petersburg, suffered severe shortages of food and fuel due to the war. The country also suffered from desertions, strikes and demonstrations, and outbreaks of cholera and typhus.

**End of the Empire:** A large demonstration of women in the capital in February 1917 protesting high bread prices led to a general strike, and within a week, on March 2, 1917 Nicholas II had abdicated in favor of his brother Michael Alexandrovich. On March 3 Michael refused the throne. This brought the Romanov dynasty to an end, and the Romanov dynasty was replaced by a Provisional Government.

The Royal family was placed under house arrest in their palace at Tsarskoye Selo from March to August 1917. In August they were sent to Tobolsk in Siberia. After the Bolsheviks seized power in November 1917, they were transferred to Yekaterinburg, where on July 27, 1918; the entire family was shot by order of the local soviet.

#### Discussion/Questions

- 1- How did the Age of Enlightenment affect Russian intellectuals?
- 2- What was the social impact of revolutionary ideas in Russia?
- 3- Which thinkers and philosophies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century played an important role among the Russian revolutionaries?
- 4- Which political movements that evolved in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century affected Russian society and culture?

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## POLITICAL HISTORY

### GOVERNMENT

**October Manifesto and Creation of Duma Monarchy:** The Bloody Sunday movement and the first revolution of 1905, both of which took place in the aftermath of the disastrous Russo-Japanese War, led to the tsarist government making significant changes to the existing system of government. In the revolution of 1905 masses of workers and peasants led by intellectuals revolted against the autocracy and demanded the rule of law and a constituent assembly. Despite the failure of the revolution of 1905, when combined with strikes, demonstrations, economic problems, famine, military defeat and high casualties in the war tsar Nicholas II was pressured to initiate some reforms and make some serious concessions to his people. He issued his *October Manifesto*, drafted by his minister of finance Sergei Witte, which announced the creation of a *State Duma*. The Manifesto promised the people of the empire basic civil rights. Later, the freedoms granted in the manifesto were canceled. The tsar still made executive decisions when the Duma was not in session, had the right to dissolve it anytime, and veto any legislation. The First Duma was dissolved because they demanded radical land reform, and the Second Duma suffered a similar fate. Russia had a real parliament, but the country continued to experience revolutionary and counterrevolutionary violence.

**Stolypin's Agrarian Refoms:** After the Duma's dissolution, the minister of the interior Peter Stolypin introduced a plan to create a prosperous landowning class. Stolypin's agrarian reforms also gave the peasants opportunities to leave their village to set up separate farms. This reform allowed peasants to purchase land through the Peasant Bank and to migrate to Siberia and Russian Central Asia from overpopulated provinces. By 1916 about half of all peasant households had left their communes and owned their land privately.

However, Russia went through a famine in 1906-1907, in 1911 discontent in factories and universities resurfaced, and new problems appeared as industrial politics became increasingly important.

**World War I:** During WWI Nicholas II took the command of the army in 1915 and left control of the government to the tsarina and Rasputin, a self-proclaimed holy man. Rasputin and the tsarina shifted ministers without reason, did not know how to exercise governmental power, and the Duma and the government were left without national leadership. The Duma immediately formed a *Progressive Bloc* led by the Kadets and Octobrists parties which advocated a government capable of winning public confidence, demanded political amnesty, religious freedom, and freedom for trade unions. Premier Goremykin rejected this attempt to limit the autocrat's power, and in 1916 the relations between the Duma and the executive organ worsened when Duma deputies accused the government and the tsarina of conspiring with the Germans.

Meanwhile, by early 1917 there were 7 million dead, wounded, captured and missing in the Russian army, and Moscow and St. Petersburg were desperately short of food. Strikes were widespread and Nicholas II did nothing to stop them; in March 1917, revolutionaries brought down the autocracy, the Romanov Dynasty. The country fell into the hands of liberal and moderate elites who quickly organized the Provisional Government, ending three hundred years of Romanov autocracy.

**Provisional Government and Petrograd Soviet:** The Provisional Government was to exercise authority until a democratically elected Constituent Assembly could establish a permanent regime. The Government granted full freedom of speech, press, assembly, and religion, and equality to all citizens. Provincial

governors were abolished and local governmental officials were elected. Restrictions on minority groups were lifted. However, the Provisional Government's intention to remain in the war, unreliable concessions, and weakness led to the formation of an alternate center of power, the Petrograd Soviet, a proletarian organ. The Petrograd Soviet, unlike the Provisional Government, demanded an immediate end to the war; confiscation of private land; the destruction of the bureaucracy, the army and the police; and the cession of all state power to the workers' soviets. The Provisional Government began to lose the battle in the factories, in the countryside and in the army. The Bolsheviks gained control in most of the urban soviets, and expelled the Provisional Government. However, when the Bolsheviks failed to win a majority of seats in elections for the Constituent Assembly and Lenin forcibly dissolved the assembly, indicating that their intention was one-man, one-party rule, they found themselves at war with their various opponents.

In 1922 the Bolsheviks proclaimed the formation of the Soviet Union which was organized into a type of ethnic federal system, and Lenin urged all of the 15 republics to create a system of national republics, equal in status, and allowed them limited autonomy. But during Stalin's rule these republics were subject to the authoritarian control of the central government.

**Totalitarian System:** During Stalin the government was highly centralized, and all other parties and cultural organizations were all closed. The political system was run by the Communist Party, the Politburo and the government ministries. The monolithic state supervised and controlled the lives of all of its citizens; any opposition was significantly diminished and via purges Soviet citizens disappeared or were eliminated. The legal basis of the Soviet political system was the Constitution of 1936, but it meant little in practice. The central government retained full power, and all nationalities had their territories and cultural institutions, but the All Union Communist Party, dominated by the Russians, ran everything. The government exercised an intense Russification and assimilation policy, and forced collectivization and industrialization.

**De-Stalinization:** After Stalin's death in 1953 none of his successors gained his arbitrary power. Khrushchev preserved the main features of the Soviet system, but denounced Stalin's crimes, loosened control over Soviet satellites, and urged a return to Leninism and collective leadership. He increased the party's authority over the technocrats. He reduced political control in all spheres of life to encourage the citizens to have a stronger commitment to socialism through greater participation in the system. Despite his efforts, he earned the enmity of other Party members, and the Presidium demanded his resignation.

**Gerontocracy:** Andropov and Chernenko maintained the old Soviet system by relying on their past experience, and advocate no reforms. However, this policy produced no beneficial results for the Soviet Union, because conditions within the country had changed and it needed to be reformed.

**Gorbachev's Democratization:** Mikhail Gorbachev became the General Secretary in 1985, and introduced a series of political and economic reforms to improve the stalled Soviet economy, and bring more flexibility to the government. In order to revive the economy, Gorbachev introduced *perestroika*, meaning restructuring. *Perestroika* allowed more freedoms in the market economy, but also allowed opposition groups to speak out against government policy. However, Gorbachev's democratization and liberalization set a series of events into motion that, in some ways, played an important role in the fall of communism, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the calls for independence from the Soviet republics.

#### Discussion/Questions

- 1- What was the social impact of revolutionary ideas in Russia?
- 2- Which political movements that evolved in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century affected Russian society?
- 3-Why did the Provisional Government fail against the Petrograd Soviets?
- 4- What were the political impacts of Gorbachev's democratization?

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## MILITARY

**Interest in the Far East:** Russia had never abandoned its imperialistic and expansionist policy, particularly in the Far East, that aimed at creating a sphere of influence in the region. It attempted to unite its dissatisfied and oppressed citizens through a “small victorious war” with Japan without considering the potential cost of the war. When Japan launched a surprise attack on Port Arthur in Manchuria in 1904, the Russian army was caught by surprise. The Russian army was not prepared to fight against the technologically superior Japanese army. The poorly planned war with Japan ended disastrously, with almost all of the Russian fleet was destroyed or captured. This war showed that Russian army was still backward, the troops were led by inept generals unable to foresee how the war could develop, and untrained troops drawn into this *battle* could not fight without adequate arms or ammunition. Nicholas II and his leading generals also did not consider the distance they had to cover to reach the Far East, having to cross thousands of miles to reach the front. In addition, the economy was very weak, and the territory being fought over was not very important to Russia. As a result, the Russian people did not support Russian involvement in the war.

