Historical Background of the Russian Revolution

Animal Farm
Animal Farm:

**Historical Allegory** = Multiple Levels of Meaning
1845-1883:

- Soviet philosopher, Karl Marx promotes **Communism** (no private ownership of property; everyone is responsible for one another).
What’s the difference?

- **Communism** (economic and political) states the distribution of goods and services takes place according to the individuals needs
  - aims to overthrow the capitalist order by revolutionary means and to destroy social classes to keep everyone equal and eliminate private property so that it can be commonly controlled
  - No capitalism

- **Socialism** (economic) states the distribution of goods and services takes place according to the individuals efforts
  - calls for cooperation and social service
  - Capitalism allowed, but is controlled somehow by a centralized planning system and that the benefits are divided equally
1880-1890:

- 2 social classes emerge in Russia - the capitalistic upper middle class (Bourgeoisie) and the working class (Proletariat). Marx predicted, in the Communist Manifesto, that there would be a revolution whereby the working class would rise up against the upper middle class.
  - They would put faith into their country and nothing else (he was anti-organized religion. He felt it provided a false sense of hope)
1880-1890:

- The upper-middle class formed the Socialist Democratic Party to try to improve the living conditions for themselves and those in the lower class.
- In an attempt to squelch the revolution, Czar Nicholas II imprisoned and exiled these democrats and many people were killed.
Czar Nicholas II
During WW1

- There is a shortage of guns and ammo. Russia was losing battles, and some soldiers were ready to revolt. Why?
  - Czar Nicholas promises to send troops to fight the Germans on the Eastern front. Many soldiers are sent to battle without guns and ammo. They are told to "pick up the weapons of your fallen countryman and use them to fight."
  - Many Russians die and the Czar loses popularity.
1917:

- Russia is collapsing because of poor leadership. Revolution becomes inevitable.
- Three men become interested in a takeover: Stalin, Lenin, and Trotsky.
Stalin, Lenin, and Trotsky
In November of 1917, Lenin starts the Bolshevik Revolution. The Bolsheviks wanted to create a government for peasants, workingmen, and soldiers.
1917:

- 4 years of civil war. RED---------------------defeated-------------------White
- Czar Nicholas and his entire family are executed. Complete removal of the past.
- Lenin became ruler and instituted the ideal of socialism./Communist Party Emerges
1924

- Lenin dies—his body entombed in glass-tourist sight. He is IDOLIZED.
- NEXT... FIERCE struggle for control between Trotsky and Stalin.
Stalin

- Concentrated on building a strong socialist state at home.
- Established the Comintern
LONG LIVE THE THIRD COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL!
EVVIVA IL TERZA INTERNAZIONALE COMMUNISTA!
VIVE LA TROISIÈME INTERNATIONALE COMMUNISME!
ES LEBE DIE Dritte KOMMUNISTISCHE INTERNATIONALE!
Trotsky

- An intellectual
- A great planner, organizer, and favored rapid industrialization and exportation of socialist views to other countries.
- Lenin wanted Trotsky to have control after his death, but Stalin took control.
- Later is exiled to Mexico by Stalin, is called a traitor and murdered in 1940.
1936-1938: Stalin Takes Control!
Let’s step OUT of Russia and visit Spain for a moment.
1936:

- Three year Spanish Civil War. It is HERE that George Orwell sees the CRUEL brand of Stalin’s socialism (it spread to Spain from Russia).
- Becomes inspired to write Animal Farm (underline titles of books!).
Stalin’s Reign of Terror

- Does not follow communism as intended (he creates an upper/more powerful class that dominates others)
- **Gulag Labor Camps**: Sent people to work there who were “traitors”. Think the camps of the holocaust used to raise and harvest crops.
- Began killing anyone who got in his way through convicting them of being traitors.
Stalin’s Reign of Terror

- Stalin personally signed 357 *proscription* lists in 1937 and 1938 which condemned to execution some 40,000 people, and about 90% of these are confirmed to have been shot.

- Collectivization: Forced all the workers to send in a huge percentage if not all of their harvests to support others. The Soviet Union Famine cost an estimated 1 to 1.5 million lives as well as secondary population losses due to reduced fertility.
Stalin’s Reign of Terror

- **Religion:**
  - He stuck with Marx’s and Lenin’s idea that religion should not be accepted as the motivation for people to work hard and have hope, even by killing 100,000 religious persons (priests, monks, nuns, rabbis, etc.). Then, he would bring religion back when he needed something to rally the people.
1936-1938
Moscow Show Trials

- High ranking Soviet military and political leaders confessed to crimes against the State and were sentenced to DEATH (Brainwashed, drugged).
- Some of the victims were revolutionary heroes who fought with Lenin.
- Secret police were arresting and interrogating hundreds of thousands of citizens who were charged with “crimes” and subsequently deported or executed.
  - KGB
- Many were reluctant to publicly criticize the Communist Party.
WWII:

- Stalin shifts his allegiance from England and the Allies to the Nazi regime in Germany.
- Stalin and Hitler divide Poland.
- A few months later, Hitler invades Russia. Surprised?
After “defeating” Hitler, Stalin returns his allegiances to the Allies and England.
- The Germans were defeated due to what?

Stalin continues to become more and more suspicious of those around him.
- He has those he is suspicious of imprisoned or killed.

Propaganda increases.
1953

- Stalin dies from a brain hemorrhage.
- The people of Russia grieve the loss of their leader. Though evil, he was powerful and made Russia revered around the world. They become unsure of Russia’s future.
What impact did Stalin leave?

- Russian writer Vadim Erlikman, for example, makes the following estimates: executions, 1.5 million; gulags, 5 million; deportations, 1.7 million out of 7.5 million deported; and POWs and German civilians, 1 million – a total of about 9 million victims of repression.
1961

- Seven years later, the truth began to sink in.
- The people of Russia begin to realize what truly happened and reject Stalin.
- Congress removed his body from the Lenin Mausoleum.
1967

- Six years later, the hate grew even more.
- Stalin and his name are eventually so hated, that his daughter, Svetlana assumed her mother’s maiden name and defected to the U.S.