April 22nd, 2008

Soviet Russia in the 20's & 30's

I) The legacy of Lenin

II) Stalin: Origins & character

III) Stalin vs. Trotsky

IV Stalinization of Russia

V The great purge

Final at Gaines 101 - 2-3:50 PM May 5th.

Totalitarian regime like Italian Fascists. Attempt to control every aspect of life via the state. Not applicable to all ~~Fas~~ regimes. Think about this for exam.

Lenin - Marx & social revolution. Must have a large industrial system. Tension between ever expanding working class and monopolistic middle class. Would first happen in England Marx thought. Lenin had to re-postulate Marxism for Russia - claimed that peasants could lead revolution - weakest link of capitalism. Turned Marx on his head. Marxism - leninism - very different than pure Marxism.

Power of Bolsheviks was ruthlessness, use of terror & strong will to hold on to power. Secret Police, Cheka, & terrorized people & enforced one political will on the country. Lenin favored a small party, well organized & disciplined. Other left parties kicked out. Model was Jacobins in French Revolution - discipline, purity, Robespierre & reign of terror.

Russia must be secure from outside interference & vast masses would have to be educated politically. Dictatorship until then. Full control in politics - not possible in Economics. Bow to reality is NEP - New Economic Policy.

Allowed some private enterprise. Some private ownership, Farms, some industries. Tactical measure, temporary. until civil war is over in 1922. Full collectivization was goal. Lenin was sick, cancer, Died in 1924. Never saw his "promised land." Body entombed via Stalin. Wanted to cover over tensions between him & Lenin.

Battle For control. No mechanism for handing over power. Trotsky, leader in civil war. Stalin - longest lasting dictator, Till 1953. Outsider - Georgia, ~~Gorgy~~ Gori. Museum there. Visit. Born 1879. Died 1953. Veli at end of name means origin is in Georgia. Mom wanted Stalin to be a priest. Sent to seminary manned by Russians. Hot bed of anti-Russian sentiment. Poor student. Got into trouble. Fighter, Drinker, carouser. Vodka & standing in a window sill several stories above the street. 1895 - hangs out with workers & Marxist group. Kicked out of seminary in 1899. Met Lenin. Dispatched Stalin to Black Sea to organize oil workers. Exiled to Siberia in 1902 by Tsar. Escaped from penal arc in 1904 & goes back to Georgia. Arrested again - back to Siberia. 1913 - goes to Vienna. Trotsky was fluent in several languages, Stalin not well traveled. Stalin wanted to be seen as a main member of revo. But was not. Lead to purges. Was only on the edges.
Not charismatic, not good speaker.
Knew human weaknesses. Utterly ruthless, played groups off against each other.

Lenin never trusted Stalin. Trotsky was obvious choice for a leader. 1924 battle for control. Trotsky - no match for Stalin's ruthlessness & political infighting. Trotsky was Jewish - played up by Stalin. Chipped away at Trotsky's character. Trotsky wanted to move revolution abroad, Stalin "Socialism in one country". Trotsky leaves Politburo in 1927. Gulag begins in 1927. Political opposition dumped there. Read Gulag Archipelago by Solh. Trotsky exiled from Russia & wanders. Eventually goes to Mexico City & is murdered by disciple of Stalin in 1940, with an ice pick. Paranoi. NEP suspended in 1928 by Stalin when he ~~reg~~ became the full dictator of Soviet Union. Collectivization begins in ernest. Banks, Farming, etc. Resistance to collective farming from wealthy farmers - called Kulacks. They were killed or exiled to Siberia. Efficiency fell, & system broke down, famine set in. Russia - largest arable land in the world. Import grain from US. Montana connection - Wilson of Wilson Hall at MSU was an advisor.

Stalin - obsessed with catching up with west in industrial production. Not efficient though. Not good quality either. 5 year state plan. Various quotas. ~~The~~ Constant push for products but with total disregard for markets & demand. People suffered terribly. Stalin filled shoes of previous despots like Ivan the Terrible. Many Russians believed in Absolute Leader. Vast majority of Russians supported the system. Stalin had admirers outside of the Soviet Union. American left saw Russia as a new model. "Saw the future & it works."

looked good compared to Nazism. Stalin changed foreign policy as Hitler's power grew. Urged communists abroad to work with liberals abroad. Spain in 1930s - popular front government. France too. - Blum. Spain - Franco & civil war. Stalin never trusted the military. Many contacts between Germans & Soviets in 1920s. Paranoia sets in - Stalin purges perceived enemies in 1934. True heirs of revolution were first to be purged. Stalin turns against his own party - Moscow show trials. Revolution devours its own. Intellectuals were next, then non-Russian personalities. Scientific community, & finally the military came under fire. 1937 - spring, most illustrious figure in Red Army, Tuthavchevsky, was arrested. Xenophobia was rampant. Military was devastated. About 1/3 of leadership was killed or imprisoned. When the Red Army was rebuilt Stalin's "yes men" dominated the military.