

THE WORLD OF 1919

Post Civil War USSR

A. New Economic Policy (NEP) and War Communism

- big industries were nationalized at first
- more drastic measures of War Communism were a result of pressures from Civil War and major economic disruption
 - ▣ 1920 industry only producing only 18% of 1913 output!!
- Reforms were needed for “peace time”, particularly after the warning from the Kronstadt Mutiny
- new measures approved after with the “New Economic Policy” see De Marco p. 52

The Kronstadt Revolt/Mutiny of 1921

War Communism made Lenin's government very unpopular. Discontent amongst the peasants led to violence in the cities. Workers went on strike, in spite of the death penalty for striking.

The most serious opposition to Lenin's government came in March 1921. Sailors at the Kronstadt naval base near Petrograd revolted. They accused Lenin of breaking his promise to help the workers.

Lenin ordered the Red Army to put down the revolt. This caused 20,000 casualties and the leaders of the revolt were executed. However, the mutiny was a warning to Lenin that he might have to relax War Communism.



Dead on the Ice: Red Army casualties at Kronstadt



- War Communism is Replaced with The New Economic Policy (NEP) see DeMarco p. 52
- To regain popular support, Lenin relaxed War Communism with the New Economic Policy (NEP).
 - ▣ Smaller industries were returned to private ownership and
 - ▣ peasants could sell their surplus on the open market.
 - ▣ This was a return to capitalism and competition.

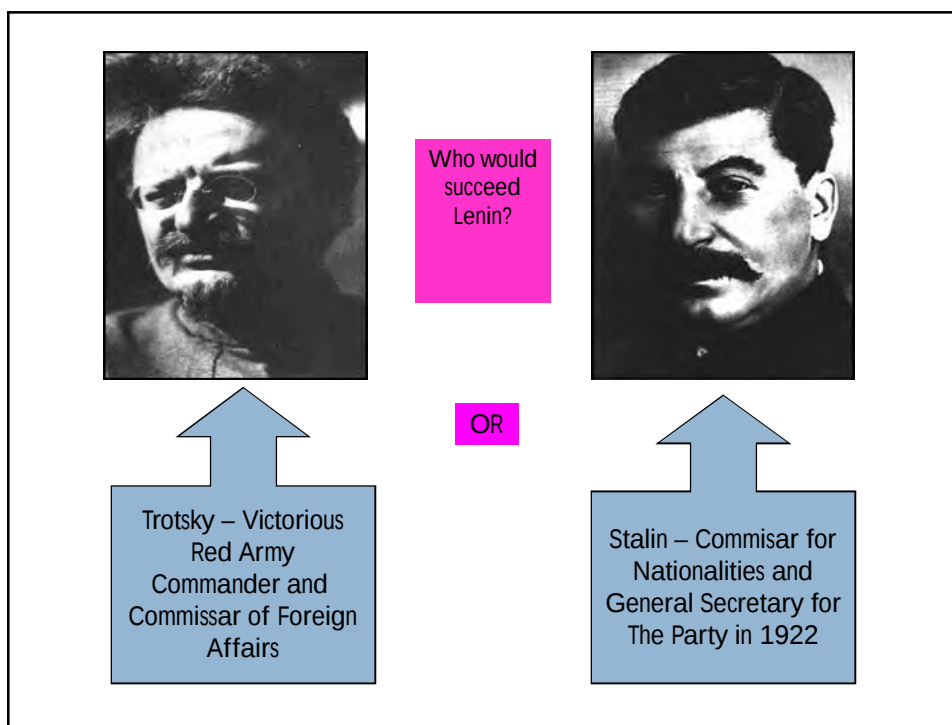
- Lenin hoped that NEP would give Russia 'a breathing space' to get back on its feet. Most of the Communist Party saw the need for NEP, but some were against it ideologically as it went against principles of Marxism
- On the whole NEP was a success. But it did create some problems.
 - Some peasants, the Kulaks, became rich, while 'Nepmen' or businessmen made a profit in the towns.
 - Some saw NEP as a betrayal of communism and return to the old system.



As each of the areas formerly belonging to the Tsar came under communist control, they were turned into socialist republics. In 1923 these became the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

B. The End of Lenin and the Rise of Stalin

- Lenin continued banning of political opposition, even from within the Communist party itself
- Lenin and Party completely control Soviet Republic
- but Lenin growing ill
- a contest of leadership would ensue between Trotsky and Stalin once Lenin died in 1924



- Stalin was appointed General Secretary of Party in 1922 – good position to be a successor! Even Lenin worried about it (De Marco p. 53)
- By Lenin's death on 21, Jan. 1924, Stalin was already too powerful to be challenged by Trotsky
- The death was a major blow to Soviet Russia – Petrograd renamed to Leningrad in his honour (Howarth p. 57)
- Stalin quickly moved to assume leadership but it was a bitter and murderous struggle until Stalin had Trotsky expelled from party in 4 years
- Sources: Paxton p. 142-143 and De Marco p. 50-53

The Struggle for power: Stalin v Trotsky

After the death of Lenin in 1924, there was a four year power struggle between Josef Stalin and Leon Trotsky over the succession to the Russian leadership.

Trotsky believed that under his leadership Russia would become a catalyst for the spread of communism across the world. He had been very successful as commander of the Red Army in the civil war and appeared to have Lenin's support.

Stalin had not played a significant part in the revolution of 1917, but since then he had gathered control of a number of key posts in the Communist Party. Stalin was determined to win control of Russia for himself. He was not interested in international communism, he wanted to make Russia strong and with himself at its head.

By 1928 Stalin emerged as the successor to Lenin and Trotsky was forced into exile.



When Lenin died he had warned the Communist Party of Stalin's threat in his 'Political Testament'.

Comrade Stalin, having become General Secretary, has great power in his hands, and I am not sure that he always knows how to use that power with sufficient caution.

Comrade Stalin is too rude.

Reasons for Stalin's success

Although Lenin had not supported him, Stalin was in a strong position. As General Secretary of the Communist Party Stalin had responsibility for appointing posts in the Party. This meant he could remove opponents and replace them with his supporters. He was also popular in the Party as he wanted to concentrate on turning Russia into a modern, powerful state; this approach was called 'Socialism in one country'.

In contrast Trotsky was much less popular. He had been a Menshevik and had only joined the Bolsheviks in 1917. Trotsky was dismissed as Commissar for War in 1925 and from the Central Committee in 1926. In 1927 he was expelled from the Communist Party and forced into exile in 1929. Stalin had Trotsky assassinated in Mexico in 1940.

Other leading figures of 1917, Kamenev, Zinoviev and Bukharin, were also removed by Stalin.