

THE STALIN REVOLUTION (continued)

Page references: Evans and Jenkins, pp298-308.

Religion

- Marx had identified organized religion as a threat to the worker because the loyalty of individual workers should be to each other, not to a supreme being ("Religion is the opium of the masses"). Neither could Stalin could not allow a challenge to his position and anybody who worshipped God was a challenge as the "personality cult" was meant for people to worship Stalin.
- As a result, Stalin took steps to limit the power of religion in the USSR. Churches and mosques were closed and converted into schools or movie theatres. Religious icons were melted down, and meetings were banned throughout the country.

Extra Notes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Education

Objectives

- Education was vital to the success and growth of the new society planned for the USSR. Children were the future of the nation and were easier to influence about the ways of communism. Schools became much stricter and focused on courses necessary to develop skilled workers. Discipline was harsh for students in order to make them disciplined workers for the factories.
- The ultimate goal of the education system was to produce a loyal Soviet citizen intensely proud of Russia's history, and capable of contributing to Stalin's new system. The enforcement of this educational policy was able to take a backward nation, where few people could read and write, and to push the literacy rate to 86 percent in rural areas:

"It is the duty of each school child to acquire knowledge persistently so as to become an educated and cultured citizen and to be of the greatest possible service to his country."

Rule One: The 20 Rules of Student Behaviours, 1927-1935

Methods

- Schools: Exams, banned under Lenin, were reintroduced. The way subjects were taught was laid down by the government - especially History where Stalin's part in the 1917 Revolution and his relationship with Lenin was overplayed. Books were strictly censored by the state and Stalin ordered the writing of a new book called "A short history of the USSR" which had to be used in schools.
- Outside of school: Children were expected to join youth organisations such as the Octobrists for 8 to 10 year olds and the Pioneers for the 10 to 16 year olds. From 19 to 23 you were expected to join the Komsomol. Children were taught how to be a good socialist/communist and an emphasis was put on outdoor activities and clean living.

Extra Notes

- 1.
- 2.

3.

Women

- For a short time under Lenin, women had enjoyed a much freer status in that life for them was a lot more liberal when compared to the 'old days'. Among other things, divorce was made a lot more easy under Lenin. Stalin changed all this. He put the emphasis on the family. There was a reason for this. Many children had been born out of marriage and Moscow by 1930 was awash with a very high number of homeless children who had no family and, as such, were a stain on the perfect communist society that Stalin was trying to create.
- The state paid families a child allowance if their were a married couple. It became a lot harder to get a divorce and restrictions were placed on abortions. Ceremonial weddings made a comeback. In the work place, women maintained their status and there was effective equality with men. In theory, all jobs were open to women. The only real change took place in the image the state created for women. By the end of the 1930's, the image of women at work had softened so that the hard edge of working became less apparent.

Extra Notes

1.

2.

3.

Living standards

- These generally rose in the 1930's despite the obvious problems with food production and shortages elsewhere. Some people did very well out of the system especially party officials and skilled factory workers. Health care was greatly expanded. In the past, the poorer people of Russia could not have expected qualified medical help in times of illness. Now that facility was available though demand for it was extremely high. The number of doctors rose greatly but there is evidence that they were so scared of doing wrong, that they had to go by the rule book and make appointments for operations which people did not require!!
- Housing remained a great problem for Stalin's Russia. In Moscow, only 6% of households had more than one room. Those apartments that were put up quickly, were shoddy by western standards. It was not unusual for flat complexes to be built without electric sockets despite electricity being available - building firms were simply not used to such things.
- Leisure for the average Russian person was based around fitness and sport. Every Russian was entitled to have a holiday each year - this had been unheard of in the tsar's days. Clubs, sports facilities etc. were provided by the state. The state also controlled the cinema, radio etc. but an emphasis was placed on educating yourself via the media as it was then.

Main Task

- Produce a mindmap entitled "USSR under Stalin: A Social Revolution?". You may wish to consider having the following categories forming the main branches of your diagram: The Arts (Written Word / Visual Image - ie from last lesson), Religion, Education, Women.
- Each branch should be subdivided sensibly (e.g. "Education" could be broken down into schools / youth organisations; Visual Image could be divided between posters / films and so on).