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for the IB Diploma



## Authoritarian and Single-Party States

Allan Todd  
and Sally Waller

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# History

## for the IB Diploma

# Authoritarian and Single-Party States

**Allan Todd and Sally Waller**  
Series editor: Allan Todd

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**Dedication**

In memory of 'Don' Houghton (1916–2008)  
who first taught me to love History (AT).

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# Contents

<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2 Stalin and Russia</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Unit 1 Origins and rise, 1924–29</b>	<b>13</b>
What was the historical context of Stalin's struggle for power?	14
What were the key stages of the power struggle?	17
Why did Stalin emerge as leader of the Soviet Union?	21
<b>Unit 2 Ideology and the nature of the state</b>	<b>24</b>
What role did ideology play in Stalin's rise to power?	25
To what extent was Stalin's ideology in line with that of Marx and Lenin?	26
What was the nature of the Stalinist state?	29
<b>Unit 3 Establishment and consolidation of Stalin's rule</b>	<b>33</b>
How did the Great Purge, 1936–39, help establish Stalin's power?	34
How can the Great Purge and the Great Terror be explained?	38
What other methods did Stalin use to establish and maintain his power?	40
<b>Unit 4 Domestic policies and their impact</b>	<b>41</b>
What were the main features of collectivisation and the Five-Year Plans?	42
How successful were Stalin's economic policies?	47
What was the position of women in Stalin's Russia?	51
What were Stalin's policies towards religion and ethnic minorities?	52
What impact did Stalinism have on education, young people and the arts?	56
<b>3 Hitler and Nazi Germany</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Unit 1 Origins and rise, 1918–33</b>	<b>63</b>
How did the political circumstances of Germany after 1918 contribute to the rise of Nazism?	64
What part was played by the economic conditions of the 1919–29 period?	66
How did the Nazi movement develop between 1919 and 1929?	67
How far did the circumstances of 1929–33 open the way for Hitler's rise to power?	69
<b>Unit 2 Ideology and the nature of the state</b>	<b>73</b>
To what extent was Nazi ideology rooted in the past?	74
What did Hitler himself contribute to Nazi ideology?	76
How important was the role of ideology in Nazi Germany?	78
<b>Unit 3 Establishment and consolidation of Nazi rule</b>	<b>80</b>
How did Hitler consolidate his position and create a one-party state between March and July 1933?	81
What part did propaganda and repression play in Hitler's consolidation of power?	83
Why did it take until 1938 for Hitler's power to be fully consolidated?	85
Was there any organised opposition to Nazi rule?	87
Was Nazi Germany a totalitarian state and was Hitler 'Master of the Third Reich'?	88
<b>Unit 4 Domestic policies and their impact</b>	<b>91</b>
What factors influenced Nazi economic policy?	92
How successful were the Nazis in bringing about economic recovery in the years 1933–39?	94
How ready was Germany for war in 1939?	96
How effectively did Speer manage the wartime German economy?	98
What was the position of women in the Nazi state?	99
How did the Nazis try to ensure the support of youth?	101
How extensive was the persecution of minorities within the Nazi state?	103
What was the relationship between the Nazis and the Churches within Germany?	106
How did Nazism affect the arts and cultural life?	108

<b>4 Mao and China</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Unit 1 Origins and rise, 1894–1949</b>	<b>115</b>
What was China like in the early 20th century?	116
How did Mao Zedong achieve leadership of the Chinese Communist Party?	117
Why did civil war break out in China in 1946?	120
Why did Mao become ruler of China in 1949?	121
<b>Unit 2 Ideology and the nature of the state</b>	<b>125</b>
What were the origins of Maoist ideology?	126
What were the key elements of ‘Mao Zedong Thought’?	127
In what ways and with what effect did Mao’s ideology influence his rule in China between 1949 and 1976?	128
<b>Unit 3 Establishment and consolidation of Mao’s rule</b>	<b>131</b>
By what means did Mao establish communist control in China in the years 1949–54?	132
What part did mass mobilisation campaigns and purges play in ensuring Mao’s authority in the years 1949–54?	135
How did Mao maintain political control between 1954 and 1976?	136
What parts were played by propaganda and repression in Mao’s consolidation of power and was Mao’s China a totalitarian state?	138
<b>Unit 4 Domestic policies and their impact</b>	<b>144</b>
What were the main influences on economic policy in Mao’s China?	145
How did Mao apply communism to agriculture?	146
How did Mao apply communism to industry?	148
Did Mao succeed in making China a great economic power?	150
What was the position of women in Mao’s China?	152
What was the attitude of the CCP government towards education and youth?	154
What was the relationship between the communists and the Churches within China?	157
How did Maoism affect the arts and cultural life?	158
<b>5 Castro and Cuba</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>Unit 1 Origins and rise, 1933–59</b>	<b>164</b>
How did the historical context of Cuba before 1953 contribute to Castro’s rise to power?	165
What were the key stages in Castro’s struggle against Batista’s dictatorship in the period 1953–59?	168
Why was Castro successful in his bid to overthrow Batista?	173
<b>Unit 2 Ideology and the nature of the state</b>	<b>175</b>
What role did ideology play in Castro’s rise to power before 1959?	176
Did Castro become a communist after 1959?	178
What is the nature of Cuba’s Castroist state?	182
<b>Unit 3 Establishment and consolidation of Castro’s rule</b>	<b>186</b>
How did Castro establish his power in the period 1959–75?	187
What measures were taken after 1975 to further consolidate Castro’s power?	190
What other methods did Castro use to consolidate his power?	193
<b>Unit 4 Domestic policies and their impact</b>	<b>196</b>
What were the main features of Castro’s economic policies?	197
How successful were Castro’s economic policies?	204
What were the main social policies in Castro’s Cuba?	206
What were Castro’s policies towards women, ethnic and other minorities, and religion?	207
What impact has the Cuban Revolution had on education, young people and the arts?	210
<b>6 Exam practice</b>	<b>215</b>
<b>Further information</b>	<b>235</b>
<b>Index</b>	<b>236</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>240</b>



# 1 Introduction

This book is designed to prepare students taking the Paper 2 topic – *Origins and development of authoritarian and single-party states* (Topic 3) – in the IB History examination. It will examine the various aspects associated with four different **authoritarian** and single-party states, including the origins of such regimes, the role of leaders and of **ideology** and the nature of the states concerned. It will also look at how such regimes maintained and consolidated power, the treatment of opposition groups and the range of domestic policies followed.

Such states are typified by Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler (1889–1945), and the USSR under Joseph Stalin (1878–1953). Some historians, especially during the early years of the Cold War (1945–91), tried to argue that Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia were essentially similar regimes. Some even argued that Stalin's regime was worse than Hitler's. Also considered in this book are the regimes of Mao Zedong in China and Fidel Castro in Cuba.

## Themes

To help you prepare for your IB History exams, this book will cover the themes relating to authoritarian and single-party states as set out in the *IB History Guide*. For ease of study, it will examine each state in terms of four major themes, in the following order:

- the origins and historical contexts that led to the rise of authoritarian and single-party states
- the role of leaders and ideologies in the rise to power, and the nature of the states that emerged
- the methods used to establish and maintain power in such states
- the domestic economic and social policies of such regimes, their impact and the success or failure of such policies.

Each of the four detailed case study chapters will have units dealing with the four major themes, so that you will be able to focus on the main issues. This approach will help you to compare and contrast the roles of the individual leaders and parties, and the main developments in the various states covered – and so spot similarities and differences.

*A mass grave discovered by Allied troops when they liberated Belsen Concentration Camp in April 1945*



**authoritarian** This term refers to regimes that are essentially conservative and traditional and that try to defend existing institutions and keep all sections of society politically and organisationally passive.

**ideology** This term usually refers to the logically related set of ideas that are the basis of a political or economic theory or system. In single-party states, ideology has often been promoted via propaganda and censorship.

## States and regions

The case studies in this book cover four of the most popular topics:

- the Soviet Union and Stalin
- Germany and Hitler
- China and Mao
- Cuba and Castro.

## IB History and regions of the world

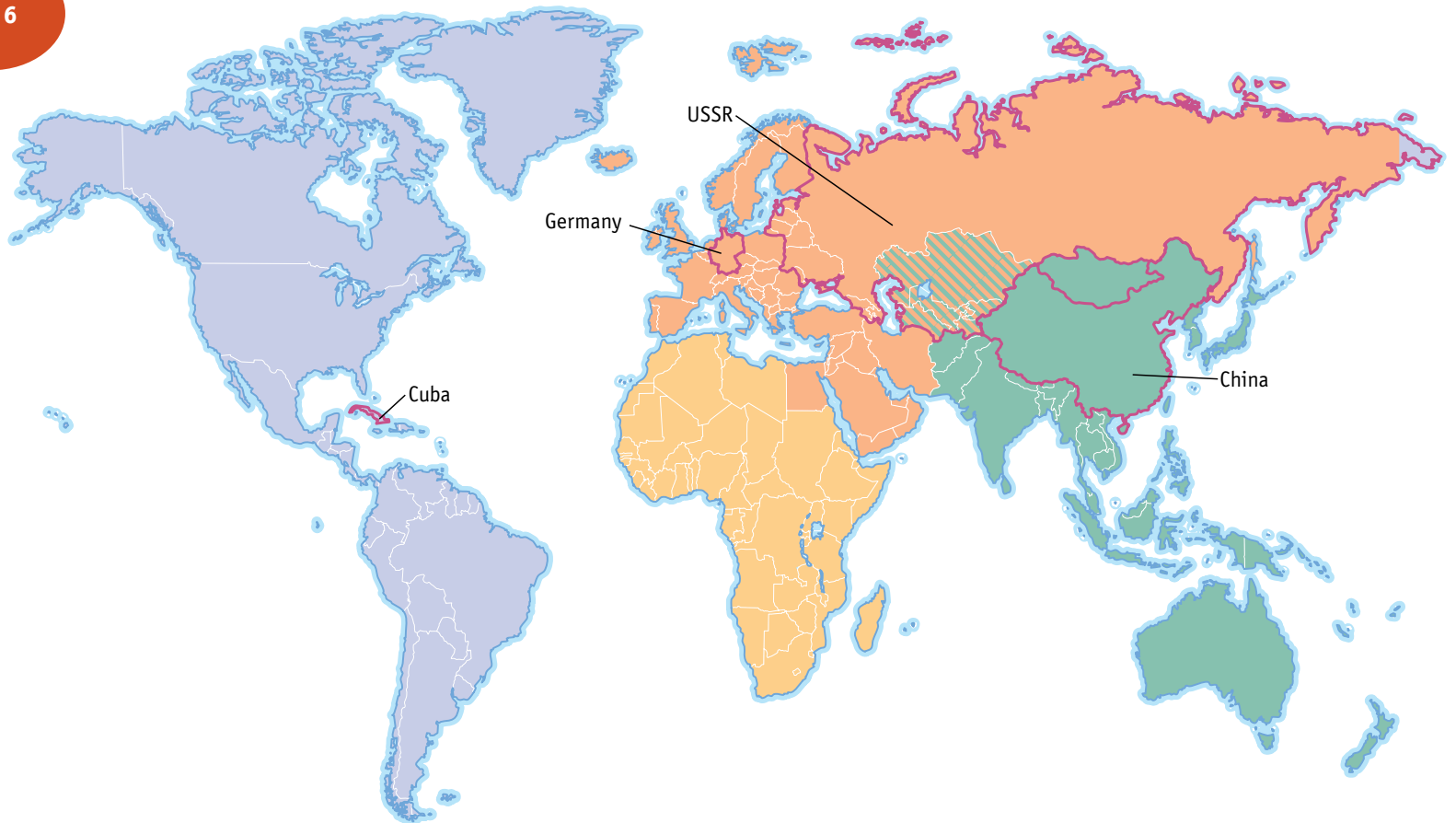
For the purposes of study, IB History specifies four regions of the world:

- Europe and the Middle East
- Asia and Oceania
- the Americas
- Africa.

Where relevant, you need to be able to identify these regions and discuss developments that took place within them. They are shown on the map below, which also indicates the states covered by this book.

The four IB regions are shown on this map, along with some of the states covered by this book.

Remember that if you are answering a question that asks you to choose two different states or leaders, each from a *different* region, you *must* be careful and choose correctly. Every year, some examination candidates attempting such questions select two states from the *same* region. This limits them to a maximum of 7 marks out of the 20 available for Paper 2 questions.





You may well, of course, study some other examples of one-party states specifically identified in the *IB History Guide* – such as Kenya and Kenyatta in Africa; Argentina and Peron in the Americas; or Egypt and Nasser in the Europe and Middle East region. You may even study relevant regimes not specifically mentioned but still acceptable, such as Italy and Mussolini, or Russia and Lenin.

## Theory of knowledge

In addition to the broad key themes, the chapters contain Theory of knowledge (ToK) links to get you thinking about issues that relate to History, which is a Group 3 subject in the IB Diploma. The authoritarian and single-party states topic has clear links to ideas about knowledge and history. This topic is highly political, as it concerns opposing ideologies, and at times these have influenced the historians writing about the various states and leaders involved. Thus questions relating to the selection of sources, and to interpretations of these sources by historians, have clear links to the IB Theory of knowledge course.

For example, to make their case, historians must decide which evidence to select and use and which evidence to leave out. But to what extent do the historians' personal political views influence their decisions when they select what they consider to be the most important or relevant sources and when they make judgements about the value and limitations of specific sources or sets of sources? Is there such a thing as objective 'historical truth'? Or is there just a range of subjective historical opinions and interpretations about the past that vary according to the political interests and leanings of individual historians?

You are therefore encouraged to read a range of books giving different interpretations of the origins and development of the authoritarian and single-party states covered in this book, in order to gain a clear understanding of the relevant historiographies.

## Exam skills needed for IB History

Throughout the main chapters of this book, there are various activities and questions to help you develop the understanding and the exam skills necessary for success. Before attempting the specific exam practice questions that come at the end of the main chapters, students might find it useful to refer *first* to [Chapter 6](#), the final Exam Practice chapter. This suggestion is based on the idea that if you know where you are supposed to be going (in this instance, gaining a good mark and grade) and how to get there, you stand a better chance of reaching your destination!

## Questions and markschemes

To ensure that you develop the necessary understanding and skills, each chapter contains a number of questions in the margins. In addition, three of the main Paper 1-type questions (comprehension, cross-referencing and reliability/utility) are dealt with in [Chapters 2 to 5](#). Help for the longer Paper 1 judgement/synthesis questions and the Paper 2 essay questions can be found in [Chapter 6](#).

For additional help, simplified markschemes have been put together in ways that should make it easier to understand what examiners are looking for in examination answers. The actual IB History markschemes can be found on the IB website.

Finally, you will find examiners' tips and comments, along with activities, to help you focus on the important aspects of questions and their answers. These will also help you avoid simple mistakes and oversights that, every year, result in even some otherwise good students failing to gain the highest marks.

