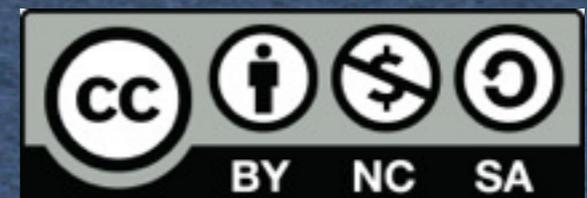


The Creation of the USSR

Unit 7



This chapter is about the creation of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) in 1922. It started with a series of revolutions in 1917 (February and October) during the World War I. This is one of the main events of the 20th century because it marks the creation of a new state based in a new social organization, the communism. The Soviet Union lasted until 1991. The father of this great social, economic and political experience was Lenin but his work was finished by Josif Stalin, an adamant dictator who ruled with an iron fist.

The points of the unit are:

- 1.- The fall of the Russian Monarchy and its political system.
- 2.- The Bolshevik October revolution and the Civil War. (1917-1921)
- 3.- The creation of the Soviet State.
- 4.- The Stalinism.
- 5.- The building of an economic power.



1.- The Russian Empire. The Tsar.



- At the beginning of the 20th century Russia was almost an Absolute monarchy. The Tsar, the emperor, ruled the country without any parliamentary control.
- As any other Absolute Monarchy Nicholas II relayed his power in the unconditional support of the nobility and the orthodox church.
- The country was under a strict bureaucracy and control by the army and an omnipresent secret service the Okhrana (the initials of the Department for Protecting the Public Security and Order in Russian)
- There was a parliament, Duma, but was completely powerless. The tsar can disband it any time he wanted.

1.- The Russian Empire. The Tsar.

- The economy was mainly agrarian. Great states owned by the Tsar, nobles and the church and worked by serfs, like in the middle ages.
- There were industrialized areas around big cities such as Saint Petersburg and Moscow and harbors such as Odessa.



1.- The Russian Empire. The Tsar.



- The opposition to the Tsar was very fragmented. Every group had different demands according to their social class.
- Mid Class. The mid class demand a liberal system or a democracy. The main party was the KD, also known as kadets (The initials for Constitutional Democrat party in Russian)
- Peasants and small farmers. Peasants followed the Social Revolutionary Party, also know as Esers because of their initials, SR. Their main leader was Alexander Kerensky.
- Workers. The followed, among others, the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. The RSDLP was created as a social democrat party but in 1905 in a congress in London it split in two different factions.
 - The Bolshevik, the majority in Russian. They were on favor of the revolution to take the power. Their leader was Vladimir Ilych Ulyanov, Lenin.
 - The Menshevik, the minority. They supported the idea of taking the power by a democratic election. They stopped being followed by workers and became a mid-class party.



1.- The Russian Empire. The Tsar.

The 1905 Revolution.

After a terrible defeat against the Japanese Empire the Tsar seemed weak so revolutionary groups started a series of strikes and demonstrations.

In January the 9th of 1905 a demonstration led to Saint Petersburg's Winter Palace, tsar's residence, to hand him their demands. The demonstrators did not want the end of the Tsar but some democratic reforms.

Nicholas II did not understand how critical the situation was so he ordered a violent repression to those who defied him. That day was remembered as Bloody Sunday due to the number of deaths and injured.

The protests continued and the workers organized themselves in soviets (councils or assemblies) for the first time.

At the end the tsar gave in to some demands collected in a sort of constitution with a parliament (Duma) elected by universal suffrage, however Nicholas, when things had settled, took back the reforms.



2.- The 1917 Revolutions.

The February Revolution.

- In 1914 the Russian Empire joined the World War I. Neither economy nor the army were ready to face the German army or that kind of effort
- After a series of defeats the Tsar himself took control of the army in 1916, that was his biggest mistake, from that moment on everyone will blame him about the continuous bleeding defeats, the terrible conditions of the soldiers in the front and the shortage at home. After a series of defeats the Tsar himself took control of the army in 1916, that was his biggest mistake, from that moment on everyone will blame him about the continuous bleeding defeats, the terrible conditions of the soldiers in the front and the shortage at home.
- The revolution started after a Women's International Day Demonstration (Feb. 23 in the Russian calendar, Mar. 8 in the western) at Saint Petersburg. The demonstrators demanded bread and peace.
- The 25 a General Strike was called for, the day after, 26th some troops joined the strikers and refused to shoot against the demonstrators.
- The tsar accepted he has lost and abdicate. A new provisional government was settled by the moderate opposition represented by the Kadets and Esers (Democrats and Social Revolutionaries). The main leaders of this new February government was Alexander Kerensky, an Eser.