**First Revolution of 1905:** In 1905, there were revolutionary movements across Russia, mass strikes, famine, and military mutinies in which soldiers defied the orders of their officers and issued economic and political demands. After the event known as Bloody Sunday on 22 January 1905 and the successive waves of mass strikes, Nicholas II had to seek a negotiated end to the war.

**World War I:** Under the unimproved political and economic conditions the demoralized army had no time to recover, and the Russian society and the army were not ready for a total war, World War I in 1914. World War I proved that both the Russian army and the empire were insufficiently modernized to wage a major war with the European great powers. Although by 1914 the active army numbered 1.4 million men, the overwhelming majority of young men in the empire never received any military training at all. As the number of casualties increased in the World War I, the Empire experienced difficulties in finding men to fill the ranks. Therefore, the non-Russian minorities were drafted into the army, but ethnic minorities met with considerable discrimination within the army.

The Russian army was also exhausted by the Russo-Japanese War and 1905 Revolution, and the high number of casualties, economic distress, inadequate infrastructure, arms and ammunition, and neglected social problems that had accumulated for centuries increased discontent to the level that the soldiers began to disobey the orders of their officers. It was this army that had helped the Empire to survive, but, now it was the same army that would bring it down. Participation in World War I was the final stage of this discontent, and was the time that the Russian army abandoned their Holy Father, the Tsar. Vladimir Lenin opposed World War I calling it an imperialistic war, encouraged proletariat soldiers not to take any order from their officers, and instead, to fight against the enemies of the revolution at home. *The Russian military* mutinied, the *troops deserted* soon afterward, demoralized army troops joined the strikers, and Nicholas II was forced to abdicate causing the Empire to collapse.

**Provisional Government verses Petrograd Soviet:** Unlike the Bolsheviks, the Provisional Government had decided to keep the Russian army in the war. However, the Petrograd Soviet forbade soldiers and workers to obey the Provisional Government unless the Soviets agreed. The Petrograd Soviet released Order #1, demanding that military units establish soldier committees, and announcing that the Soviets could veto the directives of the Provisional Government. Although this was a direct challenge to the Provisional Government's authority, the Provisional Government did nothing to stop the power of the Petrograd Soviet creating an alternate power. The Provisional Government set up death squads to execute army deserters, but this treatment increased rage against the government. When there was a pro-Tsar coup led by General Kornilov in 1917, the Provisional Government could not suppress the riot and had to call in the Bolsheviks to help it. This weakened the Provisional Government, but strengthened the Bolsheviks.

**The Establishment of the Red Army:** The establishment of the world's first revolutionary army, the Red army, was announced on January 28, 1918 by Lenin in a decree, with Leon Trotsky founding the army and

becoming the first commissar for war. Trotsky recruited 50,000 experienced former Imperial Army officers to command the Red Army. The Red Army served the world's first communist state and it was created not only to defend this state against counterrevolutionaries inside, but also against the capitalist, bourgeois states outside. In addition, it served as the political instrument of the revolution, and was also closely supervised by the Communist Party by having a political leader (*politruk*) in each unit who was appointed by the Bolsheviks to monitor the troops and the officers. To an extent that over 90% of all officers and personnel in the army were the members of the Communist Party or Komsomol. Unlike Western armies, the Bolshevik army did not serve a general national interest, it served class struggle and world revolution. Lenin's goal was to spread the revolution abroad and to expand Soviet influence throughout the world. The Comintern, established in March 1919, functioned as an organ to promote international revolution, and to establish Soviet control over countries in the West by using all available means, including military force, to overthrow existing capitalist regimes; however, the world revolution never materialized.

**Civil War:** During the Civil War, the Red Army fought the White armies, the opponents of the Bolshevik regime, as well as foreign interventionists, and also Russia's former allies such as the Britain and France which decided to eradicate *the Bolshevik* regime in order to prevent the spread of communism westward.

After the Bolsheviks won the Civil War, the Red Army became a professional military organization, and was transformed into a small regular force; territorial militias were created for wartime mobilization. The Bolsheviks opened military schools to alleviate the shortages of professional military personnel in the Soviet military.

**Industrialization and the Soviet Army:** During Joseph Stalin's rule, industrialization required a modernized army. Stalin began by changing the name of the Red Army to the Soviet Army, and increasing military expenditures and the capacity of the army. He introduced the old ranking system, and the rank of Marshal became the highest rank in the Soviet army. The Soviet Army was predominantly Russian in national composition. Stalin dissolved national military formations, and turned them into ethnically integrated units, and the territorial militias were abolished and replaced by a regular army in 1935. The class restrictions on military service were lifted through the constitution of 1936. All citizens became subject to military service, and serve in ethnically mixed units; however, the potential disloyalty of ethnic groups was a major concern in the conscription of the Soviet army.

In 1937 Stalin came to see the military as a threat to his authority, removed rivals who opposed his high military spending and rapid industrialization policy, and executed thousands of Red Army officers, severely reducing the capacity of the army in the process. The killing of more than 700,000 shook the foundations of the Soviet Army.

**World War II:** Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 caught Soviet forces unprepared. At the beginning of World War II the Red Army had 5 million men, and but this number reached 30 million towards the end of the war. The Soviets even conscripted women and used them in combat as pilots and snipers. The conscription of large numbers of young men was the greatest constraint on the Soviet economy as it created labor and food shortages. Rations fell in urban areas, and the millions of prisoners in Gulag labor camps were starving, boosting their death rate. Stalin felt that prisoners of war and minorities could not be trusted, and deportations began. First, the German population of the Soviet Union was deported to Siberia and Central Asia; later Stalin, accusing the Chechens of collaborating with the Germans, deported the entire Chechen nation to Central Asia in February 1944. Others followed.

During the war, the majority of Soviet equipment was obsolete and inferior to that of the Germans. But, their Rattenkrieg (War of the Rats), scorched earth and Maskirovka tactics, and the ice helped them to cut off enemy supplies, and force them to surrender.

Many of the Soviet forces who helped to liberate the countries of Eastern Europe from German occupation remained in the region even after Germany's surrender in 1945. This was done to establish satellite states to create a buffer zone between Germany and the Soviet Union, and to spread the Soviet's political and economic influence in the region.

**Cold War:** After the war ended, however, the Cold War emerged out of a conflict between Stalin and Harry S. Truman over the future of the seven Eastern European communist states during the Potsdam Conference in 1945.

The defeat of the Germans cost the lives of over seven million soldiers and twenty-seven million civilians. By the end of World War II, the Soviet army had been reduced to 13 million men. After the war ended, the Soviets realized that they needed advanced weaponry, and to create more modernized and mobile armed forces. Accordingly, they reduced the number of army personnel to five million, introduced new weapons like the AK-47 and vehicles like the BMP-1, the first infantry fighting vehicle.

**Nuclear Weapons:** The Soviet Union tested their first atomic bomb *First Lightning* (also RDS-1 or Izdeliye 501) on 29 August 1949, after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and continued to develop nuclear weapons in full force. It was not until 1963 that the Soviets and the US signed a treaty to ban nuclear proliferation in Antarctica, and nuclear weapons testing in the atmosphere, underwater, and in space.

**Warsaw Pact:** During the Cold War, in 1955 the Soviets created the Warsaw Pact, a mutual defense organization, to counterbalance the NATO alliance, and used this alliance to invade Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 to suppress the disturbances, and keep these countries within the Warsaw Pact.

In 1968 Brezhnev officially asserted the Soviet Union's right to intervene in other nation's internal affairs in order to defend socialist regimes against any intervention of the capitalist countries. The Brezhnev doctrine was also used to justify the invasion, and the creation of an *Afghan* satellite state in 1979. Ten years of war ended when Gorbachev ordered the Soviet troops to withdraw in early 1989; it had cost approximately 20 billion dollars a year, and resulted in 15,000 Soviet casualties.

**Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty:** A brief warming of relations with the US began in 1972, when Brezhnev and Richard Nixon signed the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT), freezing certain US and Soviet weapons systems. However, this period known as *détente* was short-lived; relations again became strained when Soviets troops invaded Afghanistan in 1979 during the presidency of the stringently anti-communist Ronald Reagan. A second SALT agreement was signed in June 1979 in Vienna, but never ratified by the United States Senate due to the breakdown of *détente* in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

**Soviet Defense Industry:** In the 1980s, the Soviets dedicated a quarter of their total state budget to the defense industry. The Soviet Union maintained the largest nuclear weapons stockpile in the world. It was estimated by the Natural Resources Defense Council that in 1986 the number of Soviet nuclear warheads reached their highest number, approximately 45,000. The Soviet Union built 50,000 T-54/55 tanks between 1954 and 1980. Even after the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Russian defense industry remained the largest in the world, larger than even those of the United States, China, Britain and France.

#### Discussion/Questions

1. What factors led the Soviets to invade and fight in Afghanistan?
2. Why did the Soviets sign the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty?
3. What were the main points of Soviet military doctrine?

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## **SOCIAL HISTORY**

### CLASSES

**Classless Society:** To build a communist society, the Soviets' first task was to eliminate all exploiting classes, such as landlords, merchants, kulaks etc., and create a classless, socialist society. With the elimination of the exploiting classes in the Soviet Union, there would be no barriers blocking the way for the development of a socialist country. Their goal was for the nation's income to be totally dedicated to providing for all of the workers' needs, both private and social. Class antagonism would be replaced by the shared interests and goals of all levels of the population. The elimination of conflict and distrust between all nations, national groups and nationalities within the Soviet Union would lead to mutual friendship, resulting in true, fraternal cooperation among all peoples in this single, federated state.

**Working class (Proletariat):** Imperial Russia was backward economically, and its working class small, around 4 percent of the population. The Bolsheviks' main task was to establish the hegemony of the proletariat, abolish the capitalist economic system, and establish socialist ownership of the means of production. The working class of the Soviet Union had become politicized, and were the backbone of the revolution.

**Peasants:** After the peasants were emancipated from all exploitation, the peasant began to survive on their own without any landlords, kulaks and usurers exploiting them. During the enforced collectivization process, the majority of peasants were compelled to join the collective farms.

**Nomenklatura:** *Nomenklatura* was the term used to classify the Stalinist and post-Stalin members of the Soviet bureaucracy. The *Nomenklatura* included all Communist Party members, government officials, and senior officers in the army. *Apparatchiki*, who were the full-time Party officials, were also considered *Nomenklatura*. The term *Partapparat* was also used to denote this privileged ruling class in the Soviet Union.

**Intellectuals:** The intellectuals in the Soviet Union had also undergone significant alteration. The majority came from the ranks of the workers and peasants. Intellectuals now only served socialism, not capitalism, and became equal members of this socialist society.

**Military:** The Bolsheviks established the Red Army in 1918. The military was politicized and the soldiers were provided special political indoctrination to serve the socialist system and to protect it. After the Civil War, the army became a professional military organization, and with the establishment of Soviet military schools, the Soviets sought to create a loyal officer corps. The name Red Army was abandoned in 1946 and became the Soviet Army under Stalin.

After the liquidation of the exploiting classes, despite the official propaganda declaring a classless society, three classes were implicitly recognized by the Soviets - the working class, the peasant class and the intellectuals. Any other class formation outside the classification of the Party was deliberately discouraged since it would threaten the Party's monopoly on social control. However, Soviet society looked far from classless and more complex toward the later years of the Soviet Union due to increasing inequalities in the distribution of income and sharp variations in socialist values. However, it is clear that they were successful in narrowing the gaps and divisions between social groups.

#### Discussion/Questions

1. Why was the main task of the Soviets to create a classless society to fulfil the building a communist society?
2. After the emancipation of the serfs, they became free and were able to leave their farms. Some stayed in the rural areas and became farmers, but others migrated to the urban areas to become workers in the factories. Discuss the working class of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. In what ways they were different from each other?

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## GENDER RELATIONS

**Women's participation in economic and social life:** Women began to participate in the economic and social developments of the last decades of imperial Russia. Noblewomen and feminists organized charities and persuaded the government to provide women with higher education. However, these changes excluded peasant and working-class women although they made up 80 percent of the female population and played a crucial role in industrialization. Many male workers did not even want to work with women in the factories, thinking that women would bring down wages and cost men jobs. Women were never allowed to obtain leadership in the factories. Even the female textile workers' union had male leadership. Starting in 1905, women were out on the street participating in strikes, demonstrations, and taking active role in the Soviets.

The Russian Revolution began in February 1917 with a demonstration staged by women congregating on the Nevsky Prospekt in Petrograd, and the slogans on their banners demanded change. Hundreds of women came out of their factories and men joined in their protests on that day in 1917 which came to be known as the Women's Day March.

On February 23, textile workers poured into the streets to protest shortages of bread and the war that had cost so many men's lives. There were around one million female workers living in Russia's cities who were paid half the wages of men and treated unequally. The revolution brought many women into politics, and they began to demand women's equality.

**Zhenotdel:** Women went to work in the new government and in the military. The Bolsheviks established the women's department of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party (Zhenotdel) to educate women and promoted the establishment of female internships. In 1930's women made up 13 percent of the total party membership. By 1939 about four-fifths of females were literate, and the number of women completing secondary and higher education continued to increase.

**Industrialization:** Between 1929 and 1935, 1.7 million women were working as industrial wage earners. Although Stalin's rapid industrialization opened up new career opportunities for women, in 1943 women made up 53 percent of industrial workers and in 1945, 92 percent of agricultural workers were women.

**Women at the front:** There were also around 70.000 women enlisted in the Red Army during the Civil War and World War I; some women fought in battles, but many of them served in non-combative positions, such as medical or clerical positions. In 1920, the Soviets provided for the political and legal equality of women, and removed marriage from church control and made it a civil matter. However, male soldiers did not want to be with women at the front. They believed that women were not strong enough to handle the stresses of war, that they brought bad luck and destroyed friendships.

**Inequality returns after war:** Towards the end of World War II, after the government's stress on the importance of women in domestic jobs, some women had to yield their jobs to returning men in the countryside, where men reclaimed their leadership positions on the collective farms. The percentage of women working as heavy machine operators dropped from 55 percent in 1943 to 5 percent in 1949.

However, women's participation in public institutions and activities continued. Women began to appear in fields that previously had been predominantly male. There were women officers, managers, physicians, farmers, engineers, economists, faculty members, journalists, writers, editors, and visual and performing artists by the late 1930s. But, as in the past, women had lower incomes than men and very few were promoted into the top ranks of their fields.

**Obshchestvenitsa (women's volunteer movement):** A voluntary movement called *Obshchestvenitsa* operated between 1934 and 1941, in which thousands of wives of military officers provided supplies to cafeterias, childcare centers, dormitories, and medical clinics in the factories and regiments to improve living conditions and bring culture. Some supervised cooks, put up curtains, taught hygiene, planted trees, organized day-care centers etc. Others organized into control brigades and inspected retail shops for cleanliness and good customer service.

After Stalin died, life improved for millions of Soviet women. The programs for providing better funding for social services and education continued. Many women began to appear in middle management position in government institutions and in other professions, and wages increased.

**Zhensovety (women's soviets):** During Khrushchev more women were appointed to government committees and regional soviets (*zhensovety*) to improve their communities. He authorized the establishment of a training program for female cosmonauts.

**Second-wave feminism:** Brezhnev believed that the outcomes of the double shift undesirable in that it not only limited women's productivity in their jobs but also caused them to have small families. Brezhnev believed that they needed to increase the productivity of labor and the growth of the population to keep up in the Cold War's arms race.

The second wave of feminism that revived in America in the 1960s advocated a more egalitarian style of life. In order Soviet accomplishments to show the world, Brezhnev encouraged journalists and scholars to publicize women's achievements. Women's presence in administrative and managerial positions increased. In the 1970s, there were thousands of doctors, judges, scientists, professors, architects etc. Female membership in the party was 26.5 percent in 1981.

**Soviet Women's Committee:** During Gorbachev, there was criticism of the double shift, and he also promised to improve social services, creating social science study groups to discuss women's problems. The *Soviet Women's Committee (Zhensovety)* represented Russia at *international* conferences and *meetings*. *Zhensovety* was brought under the leadership of the *Committee*.

