



SOURCE 1 Lenin returned to Russia by train in 1917 to start the socialist revolution. Trotsky called Lenin the 'engine driver of the revolution', hence this painting from the 1930s putting Lenin at the controls. Stalin wasn't on the train with Lenin and was not in the welcoming party to greet Lenin on his return. However, in the painting, he appears as the figure in the background

COMMUNISM

Last stage in Marx's notion of the evolution of history where there would be no state; everybody would be equal and share in an abundance of goods produced by machinery rather than by workers' labour; more leisure and people would take what they needed from central pool of goods. Never clearly defined.

SOCIALISM

Workers' control of state. At first exercised through the dictatorship of the proletariat, a period of strict control necessary to deal with counter revolution and to root out non-socialist attitudes. Factories, machines owned collectively and run by state; everybody equal, class system brought to an end; wealth and goods shared out fairly; equal entitlement to good housing and standard of living.

AUTOCRAT

All-powerful ruler.

Introduction

The Russian Revolution of October 1917 is arguably the most important event in the twentieth century, since it led to the creation of the world's first Communist state which lasted for over 70 years and had a huge impact on world affairs for the greater part of the twentieth century. From its very beginning, Communist Russia represented a philosophy and worldview that terrified countries in the West. The governments of Western Europe and the USA regarded COMMUNISM as a kind of virus that could, if unchecked, infect their countries. Fear of Communism affected the internal politics and foreign policies of numerous countries. For example, in Germany, it helped Adolf Hitler come to power. It also made some governments unwilling to stop the aggressive Nazi rearmament programme because they saw a strong Germany in Central Europe as the best bulwark against the expansion of Communism from the East.

After the Second World War, the Soviet Union emerged as a superpower vying with the USA for influence in the post-1945 world. The Cold War between these two great powers – the propaganda, spying, intrigue and interference in the affairs of other countries which this entailed – dominated international relations over five decades and nearly brought the world to the point of self-destruction. The Communist model was exported to Eastern Europe, China, South-Eastern Asia and parts of Africa and the Caribbean. So there is little doubt that the Bolshevik, or Communist, Revolution of 1917 had a major impact on the course of the twentieth century.

The aim of this book is to tell the story of how this Communist state came into being and how it developed under the leadership of two major historical figures – Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, better known as Lenin, and Joseph Dzhugashvili, better known as Stalin. Lenin and Stalin are among a very small group of individuals who have had real influence over events that have changed and shaped the world.

Lenin was a follower of the teachings of Karl Marx who believed that human history passed through a series of evolutionary stages leading to SOCIALISM and then on to Communism, the highest form of society. Marx thought that this would be achieved by a revolution of the working classes in highly industrialised countries. Lenin brought to Marxism a specifically Russian tradition in revolutionary thought. He developed the notion of a disciplined revolutionary party run by professional, hard-working revolutionaries who would seize power in Russia and set in motion a world revolution. In 1917, Lenin and his party, the Bolsheviks, hijacked a revolution that had been generated by the Russian people desperate to rid themselves of an AUTOCRATIC regime run by Tsar Nicholas II. Lenin used the momentum of this 'revolution from below' to set up a Communist state which he was sure would be the precursor to Communist revolution throughout the world.

The world revolution never materialised, and Lenin only lived long enough to see his new regime secure in power. The Soviet Union remained isolated from other countries as the only Communist state in the world. After Lenin's death, the mantle of power was taken up by Stalin who was determined to build socialism in one country – Russia. He equated the building of the socialist state with national pride and achievement.

Stalin envisaged nothing less than the complete economic and social transformation of Soviet Russia that would help it catch up with and overtake the industrialised capitalist countries of the West. With the ruling elite of the Communist Party, Stalin planned a 'revolution from above' which would not only change the way people lived but also their fundamental attitudes and