## Terminology and definitions

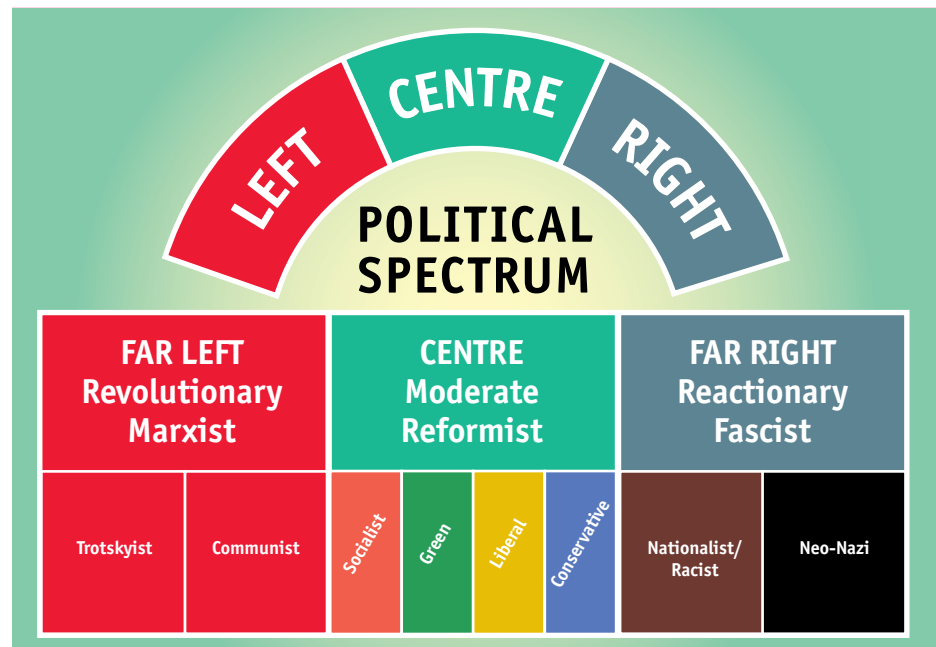
The history of the single-party states that emerged in Russia and Germany after the First World War (1914–18), and in China and Cuba after the Second World War (1939–45), is often seen as extremely complicated. In part, this is the result of the large number of different political terms used to describe the ideologies and the forms of political rule that existed in those states. There is also the added complication that different historians have at times used the same terms in slightly different ways. To help you understand the various ideologies and the historical arguments and interpretations, you will need to understand the meaning of such terms as 'left' and 'right', 'communist' and 'fascist', and 'authoritarian' and 'totalitarian'. You will then be able to focus on the similarities and differences between the various single-party regimes.

### Ideological terms

At first glance, understanding the various political ideologies appears to be straightforward, as the history of most single-party states can in many ways be seen as being based on one of two opposing political ideologies: 'communism' or 'fascism'.

Unfortunately, it is not quite as simple as this, as both communism and fascism have more than one strand. Consequently, historical figures and historians have often meant different things despite using the same terms. At the same time, some have argued that communism and fascism should not be seen as two extremes at opposite ends of the political spectrum. Instead, they argue that the spectrum almost forms a circle. In this way, they stress the similarities rather than the contrasts between the extremes. However, this approach relates to practice rather than to political theory.

The political spectrum



#### Fact

The terms 'left' and 'right' are based on the political terminology that developed from the early stages of the French Revolution of 1789. At this time, the most radical political groups sat on the left side of the National Convention, while the most conservative ones sat on the right. Communists can be described as being on the far (or extreme) left, while fascists are on the extreme right, with fundamentally opposed ideologies.

#### Fact

The terms 'communism' and 'fascism' emerged during the 19th and 20th centuries. They are generally seen as two diametrically opposed ideologies or theories, at the opposite ends of the political spectrum. Generally, the fundamental difference between these two political theories is that communism is dedicated to destroying capitalism, while fascism in practice has often been described as capitalism's most ruthless defender.

## Communism

### Marxism

The political roots of Marxism can be traced back to the writings of one man, Karl Marx (1818–83) – or two men, if Marx’s close collaborator Friedrich Engels (1820–95) is included. The writings of Marx were based on the materialist conception of history that he developed, and on his theory that human history was largely determined by the ‘history of class struggles’ between ruling and oppressed classes. Marx believed that if the workers were successful in overthrowing capitalism, they would be able to construct a socialist society. This would still be a class-based society but one in which, for the first time in human history, the ruling class would be the majority of the population (i.e. the working class).

From this new form of human society, Marx believed it would eventually be possible to move to an even better one: a communist society. This would be a classless society, and a society of plenty rather than scarcity because it would be based on the economic advances of industrial capitalism. However, Marx did not write much about the political forms that would be adopted under socialism and communism, other than to say that it would be more democratic and less repressive than previous societies, as the majority of the population would be in control.

### Marxist theory of stages

Marx believed in the idea of ‘permanent revolution’ or ‘uninterrupted revolution’ – a series of revolutionary stages in which, after one stage had been achieved, the next class struggle would begin almost immediately. He did not believe that ‘progression’ through the stages of society was inevitable. He also argued that, in special circumstances, a relatively backward society could ‘jump’ a stage. However, this would only happen if that state was aided by sympathetic advanced societies. He certainly did not believe that a poor agricultural society could move to socialism on its own, as socialism required an advanced industrial base.

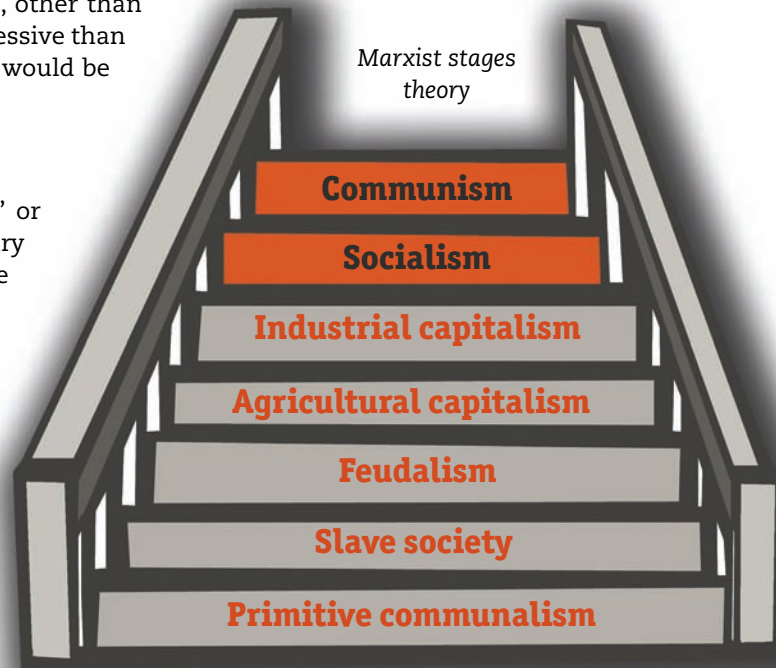
### Leninism

Marx did not refer to himself as a ‘Marxist’. He preferred the term ‘communist’, as in the title of the book he and Engels wrote in 1847, *The Communist Manifesto*. However, many of Marx’s followers preferred to call themselves Marxists as well as communists. In this way, they distinguished themselves from other groups that claimed to be communist, and emphasised that Marxism and its methods formed a distinct philosophy.

One such Marxist was the Russian revolutionary Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870–1924). Lenin developed some of Marx’s economic ideas but his most important contribution to Marxist theory related to political organisation. His main ideas, based on the extremely undemocratic political system operating in tsarist Russia, were ‘democratic centralism’ (see page 27) and the need for a small ‘vanguard’ party (a leading group) of fully committed revolutionaries.

#### Fact

The materialist conception of history was set out by Marx in his *Critique of Political Economy* (1859). Essentially he argued that the economic structure, based on the relations of production in any society (i.e. which class owns the important parts of an economy, such as land, factories, minds and banks) is the real foundation of any society, and on this are built the legal, political and intellectual superstructures of society. He went on to say that it was social existence that largely determines people’s consciousness or beliefs, rather than the other way round.



However, Leon Trotsky (1879–1940), a leading Russian Marxist, disagreed with Lenin. From 1903 to 1917, Trotsky argued that Lenin’s system would allow an unscrupulous leader to become a dictator over the party. Nevertheless, both Lenin and Trotsky believed in the possibility of a society moving through the revolutionary stages quickly to the socialist phase. This idea was similar to Marx’s idea of ‘permanent revolution’, which argued that, as soon as one stage had been achieved, the struggle for the next would begin almost immediately.

Like Marx, Lenin and Trotsky both believed that Russia could not succeed in carrying through any ‘uninterrupted revolution’ without outside economic and technical assistance. When this assistance failed to materialise, despite their earlier hopes of successful workers’ revolutions in other European states after 1918, Lenin proved to be an extremely pragmatic – or opportunistic – ruler. He was quite prepared to adopt policies that seemed to be in total conflict with communist goals and even with those of the ‘lower’ socialist stage: these policies were seen as adaptations to the prevailing circumstances.

### Marxism–Leninism

The term Marxism–Leninism, invented by Stalin, was not used until after Lenin’s death in 1924. It soon came to be used in Stalin’s Soviet Union to refer to what he described as ‘orthodox Marxism’, which increasingly came to mean what Stalin himself had to say about political and economic issues. Essentially, Marxism–Leninism was the ‘official’ ideology of the Soviet state and of all communist parties loyal to Stalin and his successors. Many Marxists – and even members of the Communist Party itself – believed that Stalin’s ideas and practices (such as ‘socialism in one country’ and the purges – see [Chapter 2](#)) were in fact almost total distortions of what Marx and Lenin had said and done.

### Stalinism

The term Stalinism is used both by historians and those politically opposed to Stalin to describe the views and practices associated with Stalin and his supporters. Historians and political scientists use it to mean a set of beliefs and a type of rule that are essentially deeply undemocratic and even dictatorial.

Marxist opponents of Stalin and post-Stalin rulers were determined to show that Stalinism was not an adaptation of Marxism but, on the contrary, a qualitative and fundamental aberration from both Leninism and Marxism, and from revolutionary communism in general. In particular, they stress the way in which Stalin and his supporters – and later Mao in China – rejected the goal of **socialist democracy** in favour of a permanent one-party state. They also emphasise how Stalinism in practice and in theory placed the national interests of the Soviet Union above the struggle to achieve world revolution.

### Fascism

Attempts by historians to agree on a definition of ‘fascism’ have proved even more difficult. Stanley Payne defined fascism as ‘a form of revolutionary **ultra-nationalism** for national rebirth’. However, this definition says nothing about fascism being a movement committed to the destruction of all independent working-class organisations – especially socialist and communist parties and trade unions. Also absent is any reference to anti-Semitism or racism in general. Other historians stress these aspects as being core elements of fascism.

Fascism is certainly one of the most controversial and misused terms in the history of the modern world. For example, it is often used loosely as a term of

**socialist democracy** This term refers to a form of democracy advocated by revolutionary socialists, in which government is in the hands of the people, who have the right of immediate recall of elected representatives who break their promises. In this system, all parties that accept the goal of ending capitalist exploitation should be allowed to exist, and the state makes newspaper facilities available to all groups with sufficient support.

**ultra-nationalism** This is an extremely strong belief in the superiority of one’s own country and a desire to advance that country at the expense of others – including by waging wars.



abuse to describe any political regime, movement or individual seen as being right-wing or authoritarian. The issue is further complicated by the fact that, unlike with Marxism/communism, there is no coherent or unified ideology or *Weltanschauung* (world view).

### Fascism and the 'third way'

Some historians and political commentators have seen fascism simply as a series of unconnected and unco-ordinated reactions to the impact of the First World War and the Russian Revolution (1917), which varied from country to country and about which it is therefore impossible to generalise. Thus fascism is seen as an opportunistic form of extreme nationalism that in political terms lay somewhere between communism and capitalism. In other words, it was a political 'third way' or 'third force'.

### Fascism and ideology

Unlike Marxism/communism, the 'ideology' of fascism does not appear to have existed before the end of the First World War. It was in Italy that Benito Mussolini (1883–1945) and other ultra-nationalists took the term *fascio* (meaning 'band', 'union' or 'group') for their own political organisation.

It is possible – with the benefit of hindsight – to trace the intellectual origins of fascism back to a rudimentary form of fascism that developed in the 19th century. Sometimes referred to as 'proto-fascism', this developed as a result of a 'new right' reaction against the late 18th-century liberal ideas of the Enlightenment and early 19th-century 'positivism'. Both of these philosophies had emphasised the importance of reason and progress over nature and emotion.

### Fascism and Nazism

In addition to trying to establish a specific and coherent fascist ideology, there is the problem of comparing the different states of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, and assessing to what extent they were similar. Those who argue that there is a general fascist category to which all fascist parties conform, to a greater or lesser extent, tend to see right-wing and left-wing dictatorships as being fundamentally different. One problem with the attempt to portray all fascist parties as being broadly similar is the question of racism and, more specifically, anti-Semitism. While anti-Semitism was not a core belief in Italian fascism, it was one of the main tenets of the German Nazi Party.

### Dictatorships – authoritarian or totalitarian?

As well as having to understand the various political ideologies, it is also necessary to be familiar with several terms used by historians and political scientists. Dictatorship is the term used to describe a regime in which democracy, individual rights and parliamentary rule are absent. Dictatorships have tended to be divided into two categories: authoritarian and totalitarian.

### Authoritarian dictatorships

According to Karl Dietrich Bracher, authoritarian dictatorships do not come to power as the result of a mass movement or revolution. Instead, such regimes arise when an existing **conservative** regime imposes increasingly undemocratic measures, intended to neutralise and immobilise mass political and industrial organisations. Alternatively, they can arise following a military coup. Whatever their origin, authoritarian regimes are firmly committed to maintaining or restoring traditional structures and values.

**conservative** A conservative political doctrine favours keeping things as they are and upholding traditional structures and values. It is a right-wing doctrine.

**totalitarian** A totalitarian dictatorship is often defined as a system in which a dictator is able to impose their will on party, state and society – all of which are strictly disciplined. Such regimes come to power as the result of a mass movement or revolution and, at least in theory, are committed to a radical ideology and programme of political, economic and social change. The term is usually applied to regimes such as Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union. However, many historians question whether all sections of society in such regimes were totally passive. Even the historian Robert Conquest, who used to advocate a stronger totalitarian interpretation, now concedes that Stalin was not always able to impose his will. Other possible examples of totalitarian dictatorships are those of Mao in China and – less convincingly – of Castro in Cuba.

## Totalitarian dictatorships

In any comparative study of single-party states, it is important to understand the debate surrounding the application of the 'totalitarian' label. In fact, the history of the term 'totalitarian' is complex. Those historians who argue that fascist and communist dictatorships were similar tend to believe that all such regimes were totalitarian dictatorships with many features in common.

### SOURCE A

Stalin's police state is not an approximation to, or something like, or in some respects comparable with Hitler's. It is the same thing, only *more* ruthless, *more* cold-blooded ... and *more* dangerous to democracy and civilised morals.

Eastman, M. 1955. Reflections on the Failure of Socialism. New York, USA. Devin-Adair. p. 87.

