

Tsar Nicholas II

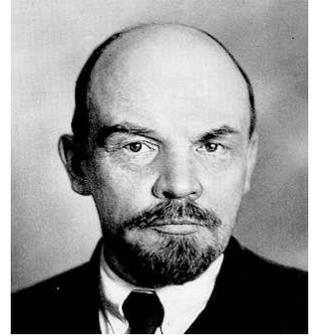


Tsar Nicholas II (1868-1918), was the last Russian emperor. His rule was marked by his insistence that he was the uncontested ruler of the nation. During his reign, the Russian people experienced terrible poverty and upheaval, marked by the Bloody Sunday massacre in 1905 when unarmed protesters

demanding social reforms were shot down by the army near Nicholas' palace. The lives of millions of Russians worsened during Nicholas' reign. When Russia entered World War I and subsequently lost more men than any country in any previous war, the outraged and desperate people began a series of strikes and mutinies that signaled the end of Tsarist control. When his own generals withdrew their support of him, Nicholas abdicated his throne in the hopes of avoiding an all-out civil war — but the civil war arrived in the form of the Bolshevik Revolution, when Nicholas was removed from his place of rule and then died shortly thereafter.

Vladimir Lenin

Vladimir Lenin was the leader of the Bolshevik Party that seized control in the 1917 Revolution. Lenin was inspired by Karl Marx's theory of Communism, which urges the "workers of the world" to unite against their economic oppressors. Communism argues that a "communal" way of life will allow all people to live lives of economic equality. Lenin was uncompromising in his views: He is widely believed to have been responsible for giving the order to kill Nicholas II and his family after the Bolsheviks had gained control. Lenin was responsible for changing Russia into the U.S.S.R. The U.S.S.R.'s flag depicted a hammer and sickle — the tools of the rebelling workers.



Lenin died (1924) before witnessing the ways in which his disciples carried on the work of reform.

Leon Trotsky



One of Lenin's allies was Leon Trotsky (1879-1940), another Marxist thinker who participated in a number of revolutionary demonstrations and uprisings. Trotsky felt that a worldwide series of rebellions was necessary to achieve the Revolution's ultimate aims. He was charismatic and very skilled at mobilizing and organizing support for the Revolution.

He was also very passionate about the Revolution's cause.

Trotsky was the leader of Lenin's Red Army who fought all the people in Russia who wanted to overturn the revolution. After 3 years of fighting, the Red Army won the Russian Civil War and the USSR was born.

After Lenin's death, Trotsky was the favourite to become the next leader of the Bolshevik Party, but Stalin outmaneuvered him.

Eventually, Trotsky was exiled from the U.S.S.R. and killed by the agents of Joseph Stalin.

Joseph Stalin



The Soviet Union Under Joseph Stalin

Stalin was unconcerned with debates and ideas, like Leon Trotsky. Instead, he valued power for its own sake and by 1927 had assumed complete control of the Communist Party through acts of terror and brutality.

Starting in the late 1920s, Joseph Stalin launched a series of five-year plans intended to transform the Soviet Union from a peasant society into an industrial superpower. His development plan was centered on government control of the economy and included the forced collectivization of Soviet agriculture, in which the government took control of farms. Millions of farmers refused to cooperate with Stalin's orders and were shot or exiled as punishment. The forced collectivization also led to widespread famine across the Soviet Union that killed millions.

Stalin ruled by terror and with a totalitarian grip in order to eliminate anyone who might oppose him. He expanded the powers of the secret police, encouraged citizens to spy on one another and had millions of people killed or sent to the Gulag system of forced labor camps. During the second half of the 1930s, Stalin instituted the Great Purge, a series of campaigns designed to rid the Communist Party, the military and other parts of Soviet society from those he considered a threat.

Additionally, Stalin built a cult of personality around himself in the Soviet Union. Cities were renamed in his honor. Soviet history books were rewritten to give him a more prominent role in the revolution and mythologize other aspects of his life. He was the subject of flattering artwork, literature and music, and his name became part of the Soviet national anthem. His government also controlled the Soviet media.

Joseph Stalin did not mellow with age: He prosecuted a reign of terror, purges, executions, exiles to labor camps and persecution in the postwar USSR, suppressing all dissent and anything that smacked of foreign—especially Western—influence. He established communist governments throughout Eastern Europe, and in 1949 led the Soviets into the nuclear age by exploding an atomic bomb. In 1950, he gave North Korea's communist leader Kim Il Sung (1912-1994) permission to invade United States-supported South Korea, an event that triggered the Korean War.

Stalin, who grew increasingly paranoid in his later years, died on March 5, 1953, at age 74, after suffering a stroke. His body was embalmed and preserved in Lenin's mausoleum in Moscow's Red Square until 1961, when it was removed and buried near the Kremlin walls as part of the de-Stalinization process initiated by Stalin's successor Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971).

By some estimates, he was responsible for the deaths of **20 million** people during his brutal rule!