**Women in politics:** During the last decades of the Soviet Union, only 16 percent of candidates elected to the Congress of People's Deputies were women. Gorbachev appointed one of the female party officials to the Politburo, and he also chose economic and sociologic female advisors. Women had been active in political life since the beginning of the Revolution of 1917, but women were most active in political life and women's organizations after the 1980s. However, they did not become a members of any political party. They were able to vote to support candidates, join strikes and demonstrations, give petitions etc. In 1991 they even showed resistance to the to the coup attempted in August 1991.

#### Discussion/Questions

1. Why did the promotion of women in public life slow down during Stalin?
2. Women's rights were one of the most divisive issues, a source of conflict during WWII in the Soviet Union. Why did the Soviet government limit women's rights after the war?
3. Women appeared in all classes, both inside the family and in the workplace during the Soviet Union. But, why were Soviet leaders were against double shift? Did this policy contradict their stated support for gender equality?

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## **ECONOMIC HISTORY**

### INNOVATIONS

### GOVERNMENT:

**First Socialist State:** After the collapse of the Russian Empire the world's first socialist state, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, based on Marxist ideology, was established in 1922.

## **ECONOMY:**

**War Communism:** War Communism was an emergency measure designed to win the Russian civil war. It was the name given to the economic system that existed in Russia from 1918 to 1921 and introduced by Lenin to combat the economic problems brought on by the Civil War in Russia. These emergency measures were introduced to win the Civil War, but had a devastating effect on the national economy and the Russian people.

**NEP:** In order to remain in power and to recover economically from the damage caused by both the Civil War and WWI, the Bolsheviks had to abandon the old style War Communism. In its place Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1921. Food seizures from the peasantry were stopped, the farmer's tax was reduced and a fixed tax in money was introduced, and the peasants could sell their products in the open market.

**Industrialization:** According to Marxist theory a socialist society must be highly industrialized with a vast majority of workers. However, the Soviet Union during the New Economic Policy (NEP) was partly industrialized, and workers were a minority of the overall workforce. Stalin advocated rapid industrialization in order to make the Soviet Union a powerful participant in the international arena. Rapid industrialization increased the number of intellectuals, workers, and other professionals, and the Soviet Union became powerful enough to resist any external threat, but it failed to increase the standard of living of the people.

**Introduction of Five-Year Plans:** Stalin introduced a series of five-year plans in 1928. The Five-Year Plans specifically concentrated on heavy industries, new factories and technological advancement. New industrial cities were constructed; hydroelectric stations were built; a railroad line was built connecting Central Asia to the Trans-Siberian line. By the end of the 1930s about 80% of all industrial production came from new factories.

**Collectivization:** Stalin decided to transfer all peasant land into new agricultural units which all peasants had to join. The pooling of assets angered peasants and they began to show resistance to collectivization. However, heavily armed units of the secret police and the army were sent to crush resistance. Full-scale collectivization began in December 1929 and more than half of the peasants had been placed on collective farms by the 1930s. Collective farms lasted until the end of the Soviet Union.

## **CULTURE:**

**Painting:** Kasimir Malevich (1878–1935), produced a modernist art of abstract collages and geometric shapes called CuboFuturism. Malevich was also responsible for the Suprematist movement, a mystical approach he defined as the supremacy of feeling over form in art. A talented young artist from Vitebsk, Marc Chagall (1887–1985), painted colorful and whimsical works inspired by the Jewish shtetl, or village, in which he was born. Vassily Kandinsky (1866–1944), a Russian artist who became a major figure in the German Blue Rider school, is generally acknowledged as the founder of abstract painting. Several women were prominent members of the Russian modern art movement, although their contributions are often overlooked. One major figure was Natalia Goncharova (1881–1962), a talented member of the Primitivist movement who drew on icons and traditional Russian themes to produce a nativist art form. Vladimir Tatlin (1885–1953) and Aleksandr Rodchenko (1891–1956) were leading figures in the Constructivist school, which reflected their revolutionary dedication to building a new society. Tatlin is best known for designing a monument to commemorate the founding of the Third International Communist Movement (the Comintern) in 1919.

**Ballets Russes:** Despite its name, Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes (1911-1929), never performed in Russia, instead it used Russian artists to bring its vision of traditional Russian dance merged with new choreography, modern design, contemporary music, and folk art. Two of its dancers, Vaslav Nijinsky and Anna Pavlova, would become household names. Just before the outbreak of World War I, Diaghilev began

to collaborate with artists such as Braque, Cocteau, Matisse, Derain, Satie, and Picasso, as well as with Russian modernists such as Goncharova, Naum Gabo, and Larinov to stage avant-garde works.

**Calendar Change:** In 1918, Lenin issued a decree to switch to the Gregorian calendar to be in harmony with all the civilized countries in the world. However, due to differences between the Julian and Gregorian calendars over the calculation of leap years a total of 13 days had to be “cancelled”.

## **SCIENCE:**

### **Dialectical Materialist Scientists:**

A strong evolutionary viewpoint is a distinguishing characteristic of dialectical materialist scientists. However, for these scientists, evolution was not limited to Darwinian biological evolution, but extended to nonliving matter both prior to and after the emergence of life.

Vygotsky, a famous Soviet psychologist, argued that both Marxist theories and societal influences were major factors in his theory of psychology. He established cultural-historical psychology, a theory of bio-social and human cultural development that remained unfinished at the time of his death, and was a well-known supporter of the “psychology of the superman”, a novel theory of consciousness. In addition, he was the head of an intellectual group known as the Vygotsky Circle.

Other important scientists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who helped to revive interest in the question of life’s origins were the biochemist Aleksandr Ivanovich Oparin, and the physicist V. A. Fock. Before this, Oparin and Vygotsky had both shared an interest in the relationship between science and Marxism.

Fock, on the other hand, made advances in the fields of quantum mechanics and relativity physics, unusual at a time when the majority of Marxist thinkers had reservations about the theory of relativity. However, Fock’s materialistic understanding of relativity was philosophically compatible with Marxist theory.

**Space Program:** The Soviets were willing to make massive expenditures to advance the space program. Korolev was the founder of the Soviet Space Program. In October 1957 the Soviet Union launched the first manmade satellite, Sputnik 1, invented by Sergei Pavlovich Korolev. In April 1961 the first flight of a human to space was launched by cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, and, in 1966 the spacecraft Luna 9 landed on the moon.

**Andrei Sakharov:** A nuclear physicist who worked on the development of the Soviet hydrogen bomb while working at the Lebedev Institute, Sakharov eventually became an opponent of the Soviet regime. His calls for civil reforms and civil liberties resulted in both official persecution and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1975.

## **MILITARY:**

**Nuclear Weapons:** In the five years following the defeat of Nazi Germany, relations between the Western powers and the Soviet Union deteriorated. Fearing that the United States might use its nuclear capability to pressure the Soviet Union, Stalin ordered the development of a Soviet atomic bomb. The first Soviet atomic test, code- named *First Lightning*, took place on August 29, 1949.

**Armaments:** Named after their original designer, Mikhail Kalashnikov and officially designated in Russian as “Avtomat Kalashnikova” (AK), Kalashnikov is the name given to a series of assault rifles that were initially designed in 1947 (hence the designation AK-47) and entered service with the Red Army in 1948.

### Discussion/Questions

1. Why did the Soviet Union arm themselves during the Cold War? What were the considerations of the Soviet leadership and their perceptions of American actions and policies?
2. Why did the War Communism and the New Economic Program introduced by Lenin fail?

3. What were the end results of the Collectivization?

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#### TRADE

**Imperial Domestic and Foreign Trade:** In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Russia's domestic trade expanded, and trade fairs grew in number. However, foreign trade expanded more than domestic trade, and in 1913 it constituted slightly more than 4 percent of world trade. The government always attempted to maintain the level exports at a higher level than imports. There were new products to export such as wheat, eggs, butter, sugar, and petroleum. In addition, machines and machine tools were imported, and in 1913, because of the textile industry's need for cotton, five times as much cotton was imported. Russia's new trading partner became Germany, replacing Great Britain.

**Soviet foreign trade and state monopoly:** The role of foreign trade and the dependence on Western imports in the Soviet economy (except grain, high-technology equipment, and phosphates used in fertilizer production) was negligible. The government of the Soviet Union introduced a state monopoly on all foreign trade, but after the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, the government eased some restrictions on foreign trade activities.