However, such totalitarian theories were first developed by US theorists during the Cold War in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Several historians and political commentators from the 1960s onwards pointed out that the attempt to equate the Soviet Union with Nazi Germany was essentially a crude attempt to persuade public opinion in the USA and other Western countries to accept permanent war preparations and military threats against the Soviet Union after 1945.

The concept of totalitarianism – or total political power – was first developed systematically by Giovanni Amendola in 1923. In 1925, Mussolini took over Amendola's term and claimed that fascism was based on a 'fierce totalitarian will', stating that all aspects of the state, politics, and cultural and spiritual life should be 'fascistised': 'Everything within the state. Nothing outside the state. Nothing against the state.' Since then, several historians have attempted to define the meaning of the term 'totalitarian' by identifying certain basic features that are not normally features of authoritarian dictatorships. For a fuller examination of these, see page 30.

## Summary

By the time you have worked through this book, you should be able to:

- understand and explain the various factors behind the origins and rise of single-party states, and be able to evaluate the different historical interpretations surrounding them
- show an awareness of the role of leaders and ideology in the rise to power of such regimes
- show a broad understanding of the nature of different single-party states
- understand the methods used by such leaders and regimes to maintain and consolidate power, including how opposition groups were treated, and the use of repression and propaganda
- understand the key economic and social policies of such regimes, their impact on society, and their successes and failures
- understand and explain the various policies towards women, ethnic minorities and organised religion.





# 2 Stalin and Russia

## 1 Origins and rise, 1924–29

### Key questions

- What was the historical context of Stalin's struggle for power?
- What were the key stages of the power struggle?
- Why did Stalin emerge as leader of the Soviet Union?

### Overview

- This unit deals with the context of Joseph Stalin's rise to power and the methods he used to establish himself as leader during the 1920s. Unlike the other leaders discussed in this book, Stalin rose to power in what was already a single-party state.
- The origins and development of a single-party state in Russia lie in the political and economic problems of tsarist Russia, the impact of the First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917, and the civil war of 1918 to 1921. By the time of Vladimir Lenin's death in January 1924, Soviet Russia had been, in practice, a one-party state for almost three years.
- Stalin's rise to power was unexpected: most of those who later became his victims or unwilling accomplices underrated his abilities and did not realise until it was too late how powerful he was becoming.
- Stalin's rise to power in the 1920s can be divided into three stages: early moves against Leon Trotsky; the defeat of the left; and the defeat of the right. Once the right had been defeated, Stalin was left in a powerful – but not yet all-powerful – position.
- Before Lenin died in 1924, rivalries and differences between other leading communists such as Trotsky, Grigori Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev came to the fore.
- In December 1922, Lenin wrote a *Testament* outlining the strengths and weaknesses of the main leaders. In January 1923, he added a *Postscript* recommending Stalin's dismissal.
- Zinoviev and Kamenev made an alliance with Stalin, known as the 'triumvirate'. Their aim was to prevent Trotsky from replacing Lenin.
- Once Trotsky had been defeated, Stalin turned on Zinoviev and Kamenev. Zinoviev and Kamenev united with Trotsky, but Stalin was able to defeat this United Opposition.
- By 1929, Stalin had also defeated Nikolai Bukharin and the right of the Communist Party. His main rival, Trotsky, was then exiled from the Soviet Union – Stalin was now sole ruler of the party.

### Timeline

**1921 Mar:** Kronstadt Rebellion; 10th Party Congress; NEP is adopted

**1922 Apr:** Stalin becomes general secretary of the Communist Party

**Dec:** Lenin writes his last *Testament*; triumvirate is formed against Trotsky

**1923 Jan:** Lenin's *Postscript* recommends Stalin's dismissal

**Feb:** triumvirs begin their campaign against Trotsky

**1924 Jan:** Lenin dies

**May:** Central Committee keeps Lenin's *Testament* secret and decides not to dismiss Stalin

**1925 Jan:** Trotsky is dismissed as commissar for war

**May:** Leningrad Opposition starts

**Dec:** 14th Party Congress; Leningrad Opposition is outvoted

**1926 July:** United Opposition is formed

**1927 Nov:** Trotsky and Zinoviev are expelled from the Communist Party, and Kamenev from the Central Committee

**Dec:** 15th Party Congress; Zinoviev and Kamenev end United Opposition

**1928 Jan:** Trotsky is deported to Alma-Ata

**1929 Jan:** Trotsky is deported to Constantinople

**Apr:** Bukharin is removed as editor of *Pravda*

**Nov:** Bukharin is removed from the Politburo

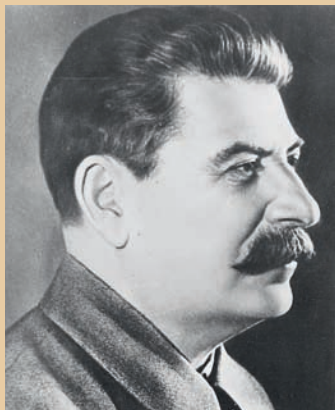


### Question

This Soviet photo-montage of leading Bolsheviks, made in 1920, shows Lenin and Trotsky together in the centre of the picture. Stalin is absent. What does this tell us about Stalin's importance at this time?

### Joseph Stalin (1880–1953)

Stalin's real name was Joseph Djughashvili. He joined the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP), a Marxist Party, and sided with Lenin when the party split in 1903. Unlike most of the other communist leaders, he was not an intellectual. In 1917, he became Commissar for Nationalities and, in 1922, took on the role of general secretary of the Communist Party. After Lenin's death in 1924, he made himself supreme ruler. He remained head of the Soviet Union until his death in 1953, having executed many of his rivals in the purges of the 1930s.



### Fact

The Kronstadt Rising took place in March 1921 when sailors and workers at the Kronstadt naval base began an insurrection against War Communism and the political restrictions imposed by the Bolsheviks during the civil war.



A photo-montage, made in 1920, of the Bolshevik leaders

## What was the historical context of Stalin's struggle for power?

The beginnings of **Stalin's** rise to power are to be found in the events that took place in Russia after the Revolution in November 1917, and especially in the political and economic problems of 1921–24.

### Political and economic problems 1921–24

After the Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917, Russia went through a civil war. The Bolsheviks (known as communists from March 1918) finally won in 1921, but there were sharp policy differences between the leading Bolsheviks, especially on economic policy. During the civil war, a policy known as War Communism had been adopted as an emergency measure. However, the economic damage suffered during the civil war, and then the Kronstadt Rising,



led Lenin to persuade the party to adopt a New Economic Policy (NEP) at the 10th Party Congress in March 1921. This NEP not only ended War Communism, it also introduced a partial step back towards capitalism (see page 22).

### The 1921 ban

The limited revival of capitalism and the shock of the Kronstadt Rising (which illustrated the Bolsheviks' growing isolation) also led the 10th Party Congress to introduce a ban on factions within the Communist Party and a ban on opposition parties in the **soviets**. Until then – even during the civil war – strong disagreements among communists had been normal, and parties such as the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries had continued to operate (despite temporary restrictions) within the soviets.

Several communists opposed the ban – Lenin later stated it was a temporary measure. It was not, however, a ban on inner-party opposition and dissent in general. Nonetheless, it was to play a crucial role in Stalin's rise to power.

### Lenin's illness and the succession

In May 1922, **Lenin** had the first in a series of strokes, which increasingly restricted his ability to take an active part in politics. Meanwhile, arguments continued over economic policy, political democracy and other issues.

These arguments became bound up in personal rivalries between leading communists who, because of Lenin's ill health, began to consider what would happen if Lenin died. The most important communists after Lenin were the

*This photo of Kamenev, Lenin and Trotsky was later 'doctored' by Stalin, as it showed his rivals as being close to Lenin; the 'doctored' version is inset*



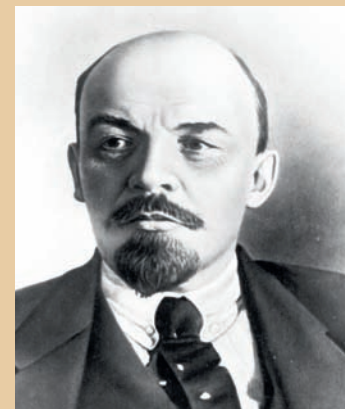
### Question

Why was the Kronstadt Rising of 1921 so important for later political developments in the Soviet Union?

**soviets** Originally set up as strike committees, these workers' councils spread throughout Russia during 1917, with each town or rural soviet sending delegates to an All-Russian Congress of Soviets. After 1917, the soviets became the main political authority, in theory controlling the government. From 1917 to 1922, Russia was known as the 'Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic' (RSFSR). Thereafter, it was the 'Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' (USSR), or Soviet Union for short.

### Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924)

Lenin (real name Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov) joined the RSDLP in 1898. He provoked a split in the RSDLP in 1903 and formed the Bolshevik faction. In exile from Russia until April 1917, he returned and pushed for the Bolsheviks to overthrow the Provisional Government in November 1917. He acted as prime minister from 1917 to 1924.



**Politburo** Short for Political Bureau, this was the Communist Party's body responsible for making political decisions.

### Questions

What position did Stalin take on in 1922? How did this help him become the ruler of the Soviet Union?

**triumvirate** This term comes from the Latin for a group of three rulers (triumvirs) acting together.

**bureaucracy** This refers to the tendency for administrative directives from the centre to take the place of decisions arrived at democratically by party and soviet institutions. Bureaucracy first emerged as an emergency measure during the civil war, but continued afterwards and was greatly increased by Stalin as general secretary.

### Fact

The existence of Lenin's *Testament* and *Postscript* was officially denied in the USSR until 1956. Only the top party leadership were aware of the existence of these documents – even local party leaders did not know about them.

### Question

Why did Lenin write a *Postscript* to his *Testament* in January 1923?

other members of the **Politburo**, especially Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin and Stalin. Of these, Trotsky seemed the most likely to replace Lenin. Zinoviev and Kamenev were also strong political leaders and had long been associated with Lenin. Bukharin, too, was a well-known and popular revolutionary leader.

Stalin was not well-known and seemed unlikely to emerge as a major leader. However, in April 1922, Stalin was appointed general secretary of the Communist Party. This position gave him the power to appoint and dismiss Communist Party officials.

Many leading communists resented Trotsky's rapid rise to the top of the party. This was in part because, while they had supported Lenin in 1903 over the Bolshevik–Menshevik split, Trotsky had only joined the Bolsheviks in August 1917. Zinoviev and Kamenev in particular believed they should succeed Lenin, and asked Stalin to help block Trotsky via his control of party appointments and organisation. In December 1922, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin formed an alliance – the **triumvirate** – to prevent Trotsky obtaining majority support.

### Lenin's Testament

After October 1922, Lenin became more concerned about the political and personal tensions among leading communists. He proposed to Trotsky that they should form a 'Joint Bloc for Democracy' against growing signs of **bureaucracy** in the party and the state.

However, at the end of December, Lenin suffered a second stroke; he then dictated what he thought would be his last political *Testament*, outlining what he saw as the strengths and weaknesses of all the leading communists. In January 1923, concerned about Stalin's power, he added a *Postscript* recommending Stalin's removal. From then, until his death the following year, Lenin urged Trotsky on several occasions to launch a campaign against bureaucracy and for the restoration of party and soviet democracy.

### SOURCE A

Since he became general secretary, Comrade Stalin has concentrated in his hands immeasurable power, and I am not sure that he will always know how to use that power with sufficient caution ...

Stalin is too rude, and this fault, entirely supportable in relations amongst us communists, becomes insupportable in the office of general secretary. Therefore, I propose to the comrades to find a way of removing Stalin from that position and to appoint another man who in all respects differs from Stalin only in superiority; namely, more patient, more loyal, more polite, less capricious, and more attentive to comrades.

Extracts from Lenin's *Testament and Postscript*, 25 December 1922 and 4 January 1923. Quoted in Lynch, M. 1990. *Stalin and Khrushchev: The USSR 1924–64*. London, UK. Hodder Arnold H&S. pp. 15–16.

## What were the key stages of the power struggle?

### Stage 1: The early moves against Trotsky, 1923–24

The triumvirs' campaign against Trotsky began in April 1923 at the 12th **Congress**. The traditional greetings from local parties – read out before the Congress started – all mentioned Lenin and Trotsky, but hardly any mentioned Stalin (showing that he was not considered a very important leader while Lenin was alive). However, with Lenin absent because of his poor health, the triumvirs isolated Trotsky. The Congress re-elected Stalin as general secretary and elected a new enlarged **Central Committee** – of the 40 members, only three were strong supporters of Trotsky. As general secretary, Stalin began to replace Trotsky's supporters with those of the triumvirs, especially those who were loyal to him. By the end of 1923, Stalin had enough control of the party machine at local level to ensure that most of his nominees were elected to future congresses.

### The formation of the Left Opposition

In October 1923, **Trotsky** formed the Left Opposition with others opposed to the policies of the triumvirs. Stalin immediately used his power to isolate them and, in January 1924, the 13th Party Conference condemned Trotsky's views. When Lenin died shortly afterwards, Stalin gave Trotsky (who was ill and on his way to convalesce on the Black Sea) the wrong date for Lenin's funeral, and then raised suspicions about Trotsky's absence.

### Stage 2: The defeat of the Left Opposition, 1924–27

Stalin then dismissed many oppositionists from posts of responsibility. However, his position seemed threatened when, before the 13th Party Congress in May 1924, Lenin's widow revealed his *Testament* to the Central Committee and senior Congress delegates. However, Stalin was saved by Zinoviev and Kamenev. They persuaded the Central Committee not to act on or publish the *Testament*, thinking Stalin would now be seriously weakened and under their control.

In November 1924, following a campaign against 'Trotskyism', Trotsky's *Lessons of October* was published. This showed how close his views were to those of Lenin, and how Zinoviev and Kamenev had opposed Lenin on several important issues. As Stalin was not mentioned, Trotsky inadvertently strengthened Stalin's position. In January 1925, the triumvirs removed Trotsky from his position as commissar of war.

### Divisions within the triumvirate

In 1925, disagreements about the New Economic Policy caused a split between the triumvirs, and left, centre and right factions emerged. Zinoviev and Kamenev led the left. In the summer of 1925, Zinoviev attacked Bukharin's rightist views. Stalin then began to remove Kamenev's supporters from their positions in the Moscow party, but Zinoviev's Leningrad base resisted.

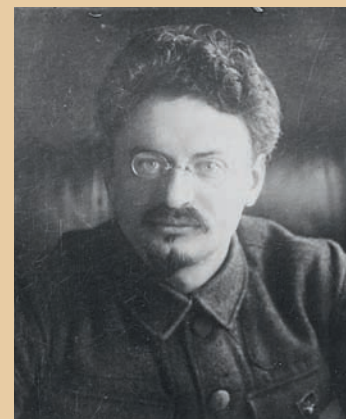
At the 14th Congress in December 1925, Stalin ensured that the majority supported him and Bukharin, and a new Central Committee and Politburo were elected, both with a Stalinist–Bukharinist majority. Stalin then accused Zinoviev of Trotskyism and, in early 1926, Zinoviev lost the leadership of the Leningrad party to Sergei Kirov, one of Stalin's supporters. 'Zinovievists' then lost their positions in the party.

