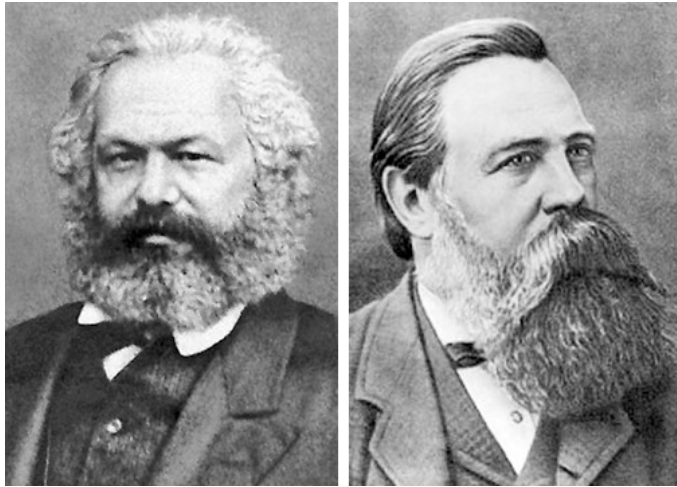


# Life under socialism in the USSR

Victoria Dorfman

Duke Federalist Society Presentation, 10/20/20

# 1848 – The Communist Manifesto (Marx/Engels)



“A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of communism,” (...)

“The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workers of the world, unite!”

- worker alienation:
  - from the work, by being a commodity paid low wages, in competition
  - from the value of the product to consumers, captured by capitalists
- “solution”: collective ownership of the means of production
- Russia did not look promising as a starting place...
  - peasants or serfs (attached to land, hereditary ownership by lords)
  - not industrialized

# The road to revolution(s)



Alexander II

+



Alexander III

+



Nicholas II

=



February Revolution

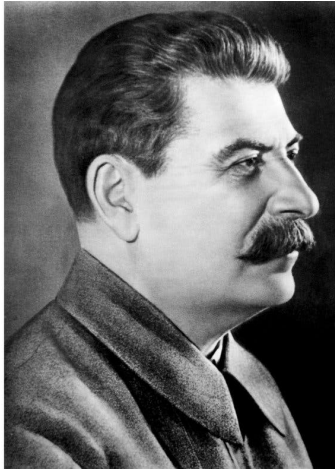
- (almost) absolutist monarchy until early 20<sup>th</sup> century
- serfdom abolished in 1861, but peasants still mistreated...
- ... 40% are industrial workers by 1914, poor conditions/wages
- Russia suffers heavy losses in WWI, shortages, bread riots
- 1917 - February revolution, Nicholas II abdicates
- establishes democratic assembly + provisional government...

# 1917 - October Revolution



- October revolution => Communist takeover
- idealist in some ways...
  - literacy (<40% of males, <12% of females could read)
  - electrification
- ... but not in others
  - seizure of all property and transfer to the state or collectives
  - mass executions against Czarists and upper classes
- by 1921, New Economic Policy reverses to mixed economy

# 1924 - Stalin



- The Great Terror
  - anonymous accusations, arrests, show trials
  - purges after purges, destroying potential rivals, making room for loyal cadres
- Five Year Plans
  - production is planned by the state, down to mines, factories, farms, ...
  - collectivize agriculture (mass expropriations, executions, forced migrations)
  - rapid industrialization
  - “one death is a tragedy, a thousand deaths is a statistic”

# 1941-1945 The Great Patriotic War

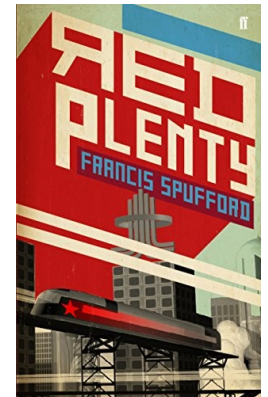


- production focused on defense against external threat
- Germany was halted outside of Moscow, at enormous cost
- ~24M civilian + military deaths, out of ~200M

# 1953 - Khrushchev



- denounced Stalinism
- focused on improving the lives of citizens
- production focused on housing, consumer goods
- goal was to overtake the USA...
- ... failed, due to lack of infrastructure/incentives
- if curious about this, “Red Plenty” is a riveting book



# 1961 – Gagarin is the first man in space



Fairy Tale Became Reality



Glory to the Son of the Party!



# 1964 – Brezhnev / 1985 - Gorbachev



- economic stagnation
- resources focused on military buildup or foreign policy
- censorship, KGB, focus on preventing active agitation
- two decades culminate in Gorbachev and
  - glasnost (“transparency”)
  - perestroika (“restructuring”)
- coup attempt in 1991 leads to the dissolution of USSR

# A day in the life



# Censorship



“The Communist Party is the leading force of the Soviet society”  
(Hail to the Communist Party! Peace to the world! People and the Party are one!)

# Censorship



Let Us Be Worthy of the Name of Pavlik Morozov!

# Education and Propaganda



“The goal is to be educated!”

# Education and Propaganda



"Glory to Marxism-Leninism!"

# It's my party...

Stalin

Sergei Kirov

Nikolai Shvernik

Nikolai Antipov



# It's my party...

Stalin

Sergei Kirov

Nikolai Shvernik

Nikolai Antipov





# It's my party...

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Stalin

Sergei Kirov

Nikolai Shvernik

Nikolai Antipov



# Education and Propaganda



"Lenin lived, Lenin is alive, Lenin will live!"

# Propaganda to the Outsiders



”Peace! Friendship!”

# (in)Equality



"What the Revolution gave to a [female] worker and peasant"  
(library, kindergarten, workers' club, school for adults...)

# (in)Equality



"50 Years of Stakhanov Movement:  
yesterday – innovator's frontier; today – worker's norm"

# Voting



"All to the elections!

All to the all-people celebration of our free Motherland!"

# Religion



"Away with religious holidays!"



# Religion



"Religion – Poison; Take Care of the Kids!"

# Three points to take home

- 1) Oppression/censorship
- 2) Perpetual shortages significantly affecting quality of life
- 3) No information about outside

Thank you!