**People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade:** The trading activities of the Soviet Union increased in 1921, with the establishment of the *People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade* when the monopoly on internal and external trade was eased, and the *New Economic Policy* (NEP) which abolished central control over the economy and established other corporations to deal directly with foreign countries.

However, during Stalin, trade was restricted again, since he was afraid of the disruptive influence of foreign market forces such as demand and price fluctuations. During the First Five-Year Plan, with the exception of factory equipment essential for industrialization, imports were drastically reduced.

**Trade through representatives:** During World War II the activities of the Soviet and foreign trade corporations halted. The Soviet trade representatives in Britain and Iran, and the Soviet Buying Commission in the United States were conducting trade. When the war ended, the United States, Britain and other West European countries introduced new restrictions on trade with the Soviet Union. Therefore, Soviet foreign trade was restricted to only Eastern Europe and China.

**Ministry of Foreign Trade:** Foreign trade demonstrated significant changes in the years following Stalin's death. Foreign trade corporations (or foreign trade associations), now known as all-union foreign trade organizations, increased in number due to the expansion of foreign trade and the growth of industry following WWII. In 1946 the People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade was transformed into the Ministry of Foreign Trade, which had right to negotiate and sign contracts with foreign corporations.

**Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon):** The Soviet Union formed the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in 1949 in response to the American Marshall Plan, to link the Eastern bloc countries economically. The Comecon discouraged Eastern European countries from participating in the Marshall Plan.

**The State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations:** In 1955 the State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations was formed for the purpose of carrying out two main tasks. One was the management of all Soviet foreign aid programs, and the second was the export of complete factories through the various foreign trade organizations that were under it. However, this committee did not have total monopoly on

Soviet foreign trade since some ministries were authorized to use their own foreign trade partners to conduct direct trade with foreign partners.

By the late 1980s the Soviet Union's foreign trade was conducted primarily with fourteen socialist countries that were divided into four groups: Comecon; China; Yugoslavia; and three developing communist states in Asia, Laos, Cambodia, and North Korea. In addition, military equipment and arms sales were a significant economic sector; in 1985 they constituted 20% of all sales to the Third World.

Nevertheless, in the same year only 4% of the Soviet Union's gross national product was the result of imports and exports, an extremely low level in comparison with the western countries. However, this small percentage was the result of both a deliberate, historical policy of economic self-sufficiency, and the Soviet Union's vast energy and raw material resources that made imports of these unnecessary.

Despite their relatively small volume, the value of Soviet exports increased in the 1970s and 1980s as world prices, particularly for oil after 1974, increased. In the first half of the 1980s half of all Soviet imports from the Third World consisted of food and agricultural goods, primarily grain.

**Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations:** The administration of Soviet foreign trade policy and foreign aid agreements came under the authority of the *Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations*, which replaced the *Ministry of Foreign Trade* and the *State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations* in January 1988. The creation of this new ministry was followed by legislation permitting joint enterprises. These moves were intended to make the Soviet foreign trade bureaucracy more efficient while maintaining the government monopoly on external trade.

**General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade:** By the second half of the 1980s it was clear that the Soviet Union was moving to normalize its foreign trade with other countries. The Soviet Union became an observer at the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in 1987, and began to express interest in participating in other international economic organizations and establishing relations with regional economic organizations. In 1988 the European Economic Community and the Soviet Union signed a normalization agreement.

**Domestic Trade - Gostorgs:** During the Soviet period over 70% of domestic trade was conducted by a mix of governmental, cooperative and private enterprises. Distribution of goods was primarily under the authority of *Gostorgs*, internal state trading organizations. *Gostorgs* were organized on a local, regional, or republic-wide basis and imported manufactured and agricultural goods from abroad which were then sold to retailers and consumers. Domestic goods and products for export were also purchased by the *Gostorgs*.

#### Discussion/Questions.

1. When was the Soviet foreign trade monopoly loosened? Why did the Soviet government take this step?
2. Did Comecon help the Eastern Bloc countries economically?

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## **CULTURAL HISTORY**

### **SCIENCE**

Although Russian science before 1917 was still not at the level of science in the major Western countries, its development had been impressive, and at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian scientists in a number of fields – physiology, mathematics, astronomy, soil science, and some branches of biology, physics and chemistry – had gained international prominence.

Nonetheless, a number of factors hampered the development of Russian technology and science in the era before the Russian Revolution. For example, industrial research remained extremely weak since both the

techniques and the capital for Russian industry generally came from outside of Russia. Even strong domestic industries such as the machine and chemical industries frequently utilized foreign sources to conduct their research and development. Compared to industrial research, research conducted at Russian universities was more developed, but still relatively new.

To receive the best scientific education possible, graduate students from Russia had no choice but to study abroad, frequently in Germany. However, because many of the most talented students became involved in political activities during their studies and became part of the political opposition in the turbulent last years of the Russian Empire, scientific professionalism was weakened as was official support for science. Lengthy strikes and demonstrations in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century effectively shut down Russian universities, and more than a hundred of Russia's most talented professors were removed from their positions by the minister of education in 1911. By this time the circumstances that the tsarist government found itself in made it unable to match the support other states were providing for advanced scientific education and research.

A number of educational reforms that would impact the future development of Soviet science were implemented during the brief period when democratic socialists and liberals held the reigns of power in 1917. Among these were professional societies free of state control, new forms of administering university faculties, the election by its members of the president of the Academy of Sciences, A. P. Karpinskii, a geologist.

After the Revolution, despite calls from the proletarian culture movement for the replacement of traditional science with a radically different form of science, Lenin remained skeptical, and, instead, believed that existing institutions of scientific and technical expertise should be maintained. During the years of the Cultural Revolution, 1928-1931, the Soviet scientific establishment underwent a period of extreme change, and many scientists involved in basic research feared that insistence on social relevance and strict ideology would have a negative impact on the field of theoretical science.

The Academy of Sciences survived the Cultural Revolution, but it had undergone a series of profound transformations. While most work in the natural sciences continued much as it had before, and some researchers were able to continue their work with little serious change, other scientists were less fortunate. Hundreds lost their jobs, and of these many were sent to prison. A system of censorship controls was imposed on Academy publications, and the Academy itself was no longer a politically neutral institution. The Academy of Sciences of the USSR that was formed in this way was the flagship of Soviet science.

### **Dialectical Materialist Scientists:**

A strong evolutionary viewpoint is a distinguishing characteristic of dialectical materialist scientists. However, for these scientists, evolution was not limited to Darwinian biological evolution, but extended to nonliving matter both prior to and after the emergence of life.

### **Lev Semenovich Vygotsky:**

Vygotsky, a famous Soviet psychologist, argued that both Marxist theories and societal influences were major factors in his theory of psychology. He established cultural-historical psychology, a theory of bio-social and human cultural development that remained unfinished at the time of his death, and was a well-known supporter of the "psychology of the superman, a novel theory of consciousness. In addition, he was the head of an intellectual group known as the Vygotsky Circle.

Other important scientists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who helped to revive interest in the question of life's origins were the biochemist Aleksandr Ivanovich Oparin, and the physicist V. A. Fock. Before this, Oparin and Vygotsky had both shared an interest in the relationship between science and Marxism.

Fock, on the other hand, made advances in the fields of quantum mechanics and relativity physics, unusual at a time the majority of Marxist thinkers had reservations about the theory of relativity. However, Fock's materialistic understanding of relativity was philosophically compatible with Marxist theory.

## **Stalin Period:**

During Stalin's rule dialectical materialism became a byword for the terrorizing of Soviet scientists. Defense of a scientific theory that had been labelled "bourgeois" or "idealistic" by one of Stalin's lackeys could lead to charges of political disloyalty against the scientist involved. The consequences of suspected political loyalty ranged from dismissal to prison sentences, or even execution in some cases. In this form, dialectical materialism not only crushed the creative elements in Soviet Marxism, it also became a tool for some Marxist scientists and philosophers to advance their own careers by denouncing their colleagues to the authorities for expressing "anti-Marxist" opinions. Stalin's purges had effectively broken most citizens' will to resist, with the result that by the late 1930s-early 1940s Soviet intellectual life was almost completely dominated by Stalin's system of controls.