**Congress** In theory, this was the Communist Party's supreme decision-making body, made up of delegates elected by local party organs. At first, Congresses were held frequently, as were Conferences, which were held to decide on specific problems.

**Central Committee** In theory, this was the Communist Party's ruling body between Congresses. It was elected by Congress delegates. The Central Committee then elected the Politburo. In practice, the Politburo soon came to dominate the Central Committee and Congresses.

### Leon Trotsky (1879–1940)

Trotsky's real name was Lev Bronstein. He sided with the Mensheviks against Lenin when the RSDLP split in 1903. However, he joined the Bolsheviks in 1917 and was the main organiser of the November Revolution. He led the Red Army during the civil war. Expelled from the Soviet Union in 1929, he set up the Fourth International, an international communist organisation, in 1938 while in Mexico. He was assassinated in Mexico by one of Stalin's agents in 1940.





**Grigori Zinoviev (1883–1936)**

Zinoviev joined the Bolsheviks and worked closely with Lenin from 1908 to 1917. He became the powerful leader of the Leningrad party and president of Comintern (the Communist International, an international communist organisation founded in Moscow in 1919). After Lenin's death in 1924, he worked with Kamenev and Stalin (the three were known as the triumvirs) to prevent Trotsky taking over. He later opposed Stalin and was executed in 1936.



**Lev Kamenev (1883–1936)**

Kamenev joined the Bolsheviks and was elected to their Politburo in 1917. He, like Zinoviev, had opposed Lenin's call for a second revolution in November, following the revolution in March 1917. He became the leader of the Moscow party organisation. As one of the triumvirs, he had supported Stalin immediately after Lenin's death but later joined with Zinoviev in forming a United Opposition with Trotsky. After this was defeated, he made peace with Stalin but was executed in 1936.

**The United Opposition – formation and defeat**

In July 1926, Trotsky, **Zinoviev** and **Kamenev** formed the United (Joint Left) Opposition, with some support from Nadya Krupskaya (Lenin's widow and a leading revolutionary in her own right) and a few other prominent party members. However, Stalin's control of the party enabled him to ban their meetings and dismiss their supporters. He then accused them of breaking the 1921 ban on factions and persuaded the Central Committee to remove Zinoviev from the Politburo. Only Trotsky now remained there to oppose him.

When one of Trotsky's supporters published Lenin's *Testament* in the *New York Times*, the Central Committee expelled Trotsky from the Politburo. The obvious isolation of the three Opposition leaders led Krupskaya (who feared splitting the Communist Party) to make her peace with Stalin.

*An official cartoon of 1927, attacking the United Opposition, with Trotsky shown as the head of the house (seated right) in charge of Zinoviev (left) and Kamenev (centre)*





In June 1927, Stalin tried to have Trotsky and Zinoviev expelled from the Central Committee. At first he failed, showing that his position was not yet totally secure. However, on 14 November, Stalin succeeded in having Trotsky and Zinoviev expelled from the Communist Party, and Kamenev expelled from the Central Committee. Hundreds of expulsions of lesser oppositionists then took place.

Stalin's actions shocked Zinoviev and Kamenev. One of their fears was that continued opposition to Stalin would result in the splitting of the Communist Party and the formation of an opposition party – something they saw as the 'gravest menace to Lenin's cause'. They believed the Communist Party was the only party capable of 'securing the conquests of October'. Then, attracted by signs that Stalin was about to abandon the NEP (see Unit 4), they ended their criticisms. By 10 December 1927 the United Opposition was over.

In January 1928, Trotsky was forcibly deported to Alma-Ata, near the Chinese border. Other oppositionists were deported elsewhere; many were moved to minor posts in other remote places in the USSR, to prevent them from communicating with one another.

*A photograph of Trotsky (centre) and other oppositionist leaders on their way to exile in 1928*



### Stage 3: The defeat of the right, 1927–29

The final stage of the power struggle began almost immediately after the United Opposition had been defeated. By the autumn of 1927, bread shortages and high food prices led Stalin to adopt a new 'left' course for industry and agriculture. This produced a rift between the Bukharinists and the Stalinists over the continuation of the NEP. Many Bukharinists were removed from positions of power, thus strengthening Stalin's position.

#### Nikolai Bukharin (1888–1938)

Bukharin joined the Bolsheviks in 1906 and, at first, was on the left of the party. However, from 1924, he moved to the right and was the main defender of the NEP until 1928, when he was defeated by Stalin. He was allowed back into the party in the 1930s but was executed in 1938.

Initially, Trotsky had seen Bukharin's faction (bigger and more right-wing) as more dangerous to the gains of the November Revolution than Stalin's. By May 1928, with Stalin clearly planning a 'second revolution' (to move from the part-capitalist NEP to full socialism), some of Trotsky's supporters thought they should join Stalin against Bukharin and the right.

During July, the food crisis became worse (see page 45). Temporarily, it seemed that Bukharin's faction was gaining the upper hand when he won a vote in the Central Committee to slow Stalin's left turn. However, by August, Stalin had renewed his leftward course, and the breach with Bukharin was confirmed.

Both factions then turned to the defeated Left Oppositionists for support, although Stalin made no direct contacts. Bukharin persuaded Kamenev to contact Trotsky, saying he feared Stalin would 'strangle us'. Bukharin argued that Stalin was preparing to create a police state and take total power.

In September 1928, Trotsky and Bukharin considered an alliance to restore party and soviet democracy, but their respective supporters were reluctant. The right, who felt the New Economic Policy should be continued, were generally opposed to the left, who wished to end the NEP. On the other hand, the left objected to an alliance with the right at a time when Stalin seemed about to implement some of their own economic policies. Instead, they now preferred an alliance with Stalin and the centre rather than with the right. Trotsky's willingness to consider such an alliance lost him some supporters amongst the left, thus making it easier for Stalin to isolate him. Bukharin and the right, now in panic, surrendered to Stalin, while the left remained divided. Thus Stalin had managed to defeat both factions by relying solely on his own supporters.

However, Stalin now decided to make the Politburo expel Trotsky from Soviet Russia. This was partly because Stalin feared a left-right alliance in the future and partly because he suspected some of his own faction had some sympathy with the Opposition. In February 1929, Trotsky was finally deported from Alma-Ata in Turkestan to Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul).

During the same period, Stalin moved against the right. In January 1929, on the fifth anniversary of Lenin's death, Bukharin made a speech entitled 'Lenin's political testament' – a clear allusion to Lenin's call in 1923 for Stalin to be dismissed from his posts. Bukharin's speech and his meeting with Kamenev the previous year led Stalin to accuse Bukharin of 'factionalism' at a meeting of the Central Committee. Bukharin made a spirited defence of the principle of collective leadership, and criticised Stalin's policies, but the charge of factionalism was confirmed in February. In April 1929, Bukharin was removed as editor of *Pravda* and, in November 1929, he was removed from the Politburo. Stalin now appeared to have almost complete control of the Communist Party.

**Pravda** This was the Bolshevik/ Communist Party newspaper. Its name is Russian for 'Truth'. It was first edited by Stalin and later by Bukharin.

#### Activity

Carry out some further research on the membership of the three factions during the power struggle. Then complete a chart, with the headings 'Left', 'Centre' and 'Right'. Under these headings, write the names of the leading members of each faction, giving details of positions held and what happened to them later.

## Why did Stalin emerge as leader of the Soviet Union?

Historians differ in their opinions about the reasons for Stalin's emergence and rise to power, as no one factor seems to offer a satisfactory explanation. In fact, the main historical interpretations often overlap in several respects.

### Power politics

According to this view, Stalin's rise can be seen as resulting from his deliberate and skilful manipulation of genuine political and ideological differences amongst the Bolshevik leaders. Robert Conquest, for example, argues that Stalin's aim was simply to gain supreme power by crushing all other factions; Robert C. Tucker argues that Stalin's aim was to make himself into a revolutionary hero as important and famous as Lenin. Stalin's success is seen as dependent not only on his political shrewdness and ruthlessness, but also on the weaknesses and mistakes of his rivals.

Zinoviev and Kamenev have been portrayed as, respectively, careerist and weak willed (Edward Carr), while Bukharin's commitment to the NEP is seen as having blinded him to the dangers posed by Stalin until it was too late (Stephen Cohen). Perhaps more importantly, Lenin himself did not realise the threat from Stalin until 1922, just two years before his death. For most of those two years, Lenin was too ill to be politically active.

Stalin's main opponent, Trotsky, can be seen as having made several serious errors and miscalculations – perhaps because he dismissed Stalin as a 'grey blur' and a 'mediocrity'. Trotsky also either refused, or did not have the skill, to organise a faction of his own. However, it has been argued that without Lenin he was virtually isolated at the top of the party from the beginning (Isaac Deutscher).

### Structuralist explanations

While there are several different structuralist explanations, they have one theme in common: that Stalin was a product of Russian history and the administrative system set up after 1917.

Some historians see Stalin as essentially a ruler in the long tsarist tradition of absolutist rule – the 'Red Tsar'. Others point to the impact of the civil war, which led to the development of appointment rather than election for party and state positions. As the administrative apparatus grew, so did Stalin's power to appoint at both national and local level. As a result, bureaucracy increased, enabling Stalin to control party congresses, the Central Committee and the Politburo itself. Robert Daniels calls this a 'circular flow of power', by which Stalin appointed local party leaders, who in turn controlled elections to party organisations.

In addition, the Revolution and civil war had led to the displacement or death of the militant industrial workers who had been the Bolsheviks' main supporters between 1917 and 1921. The survivors were later given administrative posts in the government, army or party. They were replaced in the factories by workers from peasant traditions, which had tended to support the Social Revolutionaries rather than the Bolsheviks. As a result, elected soviets seemed less likely to support Bolshevik policies and were increasingly ignored by the government.



**NEP** The New Economic Policy (NEP) was an economic policy proposed by Lenin and adopted in 1921. It involved allowing small, privately owned firms and traders to operate. It also established an alliance or *smychka* with the peasants, allowing them to sell some of their surplus produce in private markets. However, the state remained in control of the main industrial enterprises and of foreign trade. Many workers referred to the NEP as the 'New Exploitation of the Proletariat'.

**kulak** A *kulak* was a rich peasant (named from the Russian word for a fist, i.e. a grasping fist). There were two other categories of peasants: *seredniak* (a middle peasant) and *bedniak* (a poor peasant).

**nepmen** Nepmen were traders and middlemen who began to grow wealthy under the NEP.

As the administrative bureaucracy grew, the communist leaders were forced to recruit former tsarist bureaucrats. These bureaucrats had administrative experience, but lacked initiative and often had contempt for the people and a supine attitude to authority. This, too, led the communist leaders to stress strict central control. The Stalinist bureaucratic state was thus a logical outcome.

### Socio-cultural explanations

Socio-cultural explanations of Stalin's rise to power are closely linked to structural explanations. They emphasise the impact of the social structure on the politics and development of the Communist Party and the Soviet state. During the civil war, for example, the Bolsheviks attracted Russian patriots who resented the foreign intervention used by the Whites (anti-Bolsheviks) (Sheila Fitzpatrick). Then, when it looked as if the Reds (Bolsheviks) were winning, a large number of careerists flocked to join the winning side. This situation worsened after 1921, when all opposition parties were banned. In addition, many new party members (often ex-peasants) had no real understanding of Marxism or recent Bolshevik history. All these groups were easily manipulated by the party leadership.

### Ideological explanations

Several historians stress the genuine political differences among the communist leaders of the 1920s, especially over the **NEP**. In particular, E. H. Carr, Alexander Erlich and Moshe Lewin have treated the ideological positions argued by the leading Bolsheviks as much more than mere fronts to hide any personal desire for power. The left feared the NEP might eventually lead to the restoration of capitalism, especially as many of the new groups (ex-tsarist bureaucrats or ex-peasants) tended to favour capitalist rather than socialist policies.

The right argued that, as the Soviet Union was overwhelmingly agricultural and backward, while industry was in crisis the NEP was essential if the economy was to revive. However, the right tended to overlook the conflicts that might arise between the **kulaks** and the **nepmen** on the one hand, and the workers' state on the other, and seemed to envisage a long period of a mixed economy.

Thus Stalin's rise can be seen as a genuine political response by the centre to steer a midway policy course. But, later, the centre came to see that a change was needed – it became necessary to attack the policies of the right, who wished the NEP to continue.

Stalin's policies can thus be seen as consistent and in tune with the bulk of the party membership, who desired stability above all. Stalin's policy of continuing the NEP and 'socialism in one country' (see page 25) seemed safer than the idea of Trotsky's 'permanent revolution', and it also appealed to national pride. Stalin's dramatic change of course in the years 1927–28 can be seen as a response to a real crisis. This was one reason why so many ex-oppositionists moved to support him in 1928.

One interpretation of Stalin's rise, which combines elements of the socio-cultural explanation, is that developed by Trotsky himself. Pointing to the failure of international revolution and the consequent isolation of the new Soviet state, Trotsky argued that early soviet democracy was undermined by



Russian backwardness and the growing political apathy of the working class. This allowed conservative and reactionary elements to come to the fore, and eventually resulted in what he called ‘bureaucratic degeneration’. Trotsky argued that a new social and political élite – not a new class – with increasing privileges emerged. At first, members of this élite supported the right but then shifted to Stalin and the centre as the best bet for maintaining their positions. Thus Stalin’s victory was the result of unforeseen historical and cultural developments after 1917 rather than the mistakes of his opponents.

## End of unit activities

- 1 Draw a spider diagram and, using the information from this unit and any other materials available, make brief notes under the relevant headings for the different theories about the reasons for Stalin’s success in the power struggle. Try to mention specific historians.
- 2 Carry out some additional research on the various political issues that began to turn Lenin against Stalin continuing in the post of general secretary. Which one do you think was most significant: a) from Lenin’s viewpoint; and b) for the immediate future of the Soviet Union?
- 3 Produce a chart with two columns – ‘Mistakes by the left’ and ‘Stalin’s tactics’ – to show the main tactical errors made by the various Left Opposition groups in the years 1922–29 and the corresponding actions taken by Stalin. Which do you think was the most important factor behind Stalin’s success in the power struggle – the mistakes of his rivals, or his own political and organisational skills?
- 4 Find out more about Bukharin and his Right Opposition. Then write a couple of paragraphs to explain what you consider to be the biggest mistake they made during the power struggle. Do you think there was a point at which they could have blocked Stalin’s rise before 1929?
- 5 Stalin has been described as a ‘Red Tsar’. Find out more about what is meant by this term. Then imagine you are a lawyer – either for the defence or the prosecution – and draw up a case to prove/disprove the allegation. You can ‘summon’ specific historians to support your case.
- 6 Working in pairs, develop arguments for a class presentation on: a) how Trotsky could have prevented Stalin’s rise; and b) why Trotsky’s position was already too weak by 1924 for him to stop Stalin winning the power struggle.

