

## From Marx to Stalin

### Logic of Marx's *Communist Manifesto*

SCARCITY created social classes and class struggle between oppressor and oppressed, exploiters and exploited, haves and have nots. Those in power used their power to force others to work for them, exploiting their labor.

As the economic means of production changed, so did social class structure, so that the bourgeoisie grew out of the feudal age.

The bourgeoisie created new wealth (in part based on the discovery of the New World), new means of commerce, manufacturing, communicating, transportation, and expanded markets (including Imperialism). Changes in economic forces (capitalism over feudalism) led to political changes and the creation of the modern, bourgeois state, (for example, through the French Revolution).

“The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part.”

1. It has reduced the class struggle to the bourgeoisie (owners of the means of production) and proletariat (who own nothing, but must sell their labor to continue to exist).

2. In the constant search for resources, cheap labor and new markets (Imperialism and international capitalism), the bourgeoisie has brought the entire world under its sway, creating a world economy and a cosmopolitan culture.

3. Most importantly, through the Industrial Revolution, the bourgeoisie has been able to eliminate SCARCITY, so that the major economic problem for the bourgeoisie is to get enough people to CONSUME what they produce. This does not mean that scarcity is eliminated from everyone; in fact, while the capitalists get richer and richer, the conditions of the proletariat get worse since they can easily be replaced and therefore they only need to be paid enough to keep them alive and working.

However, since CAPITALISM is based on COMPETITION, it is constantly changing and growing, which leads to OVERPRODUCTION and therefore economic crises such as recessions and depressions, and political conflicts such as Imperialism and War.

Just as the feudal lords were subject to the forces of history, so to are the bourgeoisie (capitalists). As the conditions of the proletariat get worse, they become more revolutionary, eventually overthrowing the bourgeoisie (The COMMUNIST REVOLUTION)

1. Because the majority of the population will be proletariat, the REVOLUTION WILL BE OF THE IMMENSE MAJORITY IN THE INTEREST OF THE IMMENSE MAJORITY.

2. Because the Industrial Revolution (through the work of the bourgeoisie) has eliminated scarcity, the new communist society can make sure that everyone's needs (food, clothing, shelter, etc.) will be met through the practice of “from each according to his/her ability; to each according to his/her needs.”

3. Work can be reduced, since the emphasis will be on producing enough for everyone, making society wealthy, but not a rich class. Abolition of private property.

4. Choices will be made of what is best for everyone (for example, mass transportation, housing for everyone, etc.)

5. Because the bourgeoisie had brought the world into its capitalist system, the revolution would be a World Revolution (“Workers of the WORLD, Unite.” Goods and services would be shared internationally.

## ***Problems Russia Faced in the Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, which would make it difficult to have a Marxist Revolution.***

1. Lack of industrialization (Russia was the least industrial country in Europe)
2. The peasantry, not the proletariat, is the majority.  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the population were serfs.
3. Russia had not experienced a bourgeois-capitalist revolution. Russia was still ruled by the Tsar and the aristocracy. Russian capitalists did not possess political power.

**Possible Answers** – The Social Democrats (proletariat party) were split between the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks

### **Mensheviks**

1. Russia must undergo the same experiences as Western Europe, so the Social Democrats needed to support the bourgeoisie in creating a liberal-capitalist revolution. Follow the historical phases that Marx outlined.
2. Under the bourgeoisie, the Social Democrats would work to create better conditions for the workers and to bring them to class-consciousness.
3. Membership in the party should be broad, including all who sympathize with the cause.
4. When capitalism was fully developed and the proletariat became the majority, there will be a communist revolution.

### **Bolsheviks** (especially Trotsky's idea of Permanent Revolution)

1. The Social Democrats were a revolutionary party. The bourgeoisie is too weak to create a revolution so the proletariat should seize control now. Give history a push.
2. Because of their exploitation, hatred of landlords, and lack of land, the peasants (serfs) would support the Bolshevik Revolution.
3. The tasks of industrialization could be accomplished under a socialist regime; it does not need a capitalist phase. These tasks would distribute the hardships and benefits of industrialization equally, even though there will be scarcity.
4. Because there will be a world revolution, sparked by Russia's example, the more industrialized countries (after their revolution) will help out Russia as it industrializes.
5. After industrialization is accomplished, Russia will move from a socialist to a communist society.
6. Since the Tsar's regime uses spies and secret police to suppress revolutionary parties, the Social Democrats need to be a small, tight-knit group of leaders committed to a revolution.