## **Lysenkoism:**

Lysenkoism was perhaps the quintessential example of ideological dogmatism and political oppression during the Stalinist era. Named after its main advocate, Trofim Lysenko, Lysenkoism rejected both Darwinian evolutionary theory and Mendelian genetics. Supporting the theory of acquired characteristics advocated by Lamarckism, Lysenko's theory rejected natural selection, as argued by Darwin. In addition, Lysenkoism also advocated a technique called "vernalization" that was supposed to increase the chances of peasant farmers harvesting their traditional crops before the first frost. Although "vernalization" was a method that had been known to cultivators around the world for centuries, Lysenko's frequent claims that he was working to transform socialist agriculture for the benefit of the Soviet state earned him Stalin's support.

## **Natural Scientists:**

In the years following Stalin's death, scientists became the advocates of important social issues. They were able to take on this role due to their obvious importance to the Soviet government. In particular, nuclear physicists had earned great prestige by providing the Soviet government with nuclear weapons, and space scientists would be viewed in the same light when the Soviet Union became the first country to put an artificial satellite into orbit in 1957, and the first man in space in 1961.

International conferences became the venue for meetings between Western and Soviet scientists, where issues related to international peace and security could be discussed. At home, Soviet scientists carried out reforms of the Academy of Sciences, stressing greater emphasis on basic research; they established new research centers, among them the *Akademgorodok* in Novosibirsk; and sought ways to provide new opportunities for talented students of science to more rapidly expand their knowledge.

However, Soviet officials clamped down on intellectuals and their contacts with Western scientists after Khrushchev's fall in 1964, and even more so following the 1968 incursion by Soviet troops into Czechoslovakia to suppress the "Prague Spring". These changes can be illustrated by the career of Andrei Sakharov, who was highly regarded in the early Khrushchev years, and then came under increasing suspicion during the Brezhnev period. Sakharov was eventually denounced and exiled by the late seventies, but when Gorbachev came to power he was again in favor and even held an elected position.

**Andrei Sakharov:** A nuclear physicist who worked on the development of the Soviet hydrogen bomb while working at the Lebedev Institute, Sakharov eventually became an opponent of the Soviet regime. His calls for civil reforms and civil liberties resulted in both official persecution and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1975.

## Discussion/Questions

1. Discuss the Soviet scientists, their effectiveness, research performance and social relations during Stalin's period. Why was the creative spirit of scientists destroyed by Stalin? Why were scientists who engaged in research labeled "idealistic" or "bourgeois" and their research ideologically suspect?

2. If substantial numbers of Soviet scientists had been permitted to participate in international scientific networks on a regular basis after Stalin's death, what potential difficulties could the Communist Party have faced as a result of this regular interaction with international scientists?
3. Why did Lysenkoism fail? How did the Soviet Union and its allies suffer under Lysenkoism?

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ART

#### **Painting:**

**Symbolism:** Across Europe and Russia in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries Symbolism had spread as both an artistic and an intellectual movement. In Russia Symbolism dominated the artistic scene for approximately two decades and two generations of artists. The first generation was active between 1890 to 1900, and the second, known as the Blue Rose Movement, from 1900 to 1910. Symbolist artists such as Alexandre Benois, Konstantin Somov, Mikhail Vrubel and Mikhail Nesterov attempted evoke emotion or create a mood by using traditional elements of Symbolism or through their use of color. For these painters their art was an esthetic experience.

**Avant-garde:** Avant-garde is an umbrella term for a number of distinct, but closely related artistic movements that were current in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, among them Constructivism, Cubism, Cubo-Futurism, Rayonism, Neo-primitivism, Suprematism. Russian avant-garde artists did not simply mimic European artistic styles, they introduced their own innovations into them and in the process created new interpretations of these styles. Modern art of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century would be profoundly influenced by a number of artistic movements pioneered by Russian artists.

**Constructivism:** Constructivism was established by Vladimir Tatlin in 1915 and was based on an emphasis of both an object's material properties and the space it occupied. Constructivist artists put their talents to use in the service of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, in particular by applying their artistic theories to the fields of advertising and fashion. Tatlin used paper, wood, metal or glass to create distinctive three-dimensional works that expressed his artistic vision. For him, the form of his works was dictated by the *faktura* (texture) of the material being used to create them.

**Cubism:** Cubism sought to depict forms through the use of basic geometric shapes – cubes cylinders, spheres and cones – and used color freely, without being restricted to depicting forms naturalistically. Although the subject of cubist paintings is still visible, it has been reduced to simpler forms, generally lacks depth and borders on being abstract. Cubism remained popular only up to the 1920s, but its influence on avant-garde art was deep. Wealthy collectors such as Shchukin and Morozov were responsible for introducing Russia to Cubism by purchasing Cubist works and then publicly displaying them in Russia. Among the most famous Russian Cubist painters were of Malevich, Popova, and Udal'tsova.

**Cubo-futurism:** Cubo-futurism differs from Cubism in having more dynamic compositions that incorporate words or letters into them. Originally a French artistic movement, Cubo-futurism developed around 1910 in Russia and soon became one of the most influential movements in Russian art of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Inspired by *lubok* (Russian prints of popular stories with simple pictures) and traditional icons, two of the first Cubo-futurist artists, Larinov and Goncharova, merged elements of Russian folk art and modern French art in their effort to preserve Russian folk art.

**Neo-primitivism:** Founded by Mikhail Larionov and Natalia Goncharova, Neo-primitivism was a short-lived movement active from 1907 to 1912. While Neo-primitivism took inspiration from a number of diverse sources, such as the *lubok* and peasant crafts, but icon painting served as the main source. Neo-primitive painters such as Tatlin, Kandinsky, Malevich, Goncharova, Chagall and Larionov incorporated a number of typical characteristics of icons – one-dimensionality, bold colors, lack of perspective, etc. – into their own works. Line and color were used to create harmony in compositions whose figures were often rendered in either an almost childish fashion, or distorted like figures in a dream.

**Rayonism (Luchism):** Another short-lived Russian artistic movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was Rayonism which combined Cubism's fragmented forms with Futurism's sense of movement and Orphism's use of color. Created by Mikhail Larionov, Rayonist works were produced primarily by Larionov and his companion Natalia Goncharova, and the movement came to an end when they emigrated from Russia. Paintings in the Rayonist style are characterized by a mass of slanting lines, generally painted in pure blues, reds and yellows, that represent beams of light that transit and converge across the plane of the canvas.

**Suprematism:** In 1915 Kazimir Malevich established the Suprematist movement. Malevich sought a means to express an artist's feelings without being limited to realistically depicting everyday objects' normal appearance. Since both objectivity and the concepts of the conscious mind were considered to be insignificant, Suprematist art utilized basic geometric forms such as rectangles, lines, squares and circles and a limited number of colors.

**Sculpture: Cubism:** By fragmenting and flattening perspective, Russian sculptors were able to create entirely new types of works in three dimensions. In his sculptures Alexander Archipenko presented several simultaneous views of a figure, creating negative space that presented novel perspectives on the human figure. Vladimir Baranoff-Rossine was noted for his use of color, applying the chameleon process or camouflage techniques in his works. Jacques Lipchitz was one of the most successful sculptors in embodying the principles of Cubism in his sculptures.

**Constructivism:** Constructivism was the product of the merging of the political fervor of the Russian Revolution with Parisian artistic movements in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century both before and after World War I. Constructivist artists created works from industrial materials such as glass, metal and plastic. Using these materials Russian Constructivist sculptors such as Anton Pevsner, Konstantin Medunetsky, Alexander Rodchenko and Naum Gabo, in particular, created works that conveyed a sense of space without mass. Among other notable constructivist artists El Lissitzky was known for his non-objective sculptures, Ossip Nevelson for his interpretations of modern expressionism, and Louise Zadkine for her distinctive assemblage art.

**Kinetic Art:** Referring to art that either need motion to create its effect, or has perceptible motion in it, the Kinetic Art movement developed out of the Russian avant-garde. Naum Gabo's 1920 sculpture "Standing Wave" is considered the first work of the Russian Kinetic Art movement.

**Impressionism:** The first Russian Impressionist woman sculptor to be awarded the Paris Salon prize was Anna Semyonova Golubkina. She was especially known for her numerous sculptural portraits, including ones of Leo Tolstoy, Andrei Bely, Karl Marx and Alexei Remizov.