### Activity

Using the information in the section ‘Why did Stalin emerge as leader of the Soviet Union?’, produce a chart summarising the main historical interpretations and explanations of why Stalin was able to come to power. Remember to include the names of relevant historians.

### Historical debate

Historians are divided over the links between the methods of rule adopted by Lenin from 1917 to 1924 and those used later by Stalin. Read the extract from Lenin’s *Testament* and *Postscript* (Source A on page 16) again. Does this document show that, had Lenin lived longer, the Soviet Union would have become a more democratic state?



## Theory of knowledge

### History and ethics

Historians examine the past. Sometimes they make judgements about historical personalities and their actions. Is it possible for historians to do this when their contemporary circumstances are probably very different from those of the society or period they are studying? To what extent should they take into account the historical context and legacy of the past?

## 2 Ideology and the nature of the state

### Timeline

**1922 Apr:** Stalin becomes general secretary of the Communist Party

**1923 Feb:** triumvirs begin their campaign against Trotsky and 'Trotskyism'

**1924 Jan:** Lenin dies

**Nov:** Stalin reveals 'socialism in one country' for the first time

**1927 Nov:** Trotsky and Zinoviev are expelled from the Communist Party, and Kamenev from the Central Committee

**1936 Aug:** first show trial

**1939 Mar:** purges end; Stalin is in control

**1945 Jun:** Stalin becomes 'Generalissimo', and starts to reassert control over the party and state

**1948 Aug:** Zhdanov dies

**1949 Jul:** Leningrad Affair

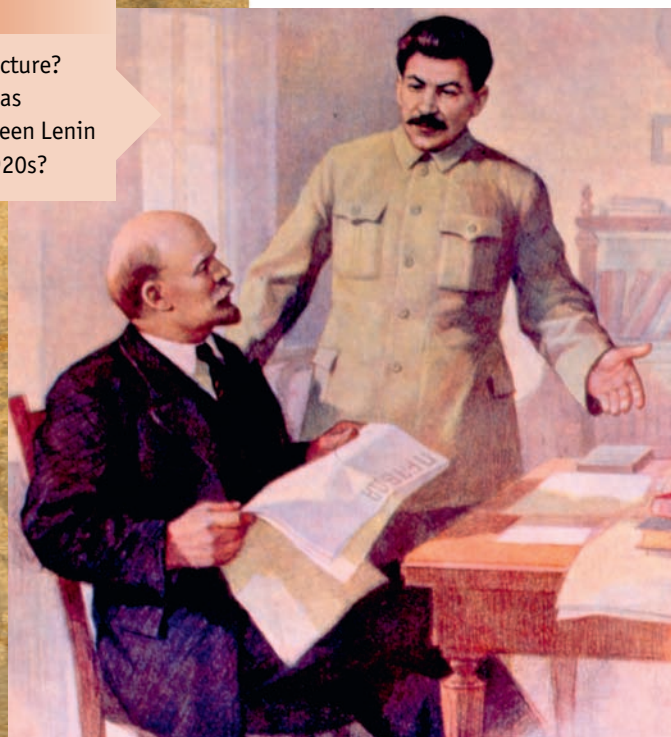
**1951** Mingrelian Case

**1953 Jan:** 'Doctors' Plot'

**Mar:** Stalin dies

### Questions

What is the message of this picture?  
How accurate is this message as regards the relationship between Lenin and Stalin during the early 1920s?



A Soviet sketch of Lenin and Stalin in the offices of Pravda

### Key questions

- What role did ideology play in Stalin's rise to power?
- To what extent was Stalin's ideology in line with that of Marx and Lenin?
- What was the nature of the Stalinist state?

### Overview

- This unit examines more closely Stalin's use of ideology and the extent to which it varied from, or was merely a continuation of, the ideology established by Marx and developed by Lenin. It also considers the nature of the state established by Stalin, and how it evolved until his death in 1953.
- From 1922, Lenin suffered a series of strokes. Policy differences and personal rivalries between other leading communists, which had existed before 1922, came to the fore.
- After Lenin's death in 1924, Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev began to argue that Trotsky and 'Trotskyism' were ideologically opposed to orthodox 'Marxism-Leninism'.
- One particularly bitter ideological dispute centred on the issue of Stalin's idea of 'socialism in one country', which was supported by the triumvirs. In opposition to this, Trotsky and his supporters defended the Bolshevik belief in 'permanent revolution'.
- After the purges of the late 1930s, Stalin seemed to be in full control of the Soviet Union. However, after the Second World War, he remained deeply suspicious of potential rivals.
- At first, Stalin used the party machine to reassert his control over the military, and several top commanders were demoted.
- Stalin then virtually ignored leading party bodies such as the Politburo and the Central Committee. During the years 1945-53, occasional purges took place - but not on the scale of the 1930s.



## What role did ideology play in Stalin's rise to power?

When Stalin began his rise to power in 1922, the Russian state had been – at least in theory – based on Marxist ideology since the Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917. So, on one level, Stalin had nothing to contribute to the ideology underpinning the new state.

However, there had been many sharp political differences between the various communist leaders over aspects of policy, theory and action. Stalin was more of a practical man than a thinker and writer; hence his main party roles before 1917 were as editor of the party newspaper, *Pravda*, and as an organiser of bank raids to obtain funds for the party. This was why, in 1922, he was appointed general secretary of the Communist Party – an essentially administrative role, which none of the other Bolsheviks thought was worth bothering with.

It was only after Lenin's death in 1924 – and really not until after 1929 – that Stalin can truly be seen as contributing to 'Marxist' ideology in his own right. However, he certainly made some use of ideology in the power struggle – especially against Trotsky. One ideological argument that played a key role in this power struggle was between 'socialism in one country' and 'permanent revolution'. All leading Bolsheviks had accepted the Marxist principle of internationalism.

After November 1917, the Bolsheviks hoped to hold on to power long enough to inspire workers in the more economically developed states, such as Germany and Britain, to carry out socialist revolutions of their own. The signs in the years 1918–20 were encouraging (especially in Germany). Bolshevik leaders in Russia fully expected that, following successful socialist revolutions elsewhere, workers' governments would be willing to give financial and technical aid to backward Soviet Russia. With this assistance, Russia might also be able to put socialism on the agenda. Although these hopes had faded by 1923, most Bolshevik leaders remained committed internationalists.

However, as Lenin became ill and the power struggle began, Stalin came up with a new ideological concept that became a weapon in the struggle against Trotsky: 'socialism in one country'.

The concept of 'socialism in one country' was not formally revealed until November 1924 – ten months after Lenin's death. It stressed the need for peace and stability and stated that, despite its backwardness and isolation, the new Soviet state could construct socialism on its own. Stalin also accused Trotsky of lack of faith in Russia and its people. These arguments were a complete reversal of Marxist and Bolshevik ideology.

In opposition to 'socialism in one country' was the concept of 'permanent revolution'. Among other things, this argued that Soviet Russia was too economically and culturally backward to be able to achieve socialism without the assistance of sympathetic, more economically advanced, states.

The theory of 'permanent revolution' had been developed from Marx by Trotsky in 1906 and, by 1917, was shared by most of the leading Bolsheviks – including Lenin. With Lenin dead, the main defender of this line was Trotsky.

### Fact

The Marxist principle of internationalism was based on the call of Marx and Engels in 1847, in their *Communist Manifesto*: 'workers of the world, unite!' They believed workers in different countries had more in common with each other than with the capitalists of their 'own' country. In 1914 at the start of the First World War, the Bolsheviks refused to support their government during the war. Instead, they called on all workers – including those in the armed forces – to begin a revolutionary class struggle to end the war and establish socialism in Europe.

### Fact

'Socialism in one country' is an aspect of Stalinist ideology that can be seen as having contributed to the rapid industrialisation of the USSR by stimulating national confidence and pride in what the Soviet people could achieve by their own efforts.





**SOURCE A**

As early as 1914 Lenin's watchword was: The United Socialist States of Europe ... He and his comrades knew that the emancipation of the workers could result only from the joint efforts of many nations; and that if the nation-state provided too narrow a framework even for modern capitalism, socialism was quite unthinkable within such a framework. This conviction permeated all Bolshevik thinking and activity until the end of the Lenin era.

Then, in the middle 1920s, the fact of Russia's isolation in the world struck home with a vengeance, and Stalin and Bukharin came forward to expound 'socialism in one country'.

*Deutscher, I. 1975. The Unfinished Revolution: Russia 1917–67. New York, USA. Oxford University Press. pp. 66–67.*

**Question**

Why was 'socialism in one country' considered to be such a big departure from Marxist theory?

**Questions**

How important do you think the failure of revolutions in the rest of Europe was for political developments in the Soviet Union? Do you think the Soviet Union would still have turned into a one-party state if it had not been isolated after 1917?

Trotsky's opponents argued that a policy based on the concept of 'permanent revolution' would anger surrounding capitalist states and so risk further foreign intervention (such as had happened during the civil war of 1918–21). 'Socialism in one country', it was claimed, along with the 'correct' leaders and policies, would avoid this, and would give the Russian people the peace they needed after years of revolutionary turmoil and civil war.

Many new members of the Communist Party after 1924 were workers and peasants with little or no knowledge of Marxism or early Bolshevik history – these members were swayed by Stalin's arguments. Also, as was seen in Unit 1, Stalin made sure that those appointed to party posts shared his views and were loyal to him. He simultaneously removed supporters of Trotsky (and later those of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin) from their party and state positions.

Stalin also worked hard to create the idea of a 'Marxist–Leninist' orthodoxy to which, he claimed, Trotsky had always been opposed. This involved misrepresenting what Lenin and Trotsky had said in the past, exaggerating the differences between Trotsky and Lenin, and hiding the disagreements Stalin and his supporters had had with Lenin. Stalin was particularly determined to keep hidden Lenin's January 1923 *Postscript* to his *Testament*, which recommended that Stalin should be removed from his posts.

**To what extent was Stalin's ideology in line with that of Marx and Lenin?**

To address this question, it is necessary to clarify the essential features of the ideology put forward by Marx, and later adapted by Lenin.

## Marx

As noted in [Chapter 1](#) in the section dealing with *Terminology and definitions* (see page 8), and in the preceding pages, one of the essential elements of Marxism is that it is an *internationalist* movement. Marx and Engels believed that capitalism had greatly increased the productive capacities of the developed European countries and was in the process of establishing a global economy. However, capitalism's contradictions (such as periodically creating over-production leading to recessions and depressions and high unemployment) and its political reliance on individual nation states led to frequent and violent class conflicts within societies and to wars between competing capitalist states. To overcome this, Marx and Engels advocated an international working-class movement that would establish world socialism and then communism.

Marx did not believe that societies would 'inevitably' progress to socialism and communism. Although class struggle was inevitable, he said that societies could stagnate and remain stuck in an inefficient system if the lower classes were unable to overthrow their ruling class. Societies could even revert to a less advanced system if the political rulers made serious mistakes. Yet Marx also argued that, in special circumstances, a relatively backward society could 'jump' a stage – but only if that state was aided by sympathetic advanced societies. He did not believe that tsarist Russia could move to socialism on its own.

## Lenin

One of Lenin's main adaptations of Marx was his idea of democratic centralism, as stated in his book *What Is to be Done?* (1902). He argued that all members of the party should have the right to form factions ('platforms') to argue their points of view (the 'democratic' part of democratic centralism). However, the lack of democracy and freedom in tsarist Russia – which was essentially a police state – meant that the party could only operate effectively in a centralised way. For this reason, once party members had made a decision, the decision should be fully supported by all members, even if they had argued and voted against it, and even if the decision only had a majority of one (the 'centralism' aspect).

One of the leading Russian Marxists who disagreed with Lenin on the issue of party organisation from 1903 to 1917 was Trotsky, who argued that democratic centralism could allow an unscrupulous leader to become a dictator over the party. Such a possibility was increased in 1921, when Lenin successfully argued for a ban on other political parties and on organised factions within the Bolsheviks. Later, Lenin argued that these bans were just adaptations to the prevailing circumstances and that, as soon as conditions allowed, there would be a return to 'socialist norms'.

Lenin also argued that the stages of human society as identified by Marx could be 'telescoped', so that there would only be an extremely short period between the end of feudalism in Russia and the first attempts to begin the construction of socialism. This idea was based on Marx's ideas of 'permanent revolution' – that as soon as one revolutionary stage had been achieved, the struggle for the next began almost immediately. Trotsky had also come to this view as early as 1904–05 and, during the second half of the 1920s, was associated with defending 'permanent revolution' against Stalin's idea of 'socialism in one country'.

### Fact

Under Lenin, freedom of debate amongst members of the Communist Party continued at least until 1921–22. During the debates on whether to make a separate peace with Germany in 1918, Lenin faced so much opposition from within his party that he considered stepping down as leader and continuing the argument as an ordinary party member.

In fact, both Lenin and Trotsky believed that early 20th-century Russia could not succeed in carrying through any ‘uninterrupted revolution’ to socialism and then communism without outside economic and technical assistance. When this failed to materialise, they – along with all leading Bolsheviks – still remained committed, in both theory and practice, to the international ideals of communism. It was only after Lenin died that Stalin put forward his idea of ‘socialism in one country’ – until that time, no Bolshevik had ever argued that backward Russia could become socialist on its own.

## Stalin

### Question

What is meant by the term ‘Marxism–Leninism’?

Stalin’s main contributions to, and use of, ideology were the notions of ‘Marxism–Leninism’ and the theory of ‘socialism in one country’. Neither of these terms was used before Lenin’s death in 1924. Stalin used the concept of ‘Marxism–Leninism’ to refer to what he described as ‘orthodox Marxism’, which came to mean what Lenin (allegedly) – and increasingly Stalin himself – believed about political and economic issues.

**‘Old Guard’ Bolsheviks** These were the Bolsheviks who had been members of the party for a long time – often since the 1903 split in the RSDLP. They had played key roles in the Revolution and the civil war that followed. Many had been close to Lenin, and many knew of the existence of his *Testament* and *Postscript*, which had recommended Stalin’s dismissal.

Essentially, Marxism–Leninism became the ‘official’ ideology of the Soviet Communist Party and state under Stalin. However, as long as the **‘Old Guard’ Bolsheviks** existed, there were many leading communists who were fully aware of early Marxist theory, and remembered the true facts of the various political arguments before and after 1917. Perhaps significantly, Stalin had almost all of them executed during the 1930s.

Stalin’s invention and use of the policy of ‘socialism in one country’ played an important part in the power struggle – and especially in the campaign against Trotsky and ‘Trotskyism’. In fact, ‘Trotskyism’ was portrayed by Stalin and his supporters as a ‘petit-bourgeois’ ideology at odds with both Marxism and Leninism, and thus incompatible with membership of the Soviet Communist Party. Stalin and Bukharin argued that the middle-class Trotsky had no faith in the ability of Russian workers and peasants to construct socialism in the Soviet Union. In addition, Trotsky’s arguments in defence of ‘permanent revolution’ were seen by many as threatening the alliance between workers and peasants, which was the basis of the NEP advocated by Lenin in 1921. Trotsky’s

ideas seemed thus to spell continued revolutionary turmoil – and even conflict with capitalist states in the future.

