Communism in Crisis
Lenin & Stalin in Power
Basil Dmytryshyn

- Wrote in the 1960s-1980s
- Polish, but escaped to USA after being imprisoned by both Germans and Russians during WWII
- Speaks many languages
- Expert on Russian history from 700s-1991; Ukraine
- Revisionist, anti-Stalinist historian
- **Thesis:** Stalin used excessive cultural and social regimentation to accomplish his industrial and agricultural goals
Russian Civil War (1919-1920)

- **Reds** (Communists) vs. **Whites** (anti-Bolshevik, Mensheviks/SRs, monarchists & supported by West)
- Last Romanovs executed (July 17, 1918)
- Lenin calls for **“Dictatorship of the Proletariat”**
  - Uses force to put down all opposition
  - Cheka create **“Red Terror”** (250K murdered)
War Communism (1920)

- Nationalization
- Drafted all men < 50; Women worked in industry
- Peasants farmed to feed army/workers
Lenin’s Reforms & NEP (1921)

- Some private ownership @ local level
  - Indicates Russia is not ready for Communism
- Politburo est. single-party state
  - Allowed local elections; candidates were Communist
- Religion suppressed; Marx
- Mass media pushed propaganda
Foreign Policy

- Worldwide Communist takeover ➔ Comintern est.
Lenin’s Death (1924)

• USSR established in 1922
• Lenin dies of a stroke with no clear successor, but it’s likely he would have liked Trotsky
  – Stalin vs. Trotsky → Stalin wins.
 Perspectives of Trotsky
USSR Under Stalin

- State would “wither away” (176)
- Rewriting History
  - Can’t question Lenin
  - 1930 – Universal primary ed.
    - Classroom discipline returns; create good workers for State
  - 1934 – Changes education system for history
- Teaching of Russian language; “Communist virtues”
- No more free love ➞ family & marriage stressed (177);
  - “Mother Heroine” – 10+ Children
  - No more “hooliganism” ➞ death!
• **Five-Year Plans** (1928) – established quotes that industry had to meet; ended privatization (goal: 250%)
  – First two Five-Year Plans were effective in building heavy industry at the expense of consumer goods, quality, and rewards for workers
• Forced *collectivization* of agriculture returned peasants to serfdom → poor econ policy, over-bureaucracy, peasant indifference (174) → 10 million starving
• Marxist historians: Truly classless by definition
• Others: USSR was just like any other country
• Others: Obeying vs. Commanding Class (D)
  – Stalin could “freeze” workers through planned econ
  – Paid skilled and unskilled workers differently (1931)
  – Rewards for Stakhanovites and others (Boxer the Horse)
Purges

- Causes (different historiographical theories)
  - Scapegoat to cover up economic failure of 5 Year Plans
  - Eliminate Opposition
  - Terror inherent to Totalitarianism → submit to state
  - Stalin’s own madness/paranoia

- Different from Lenin
  - Numbers involved & non-party casualties
  - “Show trials”
  - Forced confessions of guilt
Occur 1933-1939; 300K “purged”; 35K from army

- **Reign of Terror** – Politburo member Kirov assassinated in 1934; used as an excuse to execute whomever Stalin wished
- No defense allowed, eliminated “Old Bolsheviks,” Red Army
- **Kulaks** – shot or sent to **Gulags**
- Great Purge – Torture, public confessions, executions
- Trotsky – Murdered in Mexico

After purges, only loyalists remain – Khrushchev, Molotov, Malenkov, etc.