#### **Architecture:**

**Art Nouveau (Stil Modern):** Exploring the possibilities of metal, glass and new technologies in architecture, Art Nouveau strove to use natural, flowing lines that allowed all elements of the building – balconies, staircases and doors – to be both aesthetic and functional. In the years just prior to the Revolution a number of Art Nouveau buildings were built in St. Petersburg and Moscow, such as the Vitebsk Railway Station and the Hotel Metropol. Now the Maxim Gorky House Museum, the Ryabushinsky House designed by Fedor Shekhtel and the Yaroslavl Railway Station are also prime examples of Art Nouveau architecture.

**Constructivism:** A purely Russian style, Constructivism emerged in Moscow after 1917 as an offshoot of Functionalism. Constructivist architects took their inspiration from futurism, suprematism, and cubism and argued that efficient structures were beautiful structures. The characteristics, capacities and limits of construction materials defined Constructivist architecture, and the Shukov Radio Tower in Moscow designed by Vladimir Shukov is one of the most prominent examples of Constructivist architecture.

**Stalinist Architecture:** Stalinist architecture was heavily influenced by the political conditions of its era. Everything from the design stage, through procurement of building materials, construction and final use of the structure was under tight governmental and bureaucratic scrutiny. Architecture was expected to reflect Soviet political ideology, and the massive, monumental style favored by the Soviet government reflected both the Soviet Union's power the promises of Communism. The most prominent of the buildings from Stalin's era, among them the Moscow State University building, were tall structures built in tiers that became known as the "wedding cake" style.

**Modernism (Functionalism):** Following the First World War a new architectural style emerged that, in contrast with previous architectural styles, advocated simple structures that were unadorned to point of leaving structural elements of the building exposed and undecorated. Critics of Modernist architecture claimed that it lacked imagination and stifled architectural expression. In Russia, the projects for skyscrapers designed by N. Ladovsky and V. Krinsky are examples of this style.

**Dance:** The period in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century between the last works by Petipa and the ballets of Nijinsky, Gorsky and Fokine were a period stagnation and decline for Russian Ballet.

**Acmeism:** In the 1910s the esthetic elements of Acmeism – clarity of expression and compactness of form – could be seen Russian ballet productions staged in Paris. Mikhail Fokine's *Schéhérazade* and *Polovtsian Dances*, and the works of Vaslav Nijinsky's works all displayed a clarity of forms and a clear emphasis on the tangible world.

**Modernist Period:** The flight of numerous composers, dancers and choreographers from Russia after the revolution combined with lack of foreign artists entering the country left Russian ballet with no option other than develop it own talent. Russian ballet came to be known as Soviet ballet, and was isolated from outside influence. Although the Central Theatre Committee (*Tsentroteatr*) had assumed control over imperial theaters, including the Maryinsky (Kirov) and Bolshoi, in 1919, independent, experimental choreographers and dance troupes flourished in the 1920s. However, these independent groups and artists were all brought under state control in the early 1930s.

#### **Neo-classical period:**

**Ballets Russes:** Despite its name, Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes (1911-1929), never performed in Russia, instead it used Russian artists to bring its vision of traditional Russian dance merged with new choreography, modern design, contemporary music, and folk art. Two of its dancers, Vaslav Nijinsky and Anna Pavlova, would become household names. Just before the outbreak of World War I, Diaghilev began to collaborate with artists such as Braque, Cocteau, Matisse, Derain, Satie, and Picasso, as well as with Russian modernists such as Goncharova, Naum Gabo, and Larinov to stage avant-garde works.

**Balanchine:** Originally a dancer in the Mariinsky Ballet, George Balanchine defected from the Soviet Union while on tour in Europe in 1925 and joined Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. In 1933 Balanchine emigrated to the US, later becoming a co-founder of the New York City Ballet.

**Music:** In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the central themes of composers such as Sergei Vasil'evich Rachmaninov, Igor Fedorovich Stravinsky, Sergei Sergeevich Prokofiev and Dmitry Dmitrievich Shostakovich were liturgical and folkloric. Specifically, Mussorgsky in his historical operas *Boris Godunov* and *Khovanshchina*; Rimsky-Korsakov in his *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevronia*; and Prokofiev in his score to Sergei Eisenstein's film *Ivan the Terrible*, used Russian folkloric and liturgical music combining the techniques of Western music and the Russian classical music tradition.

After 1917 musicians were subject to extreme pressure from the state to follow aesthetic standards determined by the government. State control over musicians was extended by Stalin in 1932 with the formation of the Union of Soviet Composers. This was a regulatory body whose mandate was to direct all musical activity for the government's own political purposes. One result was that all Soviet composers were compelled to follow very specific regulations concerning the types of music they produced and this also led to the permanent emigration of numerous music composers and musicians, such as Stravinsky, Rachmaninov, and the pianist-composer Nikolai Karlovich Medtner, to Europe and the United States.

#### Discussion/Questions

1. How do politics affect the existence of statues? Why are statues more often treated as dangerous, political objects unlike the paintings? Why makes statues so politically effective?
2. Compare Soviet and Post-Soviet architecture and discuss the effect of this architecture on people. What ideals did these architectural styles attempt to convey?
- 3- Modern Russian cities have been constructed on the basis of repetition of known patterns and mass production, resulting in relatively small areas with high population density. What messages does modern Russian architecture convey with these standard structures in comparison to earlier periods? Does it have its own esthetic, or is it simply functional? Why have regional styles of architecture disappeared? Why has modern architecture become so uniform all over the world? Why have unique artistic styles been lost? How were the Russian Avant-Garde and Diaghilev's Ballet Russes linked?
- 4- During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries what genre changes did Russian ballet pass through?

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## **RELIGION**

The Bolsheviks, to clear the way for a new socialist society, changed the structure of the traditional patriarchal family, army and church associated with the tsarist regime. A major campaign against the Orthodox church began when the Orthodox church supported the Whites during the Civil War. Soviet law gave the State the legal right to supervise all religious activities.

From the Bolsheviks' perspective tsarist oppression and the Orthodox Church's conservatism together had combined to produce an utterly backward society that was intensely religious, agrarian, superstitious, peasant and illiterate. According to Lenin, religion served as opium for the Russian people, and was an obstacle to building socialism. A decree of February 1918 separated church and state, deprived churches

of property and rights of ownership, and nationalized them. Intensive Soviet persecution of religious leaders and believers of all religious groups began.

**Militant Godless League:** The Militant Godless League was formed to conduct propaganda campaigns. The Godless League, formed in 1925 by Stalin, periodically ridiculed and humiliated religion and promoted atheism; and attempted to turn superstitious citizens into atheists.

**Living Church:** To further weaken the Orthodox church the Soviets supported the Living Church which was a reformist movement among the Russian clergy (Renovationist) to split the clergy and the Russian Orthodox Church (1922–1946).

There was an important change in the state's perception of religion under Stalin. During the Second World War, Orthodox identity and the church were used in official propaganda for the purposes of mobilization, and the state also restored the Patriarchate in 1943 as a propaganda agent.

Traditional socialist ideology was re-emphasized when Khrushchev came to power, leading to a new round of religious persecution. Numerous religious institutions and churches that had been reopened under Stalin during the Second World War were closed again.

Nevertheless, religious life continued to exist despite official restrictions, and when Gorbachev came to power approximately forty-five million people belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church. For Gorbachev and his government religious groups with their numerous followers represented potential allies in helping to carry out the extensive political, economic and social reforms that they envisioned.

#### Discussion/Questions

1. Why did religious tolerance end during the Soviet Union? How can we explain the shift that took place during WWII? Why did Stalin use the idea of Orthodox identity as official propaganda for purposes of mobilization?

#### Reading

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### **PHILOSOPHY**

**Mikhail Bakhtin:** Philosopher and theoretician, Bakhtin was a literary critic and specialized in the philosophy of language. Regarding language, Bakhtin proposed that the development of language is dynamic, and both affects and is affected by the culture it is a part of.

**Bakhtin Circle:** As the Russian Revolution was being transformed into Stalin's dictatorship, the Bakhtin Circle examined the cultural and social issues that this process raised. While examining general social issues, they focused primarily on artistic creation the role of language in social conflict.

**Dialectical Materialism:** Coined by the Russian Marxist Georgy Plekhanov in 1891, dialectical materialism became the official designation of Marxist-Leninist philosophy. Dialectical materialism both rejects all forms of religious or supernatural belief, and asserts that empirical science alone is sufficient for understanding the nature of reality.