2.- The 1917 Revolutions.

This new democratic government faced three different problems that made it collapse at the end.



■ The war. Most of the Russian population, specially the february protesters, were against the war, they wanted to stop. However, Kerensky kept Russian in the war.

■ Disputes inside the government and the army that led to a pretended coup by general Kornilov.

■ The power of the bolsheviks among the workers. The leader of the bolsheviks, Lenin, had returned from exile in a German train.

■ These problems caused a new wave of strikes and demonstrations in july 1917 harshly repressed by Kerensky government. The new government was at the same position that the old one repressing workers.



2.- The 1917 Revolutions.

The October Revolution.

- ❑ After the february revolution Lenin, leader of the bolsheviks returned from exile.
- ❑ In April he wrote a series of demands, the April Theses, which were the base of the october revolution:
 - ❑ End of all war actions. Peace with Central empires.
 - ❑ Land distribution among the peasants
 - ❑ Factory control to the workers
 - ❑ Nations autonomy.
 - ❑ All power to the soviets.



2.- The 1917 Revolutions.



- ❑ At the end of October, the 24th (November 4th by the Russian calendar), the cruiser Aurora fired one of his guns at 9:45 pm marking the start of the October revolution.
- ❑ During that night the red guards (bolshevik workers battalions) stormed over the main government centres, including the Winter Palace, at the cry "All power to the soviets!"
- ❑ By next day's morning the revolution had triumphed, at least in Petrograd (new name of Saint Petersburg after the february revolution)
- ❑ The following days bolsheviks took control of some of the main cities and production centres in the country but there were some areas out of bolshevik's control and Kerensky had fled, this led to the Civil War.
- ❑ The first measure took by the new soviet government was peace, the signed the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with the Central Empires.

2.- The Civil War and War Communism.

- In 1918 Russia was divided into two factions:
 - White Russians. The counterrevolutionary elements, remains of the old government led by Kerensky.
 - The Red Army. At the beginning of the civil war Lennin asked Lev Trosky, a young bolshevik leader, the creation of a new army from the Red Guards, an army of workers. Trosky created one of the best armies in history through discipline, organization and ideology.
- Thanks to this new army bolsheviks won the Civil War in 1921.



2.- The Civil War and War Communism.

- In order to keep the front and the cities supplied during the war the government adopted the so called War Communism which was one of the bases of the future Soviet State. Its main points were
 - Industry nationalization.
 - Control of all importations and exportations
 - Discipline for workers, strikes and demonstrations were banned.
 - Requisition of all rural production for redistribution
 - National control of the Railways.
 - Private enterprises became illegal.



3.- The Creation of the Soviet State. 1922-1929.



- 1.- The NEP
- 2.- The USSR
- 3.- The Third International
- 4.- Stalin and the Marxism-Leninism.



3.- The Creation of the Soviet State. 1922-1929.

1.- **The NEP.** (New Economic Policy from Russian Новая экономическая политика, НЭП, *Novaya Ekonomicheskaya Politika*)

- After the War Communism Lenin entrusted Nikolai Bukharin the creation of a new economy that allowed the newborn soviet state to survive and grow. This new economy was also known as State Capitalism.
 - Free market and production for farmers although the land property belonged to the State.
 - Small and medium business were also allowed.
 - The State kept the control over transportation, banks, mines, and big factories and enterprises.
- The results of the NEP were outstanding, the farming production grew a 40%. The whole economy grew and, the most important, it recovered from the devastating effects of the World War I, Revolution and Civil War. But the NEP was temporary, just until the economy recovers, at 1925 was suspended.

3.- The Creation of the Soviet State. 1922-1929.

The USSR.

- While Bukharin was creating the NEP Lenin created the new State, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.
- In 1922 the Soviet Union was born. The new State was a federation minding the nationalist demands. By 1923 there was a Constitution:
 - Republics had total autonomy at local affairs.
 - Every community had its own soviet, these soviets elected representatives to every republic soviet and then to the Supreme Soviet at Moscow which was the legislative branch.
 - The Supreme Soviet named the Presidium and Council of the Peoples Commissars the executive branch.
- At the end everything was controlled by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union the only party allowed in the Union. The presidents of the Presidium and the Supreme Soviet shared his power with the General Secretary of the CPSU.