### **Russia under Tsar**

Life was miserable for the peasants and proletariat. Power and wealth were held by the Tsar and the landed aristocracy. The small bourgeois class had little political power and the Tsar used secret police to suppress revolutionary movements. The failures of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) led to a failed Revolution of 1905 (although the bourgeoisie had the Duma (parliament) established.

World War One made the revolution possible. By 1916, more than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of all men of working age had been recruited into the army of 15 million men.  $\frac{1}{3}$  of these had been killed or wounded. At one point, there was only one rifle to every ten soldiers and artillery guns were rationed to two or three shells a day. While the Western front of WWI became stagnant, the Eastern front was not. Germany's advances led to Russia losing  $\frac{1}{3}$  of its land and  $\frac{1}{2}$  of its industry. Germany advances led to millions of refugees. There were food shortages in the cities. . The peasants wanted land. (There were other problems.)

## ***February/March Revolution of 1917 (Provisional Government)***

Established the Provisional Government led by Kerensky but they were faced with many problems inherited from the Tsar's Regime. Since it fit their interpretation of Marx (bourgeois-capitalist revolution before a communist one), many Mensheviks supported the Provisional Government.

### ***Problems and Attempted "Solutions" by the Provisional Government***

**World War One** -- Because of the loss of so much land, the desire for international recognition from the Allies, and the mistaken belief that the people would now support the war because of the new government, the Provisional Government decided to stay in the war.

**Land Redistribution** – Without the Tsar's government to support the landlords, the peasants seized land. The Provisional Government did not want to support this lawlessness but they were afraid of losing the support of the peasants, so they did nothing about his issue.

**Petrograd Soviet** – The Social Democrats, representing the workers, soldiers, and peasants, set up an alternative government. Soviet Order #1 put them in charge of the troops. When Lenin returned to Russia, he pushed for revolution under the slogans, "Peace [end World War One], Bread [food for the starving cities], and Land [accept the peasants' seizure of land, for now]" and "All Power to the Soviets." (Soviets were councils of workers, peasants, and soldiers set up throughout Russia).

**Lack of Legitimate Power** – While the Provisional Government grew out of the Duma under the Tsar, they promised but kept postponing an election of a Constituent Assembly. They feared that the Bolsheviks would win power.

**Failed June Offensive against German troops.**

**July Days** – A failed Bolshevik coup in July.

**Kornilov Affair** – Fearing a Bolshevik take over and the weakness of the Provisional Government, in an attempted coup, Commander-in-Chief marched his army to Petrograd but the railroad workers (organized by the Bolsheviks) prevented his trains from moving into the city.

## ***Bolshevik Government under Lenin – October/November Revolution of 1917***

Lenin was faced with many of the same problems that the Provisional Government had.

### ***Problems and Attempted "Solutions"***

**World War One** -- In spite of its enormous consequences, Lenin pulled Russia out of World War One with the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in which the country lost more than ¼ of its population, more than 1/2 of its industry, nearly ¾ of its iron and coal, and 1/3 of its most fertile land. (This was the land conquered by Germany during the war including Finland, Poland, Baltic countries and the Ukraine. It was NOT returned to Russia in the Treaty of Versailles.)

**Land Redistribution** – Lenin issued a Decree on Land allowing village committees to seize nobles' land and share it among the peasants. [Peasants were not happy losing the land from the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.]

**Lack of Legitimate Power** – The Bolshevik Revolution was more of a coup, where they seized power in Petrograd and Moscow but still had to gain the support of the rest of the country. Believing that they would win, the Bolsheviks had elections for the Constituent Assembly, however, the Social Revolutionaries (who represented the peasants) gained the most seats (267 to 161 for the Communists). After one day, the Bolsheviks closed down the Constituent Assembly, ending the possibility for a democracy in Russia at this time. From then on, the Bolsheviks ruled by dictatorship. However, they did pass popular measures, curtailing the power of the Russian Orthodox Church, declaring women equal to men and were now able to own property and obtain a divorce easily, and adopting the Western calendar.