Many Marxists – and even some members of the Soviet Communist Party itself – believed that Stalin’s ideas and practices (such as ‘socialism in one country’ and the later purges) were an almost total distortion of what Marx and Lenin had said and done. Many of those politically opposed to Stalin came to use the term ‘Stalinism’ to refer to Stalin’s ideas and practices.

These Marxist opponents were determined to show that Stalinism was not an adaptation of Marxism but, on the contrary, a qualitative and fundamental aberration from both Lenin and Marx, and from revolutionary communism in general. In particular, they stress the way in which Stalin and his supporters rejected socialist

A photograph of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party in 1917, published in a journal produced by supporters of Trotsky, showing Stalin’s victims





democracy in favour of a one-party state, and how Stalinism in practice placed the national interests of the Soviet Union above the struggle to achieve world revolution.

Trotskyists came to see themselves as the only true defenders of the legacy of Marx, Engels and Lenin, and thus as the only truly revolutionary Marxists (all others having turned Marxism into a reactionary and even counter-revolutionary ideology that rejected the Marxist commitment to internationalism).

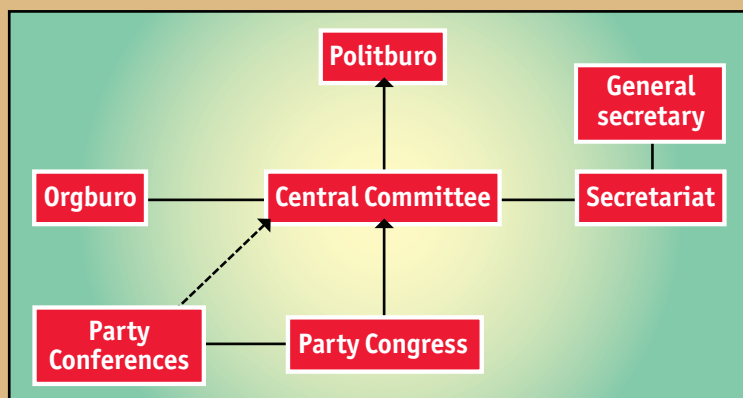
## What was the nature of the Stalinist state?

Under Stalin, the Soviet Union became in theory, as well as in fact, a one-party state. It was clearly a dictatorship by 1929 – although whether it was a dictatorship of the party or of one man (possibly with some of his closest supporters) is a much-debated point.

The use of the term ‘dictatorship’ can cause confusion. Some historians claim dictatorship was the logical outcome of both Marxist theory and Leninist practice. However, although Marx used the phrase **dictatorship of the proletariat** to describe the political rule under a socialist workers’ state, he did not mean a harsh and repressive regime. In fact, after the **Paris Commune** in 1871, Marx added to his political views on the nature of the state and politics after any workers’ revolution by saying that measures should be adopted from day one to bring about the eventual ‘withering away’ of the state. Marx shared this aim with the anarchists, who believed the state prevented people from governing themselves.

A regime in which the state had begun to ‘wither away’ was a long way from the reality that existed under Stalin. For most of the time that Stalin was in power, the structure of the Communist Party was that shown in Source B below. Although the Party Congress (and to some extent the Party Conference) was the supreme decision-making body, it was the Central Committee that ran the party between congresses. However, under Stalin, power shifted to various bodies set up by the Central Committee – the Organisational Bureau (Orgburo), the Secretariat and the Political Bureau (Politburo) – and especially to the post of general secretary. Even before the late 1920s, Stalin was the only party member with a seat on all four bodies.

### SOURCE B



Todd, A. 2002. *The European Dictatorships*. Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press. p. 38.

### Question

What do Marxists understand by the term ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’?

### dictatorship of the proletariat

The term ‘proletariat’ refers to the industrial working class (i.e. factory and mine workers). ‘Dictatorship’ in this sense meant ‘dominance’ based on the ownership of the means of production (factories, land, mines, banks), with the dominant ideas of any class-divided society always being those of the dominant classes, who own the major means of communication. Thus Marx described the parliamentary democracy of late 19th-century Britain as a ‘dictatorship of the bourgeoisie’. He believed their ownership of wealth ensured that their major interests were protected and advanced, even though ordinary people had many political and individual freedoms – including multi-party systems and the right to vote.

**Paris Commune** The Paris Commune of 1871 refers to the revolutionary provisional government that took over Paris from April to May 1871, following the Franco–Prussian War of 1870–71.

**Fact**

Further historical debate results from the fact that the nature of Stalin's state underwent significant change between 1929 and 1941, as Stalin consolidated his power via the Great Purge and Great Terror (see Unit 3).

**Historical debate**

The nature of the state under Stalin has led to several different interpretations – such as the pluralist and the totalitarian. Work in pairs to produce two charts that summarise the arguments of the two schools. Then consider the validity of the claim that Stalin was just the 'front man' for the bureaucratic élite that began to emerge after 1917. Make sure you gather specific details/events/names of historians for your evidence.

Some historians, such as David Lane, point out that the Stalinist state contained many features of Russia's tsarist and peasant past: tsarist-style autocracy and the belief in the need for an all-powerful leader; an official orthodox ideology (with 'communism' replacing religion); and the belief in a 'national community' that was transformed into the nationalist belief that the Russian people could achieve 'socialism in one country' without the need for outside help. Another important element of Stalinism was the 'cult of personality', in which Stalin was portrayed as a kind of superman who was capable of achieving anything and who was always right (see page 40).

**Was Stalin's state totalitarian?**

One of the biggest debates surrounding the nature of Stalin's state is whether or not it was a totalitarian state. Historians divide broadly into two schools of thought – the pluralist (or social) group and the totalitarian group. The pluralist group argue that the Stalinist state acted as a referee for different competing interest groups (such as managers, technical experts and the military). Fitzpatrick, for example, sees state and society under Stalinism as more dynamic than allowed by totalitarian theories, with different hierarchies and opposing interests. She sees 'revolution from below' as well as 'revolution from above'. Historians such as Graeme Gill and Leonard Schapiro put forward the totalitarian group's arguments, claiming that Stalin and the state had almost total control. These views are shown in the table below.

Some historians, such as Tucker, have tried to develop an approach that combines both elements – the 'reconstruction-consolidation' (or 'recon') approach. This sees the state as being very important but also takes account of sectional and social resistance to official policy. Many historians thus see the label of 'totalitarian' as having limited value in understanding the nature of Stalinist Russia.

**Features of a totalitarian state**

Views of Graeme Gill	Views of Leonard Schapiro
<p>Graeme Gill sees the Stalinist state as having six components:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 a personal dictatorship based on coercion, via the use of the secret police and repression</li> <li>2 a total politicisation of all aspects of life which, at the same time, weakened the political control of state and party as it was the dictator who was seen as the embodiment of the country</li> <li>3 tight political controls over cultural and artistic life</li> <li>4 a static conservative ideology which, in theory, upheld but which, in practice, replaced earlier revolutionary ideals</li> <li>5 a highly centralised economy, in which all important areas of the economy were state-owned</li> <li>6 a social structure that, while at first allowing mobility from working-class occupations into scientific, technical, administrative and intellectual professions, soon saw the emergence of a privileged élite.</li> </ol>	<p>Gill's views correspond to the features of totalitarianism as set out by Leonard Schapiro's <i>Totalitarianism</i> (1973). Schapiro identified five main aspects as central to any totalitarian regime. These are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 a distinctive, 'utopian' and all-embracing ideology that dominates and tries to restructure all aspects of society</li> <li>2 a political system that is headed by an all-powerful leader, around whom a deliberate 'cult of personality' is created, and in which party, parliament and the state are under the control of the leader</li> <li>3 a deliberate use of censorship and propaganda aimed at controlling all aspects of culture, and at indoctrinating (at times mobilising) all sections of society, but especially the young</li> <li>4 a systematic use of coercion and terror to ensure total compliance with all decisions made by the leader and the regime</li> <li>5 absolute state control and co-ordination of the economy, which is subordinated to the political objectives of the political regime.</li> </ol>

## Stalin's state after 1945

The Stalinist state underwent some changes after the end of the Second World War. Large numbers of Soviet citizens felt proud of their system, which they believed had saved the Soviet Union and the rest of Europe from Nazi domination. Many now saw Stalin as a national hero – and he continued with his ‘cult of personality’.



A portrait of Stalin produced at the end of the Second World War

However, Stalin was determined to reassert and maintain tight control of the armed forces, the party and society as a whole. In June 1945, Stalin promoted himself to the position of ‘Generalissimo’ (supreme commander). Marshal **Georgi Zhukov** lost his place on the Central Committee; other high-ranking army officers also lost influence and positions. From 1945 to 1953, there were virtually no promotions to the higher ranks in the armed forces.

Initially, from December 1945, in order to reassert political control over the armed forces, the Politburo met fortnightly. However, Stalin was also suspicious of potential rivals within the Communist Party. Once the military had been brought under control, Stalin excluded leading party members from the decision-making processes. He effectively dispensed with both the Politburo and the Central Committee, neither of which met between 1947 and 1952. Instead, Stalin met with small sub-committees composed of those he trusted at any particular time. The full Central Committee did not meet again until the 19th Party Congress in October 1952. Thus it would appear that it was Stalin who exercised real power, rather than the Communist Party.



### Theory of knowledge

#### Historical interpretations and politics

Different historians have come up with several sharply conflicting interpretations of the nature of the Stalinist state in the Soviet Union – in particular, over whether it was totalitarian, and the degree of similarity between it and Hitler's Nazi state. Is it possible for historians to research and write history unaffected by contemporary events – such as the Cold War?

#### Georgi Zhukov (1896–1974)

Marshal Zhukov oversaw the defence of Leningrad and Stalingrad, becoming deputy commander-in-chief of the Red Army in August 1942. He was the most successful Soviet general in the Second World War and led the liberation of Eastern Europe and the capture of Berlin.



**Andrei Zhdanov (1896–1948)**

Zhdanov joined the Bolsheviks in 1915 and was active during the Revolution and the civil war in the Urals. He was elected to the Central Committee in 1925 and to the Politburo in 1935. He became one of Stalin’s closest advisers. From 1934 to 1945, he headed the Leningrad party; in 1946, he launched a campaign to achieve ideological ‘purity’, based on the idea of the world (and hence science, literature and the arts) being divided into ‘two camps’: the bourgeois and the socialist. This process continued until 1953 and actually intensified after his sudden death in 1948.

However, Stalin became more and more suspicious of everyone. From 1946 to 1948 the Soviet Union went through another period of repression, mostly affecting the areas of science and culture. As this was supervised by **Andrei Zhdanov**, who was one of Stalin’s main advisers, this period is known as the *Zhdanovshchina* – the Zhdanov times – even though the repression actually peaked after Zhdanov’s death in August 1948.

The Communist Party also suffered during this period. Stalin decided to purge the Leningrad party organisation – partly because the Leningrad party had often tried to assert its independence. In July 1949, over a thousand leading party and administrative officials were arrested, and many were executed in what became known as the ‘Leningrad Affair’.

From then on, there were frequent personnel changes in the top ranks of the party, as Stalin, increasingly ill, attempted to confuse and weaken those who might be considered his successors. Further repressions took place – in 1951, there was the Mingrelian Case and, in January 1953, the so-called ‘Doctors’ Plot’ (see page 56). Then, on 5 March 1953, Stalin died, having suffered a stroke a few days earlier.

**End of unit activities**

Stalin’s use of ideology before 1929	Significance of ‘Marxism–Leninism’	Nature of Stalin’s state

- 1 Copy out the chart above and, using the information from this unit and any other materials available, make brief notes under the relevant headings.
- 2 Produce a chart, divided into two columns, to summarise the different political and ideological positions put forward by Stalin and Trotsky during the 1920s. Then write a short summary stating whether you think the views of Stalin or Trotsky were closest to the views of Marx and Lenin.
- 3 Carry out further research about the different historical views concerning the nature of the Stalinist state before 1941. Then, on an A3 piece of paper, produce a mind-map or diagram summarising each different historical interpretation. Remember, where relevant, to include the names of associated historians.
- 4 Try to find out about the Mingrelian Case (1951) and the ‘Doctors’ Plot’ (1953). What do these events tell us about the nature of the Stalinist state after 1945?

# 3 Establishment and consolidation of Stalin's rule

## Key questions

- How did the Great Purge, 1936–39, help establish Stalin's power?
- How can the Great Purge and the Great Terror be explained?
- What other methods did Stalin use to establish and maintain his power?

## Overview

- This unit deals with the methods Stalin used to establish and consolidate his power. It examines his use of terror against opponents and the roles of censorship and propaganda.
- By 1929, Stalin had defeated the left, the United Opposition and the Right Opposition, but dissent still existed within the Communist Party. Stalin feared that his opponents might work their way back into the party; in addition, once the Nazis took power in Germany in 1933, Stalin became concerned that Red Army generals might try to remove him from power.
- Problems with Stalin's economic policies caused significant criticism to emerge at the 16th Party Congress in June 1930.
- In 1932, the Ryutin Affair revealed this continuing dissent, and Stalin was further troubled when a majority of the Politburo refused to support his call for Martemyan Ryutin to be executed.
- The 17th Party Congress in February 1934 revealed continued criticism, and the growing popularity of Kirov. On 1 December, Kirov was assassinated in suspicious circumstances.
- Stalin then ordered a series of arrests and executions; after a secret trial, Zinoviev and Kamenev were given prison sentences.
- In August 1936, the first show trial was held and the Great Purge was launched; other show trials took place in 1937 and 1938.
- The Great Purge was undertaken by the NKVD (secret police), led by Genrikh Yagoda. He was replaced later in 1936 by Nikolai Ezhov, whose more extreme methods began a Great Terror. In 1937, this spread to include a purge of the officer corps of the armed forces, as well as of Communist Party officials.
- Once started, the Great Purge developed a momentum of its own. In the regions away from Moscow, local party bosses used it to further their own positions and there is evidence to suggest that ordinary people saw the punishment of middle-class experts as part of a social revolution that would give them better jobs.
- As a result of the Great Purge, several million people were arrested and large numbers were executed or sent to the Gulag.
- In 1938, Lavrenti Beria replaced Ezhov as head of the NKVD and the Great Terror began to diminish. In 1939, at the 18th Party Congress, the Great Purge was officially ended. By then, virtually all the 'Old Guard' Bolsheviks had been executed or had committed suicide.