**Georgy Plekhanov:** Plekhanov, considered the father of Russian Marxism, began his activism with the Populists as one of the organizers of the Land and Freedom movement. However, his study of Marx and Engels' ideas while in Geneva convinced him that Marxism rather than Populism would shape Russia's future, since Populism called for an end to Westernization and an independent course of development for Russia.

**Vladimir Lenin:** By taking dialectical materialism and adapting its tenets to the realities of Russia in his time as well as the revolutionary activity of the Bolsheviks, Lenin came to be regarded as the father of Soviet dialectical materialism. For Lenin dialectical materialism was the most essential concept in “the philosophy of Marxism”, the sum total of all ideas found in Marx and Engels’ writings.

**Alexander Bogdanov:** An original thinker who wrote on the role of culture in creating a communist society, Bogdanov also sought to link all the sciences – physical, social and biological – by identifying the organizational principles of these sciences which he regarded as systems of relationships. Bogdanov set down his philosophical and economic ideas in a three-volume work titled *Empiriomonism*. However, Lenin viewed Bogdanov’s ideas as a danger to dialectical materialism.

#### Discussion/Questions

1. Why did Lenin not strictly follow Marxist principles? How did he interpret Marx? How did he combine Russian Narodism (Populism) with Marxism? Can we say that this departure from Marxist principles brought the end of the socialist regime in Russia?

2. At the beginning of the 20th century, Russian thought was the first to embrace existentialism as a coherent set of new philosophical ideas. What is existentialism and why do you think that Dostoyevsky’s novel *Notes from the Underground* would be regarded as an example of an existential novel?

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#### **LITERATURE:**

**Socialist Realism:** Although Socialist Realism claims to present an unbiased, accurate depiction of life, as did its predecessor 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian realism, there are significant differences between the two, particularly in regard to subject matter. Socialist Realist works focus almost exclusively on the themes of building socialism and creating a classless society. Maxim Gorky is widely regarded as the pioneer of this genre with his novel *The Mother*.

**Symbolism:** Symbolism conveys its message through the use of symbols whose meanings are grasped intuitively. It emerged as a reaction against realism and can be seen in the works of F. Sologub, V. K. Brynssov, I. F. Annensky, A. Bely, A. A. Blok, K. D. Balmont, and A. M. Remizov. The religious and philosophical works of V. S. Solovyev and the historical novels of D. S. Merezhkovsky also show the influence of symbolism.

**Acmeism:** Acmeism, led by N. S. Gumilev and S. M. Gorodetsky, in 1912 promoted a return to more concrete poetic imagery. Among the followers of this movement were O. E. Mandelstam and A. A. Akhmatova. Among the major figures in the field of fiction were V. M. Garshin and V. G. Korolenko.

**Émigré Writers:** Following the Bolsheviks’ victory in the Russian Revolution (1917), many writers emigrated and continued writing abroad, among them Bunin, Kuprin, Merezhkovsky, Aldanov, and Nabokov.

Others stayed in Russia but no longer published, some became Communists, while others found a niche for themselves in the new system, writing but remaining above its official doctrines. Initially, literature in the Bolshevik regime was little different from that current in Western Europe.

**Silver Age:** Up until 1921 poetry continued to thrive, the major writers being the symbolist Blok, the imagist S. A. Yesenin, and the iconoclast V. V. Mayakovsky. Boris Pilnyak, an older novelist, documented the new society, and Isaac Babel wrote vivid short stories. Between 1922-1928, the era of the New Economic Policy, literary dictatorship was the subject of great debate; one group, known as "On Guard" supported it and the group around Mayakovsky was against it.

Another group that included K. A. Fedin, M. M. Zoshchenko, V.V. Ivanov, V. A. Kaverin, Y.I. Zamyatin, and L.N. Lunts, and known as The Serapion Brothers voiced their support for artistic independence, while the formalists stressed poetic structure over poetic content. The novel was once again a major literary form, as seen in Ilya Ilf and Y. P. Petrov's satirical works, and in L. M. Leonov, Y.K. Olesha, and Kaverin's psychological and romantic novels. M. A. Sholokhov wrote epic novels on the subject of the revolution and Gorky a large audience in 1928.

**Oberiu movement:** Numerous avant-garde literary groups emerged in the early years of Soviet rule, and the Oberiu movement was one of the most significant of these many groups. Writers such as Alexander Vvedensky, the absurdist writer Daniil Kharmis, Nikolay Zabolotsky and Konstantin Vaginov were among its more famous members. The short story writers Mikhail Zoshchensko and Isaak Babel, as well as, the novelists Andrei Platonov and Yuri Olesha were also associated with the Oberiu movement.

**Formalism:** Based in St. Petersburg, the OPOJAZ (Society for the Study of Poetic Language) was a major element in the creation Russian Formalism, which emerged in tandem with Russian Futurism. Among OPOJAZ's members, two became particularly influential. The first was Yury Tynyanov who wrote a number of historical novels, many set in the time of Pushkin, that were based on his extensive knowledge of Russian literary history. The second was Viktor Shklovsky whose blend of social commentary, narration, aesthetic commentary, and autobiography in his works make them difficult to categorize.

**Moscow Linguistic Circle:** Regarded as the Moscow counterpart to St. Petersburg's OPOJAZ, the Moscow Linguistic Circle was active between 1915 – 1924, and was composed of specialists in literary theory, semiotics, and linguistics such as Grigory Vinokur, Filipp Fedorovich Fortunatov, Petr Bogatyrev, Roman Jakobson, and Boris Tomashevsky. The formation of Russian formalist literary linguistics and semiotics was a result of the activities of the Moscow Linguistic Circle and OPOJAZ.

Between 1929 and 1932 the various literary groups were dissolved, and the political mobilization of writers became a noticeable trend. Stalin's purges of the intelligentsia during the 1930s only accelerated this, and socialist realism became the guiding principle of all literary output. As an art form supported by the state and widely used as a means of propaganda, drama after the revolution was associated with a number of eminent figures, among them Y. L. Schvartz, N. R. Erdman, M. A. Bulgakov, S. M. Tretyakov, V. P. Katayev, V. M. Kirshon, A. N. Afinogenov, and A. N. Arbuzov. The prominent poets of this period were B. L. Pasternak and N. S. Tikhonov, while N. A. Ostrovsky, A. N. Tolstoy, and I. G. Ehrenburg were among the most widely read novelists. V. B. Shklovski became a very influential critic.

Stalin's death in 1953 ushered in a new period for a number of writers; some who had previously been publicly disgraced, returned to official favor; other living writers were once again allowed to publish. *Thaw*, a famous novel by Ehrenburg, described the desperation of writers who had no choice but to write according to the party line. Extraordinarily, cultural exchange with foreign countries was encouraged and, in contrast to official party propaganda, literature which criticized aspects of Soviet society was permitted, at least for a while. The nonconformist poetry of A. A. Voznesensky and Y. A. Yevtushenko was immensely popular. Voznesensky's innovative form and use of language was singled out for particular praise.

However, this period of relative literary tolerance came to an end in 1963 when both the government and the Union of Soviet Writers severely reprimanded these and other dissident writers. *Doctor Zhivago*, published outside the Soviet Union and widely praised throughout the West, was not allowed to be published in the USSR, and state pressure compelled Pasternak to decline the Nobel Prize for literature.

The effort to free Soviet writing from official control increased after Khrushchev was removed from power in 1964. Public calls for an end to political censorship came from well-known writers such as Voznesensky and A. I. Solzhenitsyn. For publishing works outside the USSR which criticized the Soviet regime under pseudonyms A. D. Sinyavsky and Y. M. Daniel served prison sentences. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, the first novel written by Solzhenitsyn, described prison-camp life; when published in 1962 its anti-Stalinist tone was politically acceptable. Solzhenitsyn's later works resulted in his 1974 exile from Russia.

In the 1980s the stories of T. N. Tolstaya were one example of the religious, even mystical, trends in literature. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Solzhenitsyn returned from exile in 1994, twenty years after he had left.

#### Discussion/Questions

1. How can we characterize Russian literature at the age of Socialist Realism?
2. Discuss the response of émigré Russian writers to being exiled and living abroad as reflected in their works.

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