**Civil War (1919-1921)** – Many groups allied against the Bolsheviks, who gained power through a coup and controlled only part of Russia. The Whites (those opposed to the Bolsheviks) included the bourgeoisie, the Social Revolutionaries (who were resentful for the loss

of the best farmland because of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and who were denied power through the closing of the Constituent Assembly), generals and others loyal to the Tsar, and minorities and nationalist and separatists living in different parts of Russia. Because of the Bolsheviks withdrew Russia from the war, the Germans were able to move the Eastern troops to the Western Front. For this reason and the desire to stop communism both in Russia and spreading, the British, Americans, and Japanese supported the Whites and invaded Russia.

The Civil War was devastating to Russia (now the Soviet Union). Between 1914 (the start of WWI) and 1921 (the end of the Civil War), 28 million Russians died. Famine spread throughout the country. To win the Civil War, the Communists had to resort to draconian measures including conscription in the army, War Communism including forced labor, severe rationing, terror (used on both sides), the secret police (Cheka), and the Red Army.

**New Economic Policy (NEP)** (a “solution” for survival) – To recover from the devastation of the Civil War, Lenin and the Communists had to take a step back from their communist theory. The NEP was a return to private ownership and private trading, while government controlled large industries, banking, power supplies, etc. Some peasants became wealthier (kulaks) as did some traders. By 1927, the Soviet Union had recovered from the worst effects of the wars.

**Internationally, the Soviet Union was isolated.** The allied invasions of Russia during the Civil War and the failure of allies to allow the Soviet Union to participate in The Treaty of Versailles, let alone its provisions, which created independent countries which had been part of Russia (such as Poland and Finland), created great distrust of the rest of the world. The United States did not recognize the Soviet Union until 1935.

**The Death of Lenin** in January 1924 created a power struggle between Leon Trotsky and Joseph Stalin. Trotsky, the creator of the Theory of Permanent Revolution, was a leader of the Revolution of 1905, the head of the Petrograd Soviet, a leader of the Bolshevik Revolution, the organizer and head of the Red Army, and Lenin’s right hand man. Nevertheless, for many reasons, Stalin won the power struggle and exiled Trotsky and had him murdered in Mexico.

### ***The Soviet Union under Stalin***

**Problems** facing the Soviet Union and Stalin’s “Solutions”

Stalin realized that the Soviet Union was isolated and that the hopes for an international revolution (part of Trotsky’s Theory of Permanent Revolution) was a not possible at this time. He also thought there would be another war. If Russia was to survive, it must industrialize quickly. “We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make up this lag in ten years. Either we do it or they crush us...”

#### **“Solutions”**

Stalin developed a theory, “**Socialism in One Country,**” in which the Soviet Union would go it alone, but its successes would make it the model for the rest of the world and create future revolutions.

**Industrialization through the Five Year Plans** – Centralize planning with an emphasis on heavy industry – steel, coal, oil, and electrification. The second Five Year Plan stressed transportation. However, Stalin used the harshest measures to get the results he needed.

**Agriculture through Forced Collectivization** – All farms were converted into village farms run by committees of party members. The kulaks (richer peasants) were eliminated as a class; many were killed when they resisted collectivization (killing livestock and burning fields). Large collective farms needed tractors and other heavy equipment, but there were only 7,000 tractors in all of Russia in 1929. The army and secret police were used to kill the kulaks, stifle resistance, and confiscate food for the workers in the cities. Stalin’s policies led to a massive famine in 1931-33 in which 10 million died.

**Internal Enemies** – Stalin’s policies created mass opposition, which he put down ruthlessly with the secret police (NKVD) and secret executions. Stalin also needed people to

blame for his failures, which led to the Great Purge Trials. Many “Old Bolsheviks,” including those who worked with Lenin, and the chief of the Army and Navy, were forced into show trials, where they were made to confess that they were enemies of the state and plotting to kill Stalin. He had his greatest rivals, Kirov and Trotsky, killed. 1/5 of all officers in the Red Army were liquidated. About 20 million Russians were executed or died in slave labor camps (gulags). This was rule by **Terror**, plain and simple.