3.- The Creation of the Soviet State. 1922-1929.

The Third International. The Communist International.



- Lenin and Trosky believed that the revolution should be extended to the whole, being Russian and the Soviet Union the first step in the settlement of the communism in the World. In 1919 Lenin created the III International (The Komintern) sending delegates all over the world to set new communist parties all over the World.



- Many communist parties appeared from divisions of social democrat parties. Every party was an extension of the CPSU and followed orders from the Komintern.

3.- The Creation of the Soviet State. 1922-1929.

Stalin and the Marxism-Leninism.

- At Lenin's death in 1924 there was not a clear successor. The rule of the country and the Party were taken by a group of prominent members of the Party (Trosky, Kamenev, Stalin and Zinoviev among others), but shortly they started to struggle for power.
- Stalin begun to take control of the situation little by little, softly, from his position of General Secretary of the CPSU, by 1929 he had all the powers of the Soviet Union.



Lenin's funeral



Lev Trosky



Kamenev



Zinoviev



Stalin



3.- The Creation of the Soviet State. 1922-1929.

Stalin's Dictatorship.



- Stalin turned the Soviet Union in a personal dictatorship where the communist ideal was still alive but filtered by his powerful personality. He ruled over the USSR using three tools.
- Cult of personality. Stalin became omnipresent by the propaganda. There were pictures of him everywhere. He was the father, the husband, the grandfather of every Russian. This presence was reinforced by the World War II.
- The Party. During stalinism the only way to be promoted, of being someone was the Communist Party.
- The terror. Stalin set a secret service network that controlled every citizen of the Soviet Union. The NKVD was managed by Lavrentiy Beria. In the late 1930's they purged many members of the party who were sent to concentration camps in Siberia (Gulags)

3.- The Creation of the Soviet State. 1922-1929.

Stalin's Dictatorship.

- The flourishing cultural activity of the NEP Era with film directors like Eisenstein or abstract painters like Malevich (suprematism) or El Lissitzky (constructivism) was condemn as bourgeois and banned in order to favour an official and traditional like art style, the social realism that represented the success of the worker class.



3.- The Creation of the Soviet State. 1922-1929.

Stalin's Dictatorship.



Malevich's Suprematism.

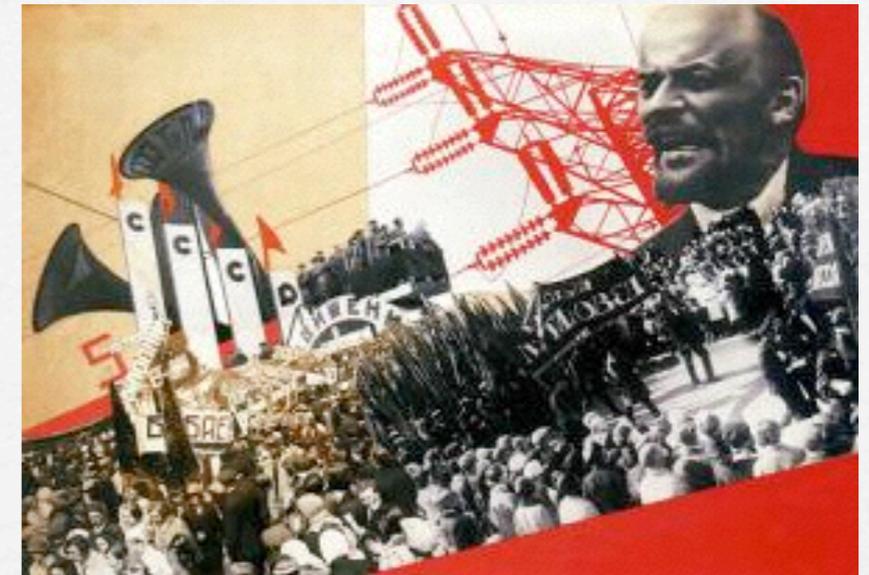


Sergei Eisenstein.