## Timeline

**1928–30** Party purge expels thousands of lower ranking party members

**1930 Jun:** 16th Party Congress (signs of some opposition to Stalin)

**1932 Sep:** Ryutin Affair

**1933 Jan:** Smirnov's 'anti-party group' is charged with attempting to replace Stalin

**1934 Feb:** 17th Party Congress

**Dec:** Kirov is murdered; thousands are arrested

**1935 Jan:** mass arrests continue; secret trial of Zinoviev, Kamenev and 17 other members of a 'Moscow Centre'

**1936 Aug:** first show trial (Trial of the Sixteen); Great Purge starts

**Sep:** Ezhov replaces Yagoda as head of NKVD (secret police)

**1937 Jan:** second show trial (Trial of the Seventeen)

**Feb:** Bukharin is expelled from the party

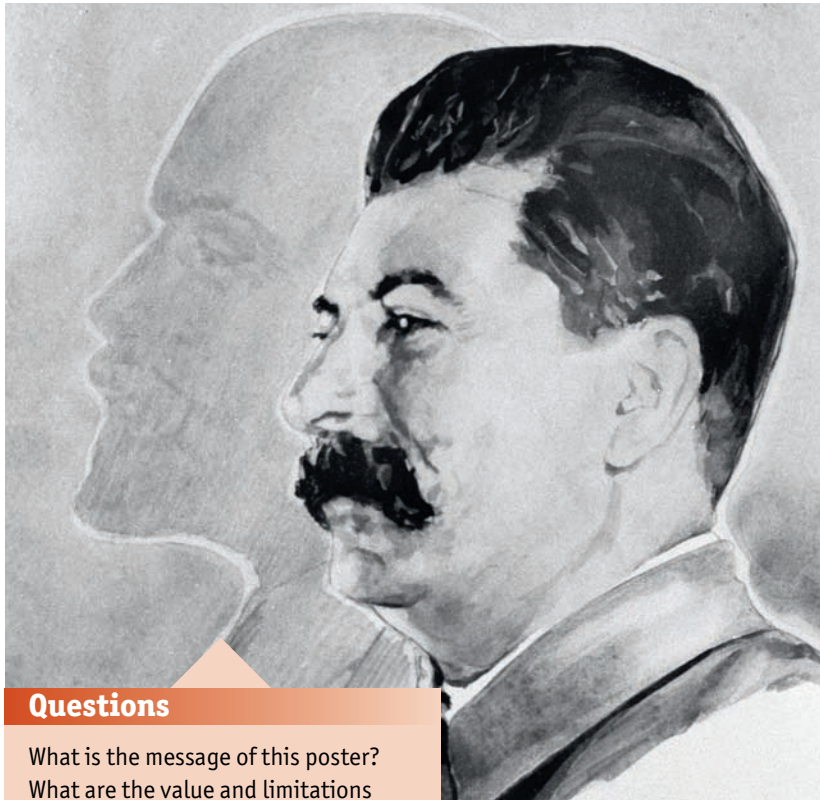
**May:** purge of the Red Army starts

**1938 Mar:** third show trial (Trial of the Twenty-one)

**Dec:** Beria replaces Ezhov as head of the NKVD

**1939 Mar:** 18th Party Congress; official end of the Great Purge





A reproduction of a 1936 poster depicting Stalin and Lenin

## How did the Great Purge, 1936–39, help establish Stalin's power?

### Stalin's insecurities in 1930

**Purges** had taken place in the Communist Party before Stalin's rise to power. However, they had only been used to expel those judged to be unsuitable (e.g. drunkards, careerists or those who were hostile to Bolshevik aims). During the power struggle of the 1920s, many of Stalin's opponents had lost senior posts or had even been expelled from the party. However, even these purges were not violent or as extensive as those of the 1930s.

Stalin had defeated his main opponents by 1929, but he was not totally dominant. In the late 1920s, members of the Politburo did not always support his calls for stricter action against defeated opponents. Furthermore, though removed from high office, Bukharin

still had sympathisers and supporters in the party. At the 16th Party Congress in June 1930, Bukharin was re-elected to the Central Committee. The early problems arising from mass collectivisation and rapid industrialisation (see Unit 4) created political division even within the Politburo, where only Vyacheslav Molotov and Lazar Kaganovich were uncritical supporters of Stalin. In December 1930, Sergey Syrtsov and others were expelled from the Central Committee for criticising the excesses committed under collectivisation (see Unit 4). Significantly, they had previously supported Stalin in the struggle against Bukharin and the right.

### The Ryutin Affair, 1932

More serious opposition to Stalin's policies came in 1932 when Martemyan Ryutin, a rightist, wrote a document calling for the end of forced collectivisation (see Unit 4), the rehabilitation of oppositionists (including Trotsky) and the dismissal of Stalin. The document was signed by several prominent communists. Members of the group were put on trial in September – Ryutin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and 17 others were then expelled from the Central Committee. Stalin had wanted Ryutin executed, but the Politburo refused to go that far, thus underlining the fact that Stalin did not yet have complete control. During the next two years, nearly a million party members were expelled as 'Ryutinities'.

### The 17th Party Congress, 1934

Despite these expulsions, opposition to Stalin continued after the Ryutin Affair. In January 1933, Smirnov (another leading communist) was expelled for forming an 'anti-party group' in order to remove Stalin. A major turning point seems to have been the 17th Party Congress (the Congress of Victors), which took place in February 1934.

#### Questions

What is the message of this poster? What are the value and limitations of this poster for historians trying to discover the political links between Stalin and Lenin?

**purge** In the Russian Communist Party, this term initially referred to checking the personal qualities and behaviour of party members (e.g. drunkenness, political inactivity). In such purges or 'cleansings' (*chistki*), those found guilty had their party cards taken away. Violence was not involved and former members were later allowed to rejoin if behaviour improved. Such purges took place, for example, in 1919, 1921, 1929 and 1933. The Great Purge that began in the later 1930s was a very different phenomenon, with mass imprisonment and executions.

#### Questions

What was the Ryutin Affair? How did it show that Stalin was not in complete control of the Communist Party in 1932?



Evidence suggests that, before the Congress began, some leading local officials asked **Kirov** (a Politburo member and the party boss of Leningrad) to replace Stalin, but he refused. However, the Congress did abolish the post of general secretary. Thus, in principle, Stalin was now no more important than Kirov, Kaganovich and Zhdanov, the three other secretaries of the Communist Party who were elected after the Congress. It is possible that Stalin himself desired this, in order to share responsibility for the economic crisis. However, the Central Committee elected by the Congress gave an indication that not everyone in the Communist Party approved of Stalin's leadership. In particular, it appears that Kirov received votes from almost all the 1225 delegates who voted, while about 300 did not vote for Stalin.

### The Kirov Affair, 1934

Kirov was known to have doubts about the pace of industrialisation and Stalin's methods of disciplining the party. In December 1934, in suspicious circumstances, Kirov was assassinated. Stalin immediately claimed this was part of a plot to overthrow him and the rule of the Communist Party.

The plot was supposedly organised by a 'Leningrad Opposition Centre', which had links with Trotsky's Left Opposition and the United Opposition. The recently reorganised **NKVD** (which had absorbed the **OGPU** in July 1934) headed by **Yagoda**, was given sweeping powers of arrest, trial and execution under a special terrorist decree passed the day after Kirov's assassination.

In the next few weeks, over 100 party members were shot and thousands of Trotskyists and Zinovievists were arrested, including Kamenev and Zinoviev himself – Trotsky was abroad, having been deported in 1929. In January 1935, Zinoviev, Kamenev and 17 others were tried and imprisoned for five to ten years. A few days later, 12 important NKVD members in Leningrad were also tried and imprisoned, and several thousand 'bourgeois elements' were then rounded up.

### The Great Purge

By mid 1935, the purges had begun to come to a halt. However, a new purge began in the summer of 1936, involving the first **show trial**, and signalling the start of what later became known as the Great Purge.

#### SOURCE A

I am guilty of nothing, nothing, nothing before the party, before the Central Committee and before you personally. I swear to you by everything that is sacred to a Bolshevik. I swear to you on Lenin's memory. I cannot even imagine what could have aroused suspicion against me. I beg you to believe my word of honour. I am shaken to the depths of my soul.

Zinoviev to Stalin in December 1934, following his arrest after the assassination of Kirov. Quoted in Volkogonov, D. (trans. Shukman, H.). 1991. Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy. New York, USA. Grove Weidenfeld. p. 277.

**Sergei Kirov (1888–1934)** Kirov joined the Bolsheviks in 1904 and was elected to the Politburo in 1930. He was head of the Leningrad Communist Party. He was a moderate and opposed some of Stalin's more extreme measures. He was assassinated in mysterious circumstances in 1934.

**NKVD** This term refers to the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, set up in 1917. In July 1934, it took over the secret police (see OGPU) and kept this responsibility until 1943.

**OGPU** This term refers to the secret police (United State Political Administration) from 1923 to 1934; from 1917 to 1922, the Cheka had been the secret police and, from 1922 to 1923, the GPU.

### Genrihk Yagoda (1891–1938)

Yagoda joined the Bolsheviks in 1907 and the Cheka in 1917. He was put in charge of forced-labour camps in 1930 and, in 1934, the NKVD. He is suspected of having been involved in Kirov's murder and, in 1936, he supervised the first show trial. He was replaced by Ezhov after failing to get Bukharin convicted. He was arrested in 1937, found guilty of plotting with Trotsky and others, and executed in 1938.

**show trials** These were the public trials of 1936–38 in which leading communists were accused of plotting against Stalin and the Soviet Union. The interrogation methods of the NKVD (sleep deprivation, continued questioning and beatings) led to many bizarre 'confessions'.

### Nikolai Ezhov (1895–1940)

Ezhov joined the Bolsheviks in 1917 and played an active part in the November Revolution. He helped to organise the collectivisation of agriculture (see Unit 4). As head of the NKVD from 1937 to 1938, he organised the show trials against the 'Old Bolsheviks' and the purge of the armed forces. He was removed from his post in 1938 and executed in 1940.



### Andrei Vyshinski (1883–1954)

At first supported the Mensheviks but joined the Bolsheviks during the civil war. He acted as deputy state prosecutor during the show trials.

**Ezhovshchina** Literally 'the time of Ezhov', this term refers to the height of the Great Terror, from 1937 to 1938, when Ezhov was head of the NKVD.

### The Trial of the Sixteen, August 1936

The NKVD claimed to have uncovered a Trotskyist–Zinovievist counter-revolutionary conspiracy. Zinoviev, Kamenev and 14 others were accused of organising the conspiracy and plotting to kill Stalin and other Politburo members. All 16 were found guilty and executed. Bukharin and other Right Opposition leaders were questioned but were not arrested, possibly because of disagreements within the Politburo.



The first show trial, in August 1936

Stalin then had Yagoda replaced by **Ezhov**, on the grounds that Yagoda had not been active enough in exposing the full scope of the 'conspiracy'.

### The Trial of the Seventeen, January 1937

In January 1937, at the second show trial, 17 communist leaders were accused of plotting with Trotsky to carry out assassinations, sabotage of industry and spying. NKVD interrogations again produced 'confessions' that were the main 'evidence' of **Andrei Vyshinski**. This time 13 were sentenced to death.

Following the second show trial, the Central Committee met during February and March 1937. Its main business was to consider the destruction of the 'Trotskyist Conspiracy', as 'revealed' by Stalin and Molotov. Ezhov took his cue from Stalin and accused Bukharin of having known of Trotsky's 'plans'. Bukharin refused to 'confess' to this, was expelled from the party, and immediately arrested.

### The Trial of the Twenty-One, March 1938

The Trial of the Twenty-One was the last and biggest of the show trials. It focused on Bukharin and 20 others, who were accused of membership of a 'Trotskyist–Rightist Bloc'. As before, most of the accused 'confessed' to their 'crimes' – but not Bukharin. The court returned the desired verdict, and Bukharin and 16 others were shot.

### The Great Terror

By this time, the Great Purge had begun to transform into the Great Terror – or **Ezhovshchina** – as the number of denunciations, expulsions, trials, imprisonments and executions multiplied. Initially, the purges had mainly

affected party members; by mid 1937, they widened to include large numbers of administrators and specialists, including engineers and railway workers. In the years 1937–38, almost the entire party structure in Ukraine, from the Politburo downwards, was purged. In most of the other republics, high-ranking party officials were purged of ‘nationalists’. Moscow even set quotas for each region as to the number of ‘wreckers’ they should find. Many ended up in the **Gulag**, while others were simply executed by the NKVD.

The Great Terror also spread to the Red Army. As the threat of war with Nazi Germany increased, Stalin began to worry about a military coup. Some officers or former officers had been implicated in the first or second show trials. In May 1937, Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky (chief of general staff and a deputy commissar for defence) and Yan Gamarnik (head of the Red Army's political commissars) were arrested and accused of plotting with Trotsky and foreign enemies to assassinate Soviet leaders. On 12 June 1937, Tukhachevsky and some other leading commanders were executed. The Great Terror then spread down to the lower ranks of the Red Army so that, by the end of 1938, the list of those executed included three out of the five Red Army marshals, 14 out of the 16 top commanders, and all eight admirals. Airforce officers and the military intelligence service were also badly hit. In all, about 35,000 (about 50%) of the entire officer corps were either executed or imprisoned.

The Great Terror also began to affect large numbers of ordinary people. Keen to avoid suspicion falling on themselves, many people tried to prove their loyalty to Stalin by denouncing others. Some also saw it as a way of settling scores or securing the jobs of those who were purged. By the end of 1938, most Russians were in a state of terror, reluctant to talk openly to anyone. It was at that point, however, that the Great Terror began to diminish.

### The end of the Great Terror

As early as October 1937, Stalin raised doubts about the purging of industrial workers. In December 1938, **Beria** replaced Ezhov as general commissar for state security. At the 18th Party Congress in March 1939, Stalin and Zhdanov announced that ‘mass cleansings’ were no longer needed and even admitted that ‘mistakes’ had been made. Later in 1939, Ezhov was accused of being a British agent, and was executed. As a result, mass arrests ended, several thousand Gulag prisoners were released and many more who had been expelled from the party and had lost their jobs were rehabilitated.

However, it is important to note that potential opponents of Stalin continued to be arrested and imprisoned or executed, although on a much smaller scale.

**Gulag** This term refers to a Soviet government agency set up in 1930 to administer the system of forced-labour camps (see page 49). Gulag is an acronym for the Russian term for the ‘Chief Administration for Corrective Labour Camps’. Initially it was under the control of a special section of the OGPU, the secret police; then, in July 1934, the NKVD took over the OGPU and its Gulag administration.



Soviet Union labour camps under Stalin

### Question

Why did Stalin spread the Great Purge to the Red Army, and what was its impact?

### Lavrenti Beria (1899–1953)

Beria was an early supporter of Stalin. In 1938, he replaced Ezhov as head of the NKVD and was responsible for the elimination of Ezhov and several other NKVD officials at the end of the Great Terror. When Zhdanov died in 1948, it was thought Beria would succeed Stalin as ruler of the Soviet Union. However, when Stalin died in 1953, Beria was arrested and executed.



**glasnost** This term refers to the policy of 'openness' in the Soviet Union, begun after Mikhail Gorbachev became general secretary of the Communist Party in 1985. As a result, many secret documents became available for research by both Soviet and Western historians.

### Question

What problems do historians have when trying to calculate the number of victims of the Great Purge?

### SOURCE B

It cannot be said that the cleansings were not accompanied by grave mistakes. There were, unfortunately, more mistakes than might have been expected. Undoubtedly, we shall have no further need to resort to the method of mass cleansings. Nevertheless, the cleansings of 1933–36 were unavoidable and their results, on the whole, were beneficial.