**External Enemies** – The communists had established the Comintern, to encourage international revolutions by working with communists in other countries, especially poor countries that were controlled by imperialism. Because the Soviet Union was isolated, Stalin created Socialism in One Country and extremely harsh measures to industrialize. However, with the rise of Hitler, democratic countries were willing to form a Popular Front against fascism, and recognized the Soviet Union. In 1934, the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations. With the appeasement of Hitler at Munich, Stalin realized he could not trust the allies and so he signed a Non-Aggression Pact with Germany. Both countries invaded Poland in 1939, but then in 1941, Hitler invaded Russia. The Soviet Union lost 20 million out of a population of 191 million during World War Two. [By comparison, the United States lost about 400,000 in WWII.]

## **Russia Chronology (Problems and “Solutions”)**

### **Tsar**

Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) – losses, famine

Revolution of 1905

Bloody Sunday

Opposition by many groups – Constitutional Democrats (bourgeoisie), Social Revolutionaries (peasants), Mensheviks and Bolsheviks (workers – communists)

Creation of the Duma

Limits and Failures of the Revolution of 1905

World War One (1914-1917)

The Tsar abdicates – What form of government would replace him?

### **Provisional Government**

**(February Revolution) Feb./March 1917 (Kerensky)**

Problems:

World War One

Land Redistribution

Petrograd Soviet and exiled Bolshevik leaders

July Days

General Kornilov

### **Bolshevik Government and Lenin**

**(October Revolution) Oct./Nov. 1917**

Problems:

World War One/Occupation of Foreign Troops (Treaty of Brest-Litovsk)

Land Redistribution

Constituent Assembly

Spreading Revolution beyond St. Petersburg and Moscow

International Revolution

Civil War (1919-1921) (Cheka)

New Economic Policy (NEP)

Problem of Lenin's Death

## **Power Struggle between Trotsky (Permanent Revolution) and Stalin (Socialism in One Country)**

### **Stalin**

#### Problems:

Industrialization

Agriculture

“Internal Enemies”

“External Enemies” (Capitalist countries and later Hitler)

#### “Solutions”:

Five Year Plans

Collectivization

Purge Trials, assassinations, forced labor (Gulags)

World War II (including Non-Aggression Pact with Hitler)

Think of the major problems facing Russia and the different governments. While understanding the choices made, what alternative actions do you think should have been taken?

Given your understanding of Marx’s ideas, was the Soviet Union under Stalin Marxism?

## **Women and the Russian Revolution**

Women's demonstrations started the February Revolution. In 1917, the Russian government was forced to ration bread in the capital, Petrograd. It was women who stood in bread lines to feed their families, many of them after putting in a 12-hour day in the factories. About 10,000 women decided to demonstrate on International Women's Day, 1917 carrying banners stating "Down with Autocracy," "Down with War," "Our Husbands Must Return from the Front," and "Peace and Bread." Other workers joined, leading to a general strike.

Women fought during the February and October Revolutions and the Civil War. Lenin appointed Alexandra Kollontai, a long time Bolshevik and feminist, as Commissar for Public Welfare. The new Soviet government actively legislated to transform women's lives. In 1918, a new marriage law made marriage a civil ceremony and divorce easy to obtain. Kollontai issued a decree guaranteeing state protection for mothers and children and making maternity hospital care free. In 1920, abortion became legal for the first time in modern Europe. Lenin argued for the creation of public catering establishments, nurseries, day care centers, kindergartens, restaurants and laundries to free women from the labor of motherhood and housework.

After Lenin died, there was a backlash to women's liberation. Kollontai fell out of favor, independent women's organizations were abolished, and women were removed from their positions in the Red Army and the upper echelons of the Communist Party. The major gains for women were educational. Maternity centers were opened, reading widely taught, and girls were trained for a wide variety of work.