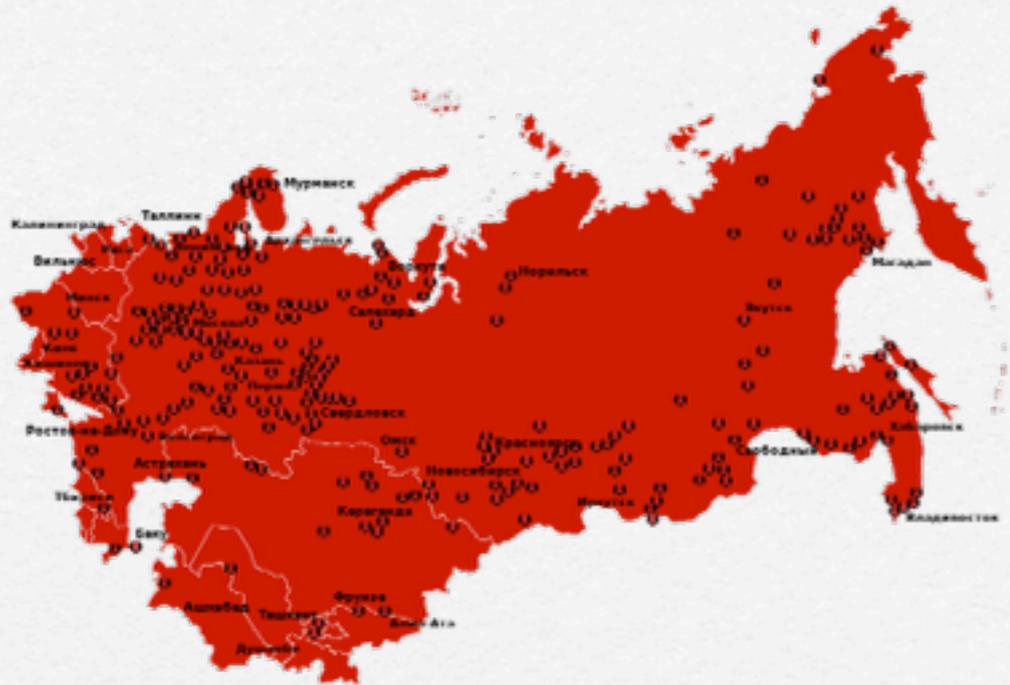


4.-The Building of an Economy Power.

- ❑ Since 1927 Stalin promoted the idea that the State should plan the economy. They formed the **Gosplan**, an agency in charge of the planing.
- ❑ Every plan must last five years. In those five years the plan set the sources and the goals.
- ❑ The targets of this plans were:
 - ❑ End the NEP and adopt a more socialist way of production.
 - ❑ Bring the USSR out from its economic backwardness
 - ❑ Reach the industrial development.
 - ❑ Being self-sufficient in food and weapons production.



4.-The Building of an Economy Power.

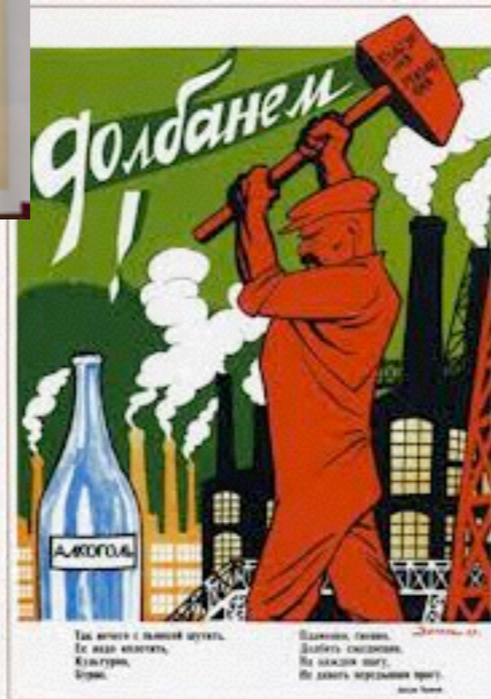


- ❑ The first plan 1928-1933. Collectivization plan.
- ❑ The first plan sought collectivization of the land. During the NEP a group of wealthy mid-class farmers appeared, the kulaks.
- ❑ They refused to hand off their lands to the State which was followed by a hard repression. Most of them were declared counterrevolutionaries and sent to Siberia, millions died in the gulags or by starvation due to the bad crops that followed the collectivization.

SIX MILLION PERISH IN SOVIET FAMINE
Peasants' Crops Seized, They and Their Animals Starve



4.-The Building of an Economy Power.



- Industrialization.
- At the end of the revolution, 1921, the USSR was a poorly industrialized country, mainly in the heavy industry sector (Ironworks, coal mining, electricity and oil.)
- The results after the three first five-years plans were outstanding turning the Soviet Union in an industrial power. However the results on heavy and military industry were great other kind of goods like private goods were left behind, leaving the population in a sort of material poverty.



**The next day we will correct
the activities:**

□ Page 7