*Stalin reporting to the 18th Party Congress in March 1939 on the purges from 1933 to 1936. Quoted in Ward, C. 1993. Stalin's Russia. London, UK. Hodder Education. p. 119.*

## The impact of the Great Purge

### The numbers debate

Before Gorbachev and his policy of '**glasnost**', estimates of total victims of the Great Purge (imprisoned, sent to the Gulag or executed) varied from 5 million to 18 million. In 1990, however, KGB archives were made public. These gave much lower figures of just under 2 million victims. The lower figures are now taken as fairly reliable by many historians and they support lower estimates given in the past by, among others, Jerry F. Hough, Merle Fainsod and T. H. Rigby. However, some more recent evidence has led to renewed debate, with some historians favouring an upward revision of the number of victims. There is also the problem of trying to separate deaths due to the 'liquidation' of the kulaks and the famine from deaths connected to the Great Terror.

## How can the Great Purge and the Great Terror be explained?

While most historians see the Great Purge and Great Terror essentially as steps taken by Stalin, there is considerable historical debate about their nature and how they can be fully explained.

### Totalitarian theories

The orthodox or traditional views on the reasons for the Great Purge centre on the role of Stalin. They are based on his position as dictator of the Soviet Union, which was clearly established by the time the Great Purge ended. Many historians accept Stalin's responsibility for and planning of the Great Terror, but argue that it should be seen, at least in part, as a 'rational' response to the circumstances of the 1930s – i.e. serving Stalin's determination to remain as leader. Others, such as Tucker, have argued that Stalin launched the purges because he was suffering from some form of mental illness, or at least paranoia, that led to irrational and extreme action.

Trotsky himself, while continuing to attack Stalin, saw the Great Terror as a way of providing scapegoats to explain away the economic problems. He also saw it as a consequence of an inevitable paranoia resulting from the increasing isolation of Stalin and the bureaucracy from Soviet society. The historian Isaac Deutscher linked the Great Terror to Stalin's fear that, with the international

situation becoming threatening in the 1930s, the outbreak of war might lead to opponents in the party and/or the army attempting to overthrow him in a coup d'état.

Roy Medvedev has connected Stalin's 'lust for power' and his 'measureless ambition' to the huge support given to Kirov at the 1934 Party Congress. Thus the Great Purge can be seen as a deliberate and intentional action that was designed to strengthen the regime and Stalin's position within it.

### Revisionist theories

More recently, several historians have focused attention on the existence of genuine opposition that posed a potential threat to Stalin's position. John Arch Getty has suggested that there is evidence that Stalin's references to a Trotskyist–Zinovievist plot were based, at least in part, on fact. Between 1930 and 1932, middle-ranking communist officials contacted Trotsky about forming a new opposition bloc, and proposals for a new Trotsky–Zinoviev alliance were being made. However, the number of victims of the Great Purge was far greater than the number of likely oppositionists by the mid 1930s.

Some historians, such as Gabor Rittersporn, have argued that, although Stalin made crucial appointments – such as replacing Yagoda with Ezhov as head of the NKVD – the NKVD and local party bosses were often out of control in the chaos of the 1930s and frequently took matters well beyond Stalin's intentions. These historians argue that at times the Great Terror was an opportunity for rival local leaders to settle old scores. These arguments echo the structuralist debate over the nature and distribution of power in Nazi Germany.

### Stalin and Lenin

Historians such as Conquest have argued that the rise of Stalin, and the Great Terror, can be traced to the Marxist roots of early Bolshevism and in particular to Leninism. They point to the way that Lenin and the Bolsheviks frequently portrayed those who had different ideas about the 'correct line' as 'traitors' and 'class enemies'. They also point to the fact that the Bolsheviks resorted to purges of the party membership in the 1920s under Lenin, and shortly after his death. Purges took place during the civil war and as the NEP was introduced (the civil war and the NEP threatened the survival of the new Bolshevik government). In 1919 and 1921, about 15% and 25% of members respectively lost their party cards. These expulsion rates were much higher than those of the 1930s: 11% were expelled in 1929, 18% in 1933 and 9% in 1935. However, though the Cheka had used terror against opponents of the Bolsheviks in the civil war, violence had not been used against party members, even when, in 1921, factions in the Communist Party (as well as all opposition parties) had been banned.

However, Trotsky rejected the argument that Stalin and Stalinism were a logical outcome of Lenin's ideas and methods of rule. Historians such as Deutscher and Medvedev have also portrayed Stalinism as being distinct from Leninism, pointing to the fact that terror was not used against Communist Party members. In addition, the Communist Party leadership at several points in the 1930s tried to limit actions taken against various oppositions. Nor did Lenin ever try to force defeated political opponents to recant their views or make preposterous 'confessions' – such methods were only used by Stalin. Several historians also point out that, unlike the earlier purges, Stalin was attempting to create an ideologically 'pure' and monolithic party. Thus Stalin's Great Purge appears to have been uniquely violent and a clear break with Leninist traditions.

### Historical debate

The opinions of historians are still divided over the reasons for the Great Purge and Great Terror, and on the degree of Stalin's responsibility. How would you evaluate the view that Stalin's purges in the 1930s were essentially a 'rational' response – by him – to real threats from opponents and a possible war?

### Activity

Work in pairs to carry out research on the question of whether or not Stalin's Great Purge and Great Terror can be seen as merely a continuation of methods used before 1924 by Lenin. Then present your views – for and against – to your class.

## What other methods did Stalin use to establish and maintain his power?

Although terror was an extremely important method for Stalin's attempt to dominate the Communist Party and Soviet society, he also used other methods of control. Particularly important were censorship and propaganda.

### The cult of personality

As early as December 1929 and Stalin's 50th birthday, the party and the media began consciously to build up Stalin as a hero and to equate his political thinking with that of Marx and, especially, of Lenin. The newspaper *Pravda* called on the party and the people to unite around 'Lenin's most faithful and dedicated pupil and associate'. Elements of this had already emerged during the power struggle, as Stalin tried to portray himself as a true 'disciple' of Lenin, while branding all his opponents as 'anti-Leninists'. During the upheavals of collectivisation (see Unit 4), the Five-Year Plans and the purges, references were made to a 'Lenin-Stalin partnership', and it was claimed that 'Stalin is the Lenin of today'. The photographs or faces of Stalin's opponents who had been defeated in the 1920s were 'airbrushed' out, simply torn from books or blanked out with pens (see page 15).



#### Theory of knowledge

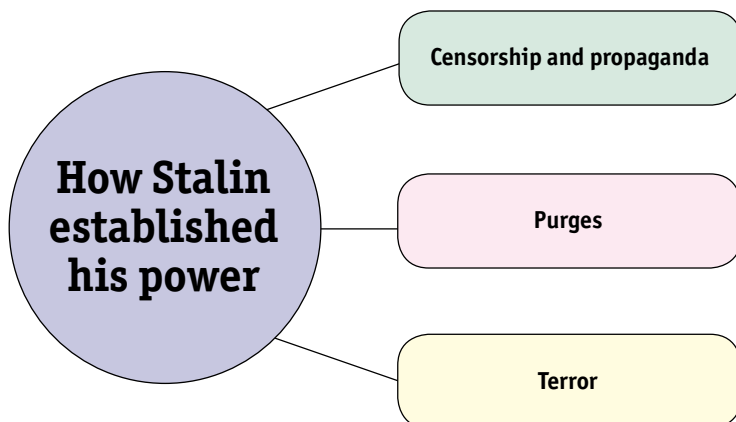
##### History and propaganda

Propaganda techniques have been employed by many leaders and parties in their attempts to achieve and/or maintain power. Consider the ways in which Stalin used posters, the arts and film to present himself as Lenin's 'rightful heir' and the 'saviour' of the Soviet 'motherland'. Were they effective and, if they were, what makes them so? Try to consider how language and emotion can be – and were – used to influence reason.

During the 1930s, a 'cult of personality' developed: Stalin was portrayed as the 'father of the nation' who had saved the Soviet Union from its enemies, and as an expert in science and culture. Posters, paintings and statues appeared everywhere, in streets, factories, offices, schools and even in Soviet homes. The media referred to Stalin in glowing terms, such as 'Universal Genius' and 'Shining Sun of Humanity'. He was credited with having made the Soviet Union the envy of the world through the achievements of the Five-Year Plans. Artists, writers and film directors were ordered to produce work in praise of Stalin and his achievements. Children were specifically targeted with this kind of propaganda in schools and the Komsomol (see page 57).

After the Second World War, Stalin moved quickly to portray himself as the one who had saved the Soviet 'motherland' and, in June 1945, he promoted himself to 'Generalissimo'. Many Soviet citizens *did* see Stalin as a national hero but, to counter any possible threats from the armed forces, he encouraged this 'cult of personality' by making sure he took pride of place in the victory parades.

## End of unit activities



- 1 Complete the spider diagram to show the main ways in which Stalin established his power in the 1930s, using the information from this unit and any other resources available to you.
- 2 Research and make notes on the historical arguments surrounding the view that Stalin began the purges as a result of mental illness or instability.
- 3 Produce a chart to summarise the main events and impact of the purges and show trials of the 1930s.



# 4 Domestic policies and their impact

## Key questions

- What were the main features of collectivisation and the Five-Year Plans?
- How successful were Stalin's economic policies?
- What was the position of women in Stalin's Russia?
- What were Stalin's policies towards religion and ethnic minorities?
- What impact did Stalinism have on education, young people and the arts?

## Overview

- This unit will examine the reasons behind Stalin's main economic and social policies, their outcomes, and whether they contributed to the further consolidation of his rule.
- By 1928, problems with agricultural production under the NEP led Stalin to consider collectivising agriculture and to push for more rapid industrialisation. This led to a clash with Bukharin and the right, who wanted to continue the NEP and *smychka* (see page 42).
- In 1928, the first Five-Year Plan for industrialisation was drawn up. It concentrated on heavy industry, with high targets for increased productivity being set for each industry.
- In 1929, Stalin announced the forced collectivisation of agriculture. The *kulaks* strongly opposed the policy and often destroyed their animals, crops and tools rather than hand them over to the collectives. In 1930, Stalin determined to destroy the *kulaks* as a class. Around 1.5 million (out of 5 million) were forcibly deported to poorer parts of the Soviet Union. Many died on the journey.
- By 1932, the disruption of agriculture had led to famine in some parts of the USSR, as food production slumped.
- Results in industry were better. In 1933, a second Five-Year Plan was drawn up, which continued the emphasis on heavy industry. 'Shock brigades' of super-workers – the Stakhanovites – were set up to encourage workers to beat their production targets.
- In 1938, a third Five-Year Plan began, which was to concentrate on light industry and consumer goods. In 1940, this was shifted to the production of armaments as fears of a Nazi invasion increased.
- Despite unrealistic targets and practical problems, industrial production increased, and many new railways, canals, dams and industrial centres were built.
- While reasserting his political control, Stalin launched the reconstruction of the Soviet Union via the fourth and fifth Five-Year Plans. Industry soon revived but agriculture continued to present problems of under-production.
- As regards social policies, Stalin attempted to increase control over minorities and religion, young people, education and the arts, while women both lost and gained some important rights.

## Timeline

- 1925 Dec:** 14th Party Congress (the 'industrialisation congress')
- 1927 Dec:** 15th Party Congress (the 'collectivisation congress')
- 1928 Jul:** Bukharin wins Central Committee vote to slow down collectivisation
- Oct:** first Five-Year Plan starts
- 1929 Apr:** 16th Party Conference; right is defeated over collectivisation; first Five-Year Plan is approved
- Dec:** Stalin calls for *kulaks* to be 'liquidated as a class'
- 1930 Jan:** start of mass collectivisation
- 1932–33** crisis in industry; forced collectivisation causes famine
- 1934 Jan:** 17th Party Congress approves second Five-Year Plan
- 1935 Aug:** start of the Stakhanovite movement
- 1936 Jun:** new family law is introduced
- 1939 Mar:** 18th Party Congress approves third Five-Year Plan
- 1946** fourth Five-Year Plan is announced
- 1951** fifth Five-Year Plan starts



### Question

What messages does this poster give about Soviet priorities under Stalin? As you work through this unit, try to decide whether this poster gives a fair reflection of the realities of the lives of Soviet women during Stalin's rule.



A Soviet poster encouraging women to work; the poster says: 'The development of a network of crèches, kindergartens, canteens and laundries will ensure that women take part in socialist construction'

## What were the main features of collectivisation and the Five-Year Plans?

### Why Stalin changed economic policies

Initially, Stalin and the right had rejected calls by Trotsky and the Left Opposition for industrialisation. Instead, Stalin and his supporters defended the maintenance of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and *smychka*, and warned against the dangers of creating 'a state of war' with the peasantry. In 1925, Bukharin had dismissed the left's arguments that the NEP was generating

***smychka*** This term refers to the economic link between the town and countryside/workers and peasants. This was the cornerstone of the NEP.

a capitalist class of *kulaks* and *nepmen* (see page 22), which threatened the socialist nature of the Soviet state. However, as early as November 1925, Stalin had started to contemplate a new revolutionary shift from the NEP to a socialist economy. After 1928, his economic policies focused on two interrelated areas, both of which were presenting problems: industry and especially agriculture.

## Industry

At the 14th Party Congress, in December 1925 (later called the ‘industrialisation congress’), the principle of economic modernisation was supported. At the 15th Party Conference in the autumn of 1926, Stalin called for the Soviet Union to catch up with and overtake the West in industrial production – though insisting on maintaining the worker–peasant alliance. During the years 1925–26, the organisations Gosplan and Vesenkha drafted schemes for developing the Soviet economy. By 1927, fears of imminent war led many to believe that rapid industrialisation was necessary. Furthermore, by 1927, with the United Opposition defeated, Stalin felt able to adopt some of their economic policies.

However, in December 1927, the 15th Party Congress still spoke of maintaining the basic elements of the NEP, although Stalin stressed the foreign threats and the need to develop heavy industry. Production figures for heavy industry had virtually returned to pre-war levels, but there was still unemployment so many in the party called for the state sector to be developed.

During 1927–28, a ‘grain crisis’ in agriculture (see page 45) persuaded Stalin that the NEP should be abandoned in favour of rapid industrialisation. This led to a serious split between Stalin and Bukharin. By the end of 1928, with the right virtually defeated, Stalin pushed for higher production targets from Vesenkha and Gosplan. By April 1929, two draft Five-Year Plans were presented to the 16th Party Conference – the ‘basic variant’ and the ‘optimum variant’. Stalin persuaded the Politburo to accept the ‘optimum’ plan, to double Soviet industrial production by 1932. This was a much bigger increase than the left had called for or believed possible.

### The first Five-Year Plan, 1928–32

The first Five-Year Plan began on 1 October 1928. It concentrated on heavy industry – coal, iron, steel, oil and machine-production. Overall production was planned to increase by 300%. Light industry was to double its output and, in order to ensure sufficient energy was available, electricity production was to increase by 600%. Many workers were enthused by the vision of creating a socialist economy and worked hard to fulfil each year’s targets. Soon, reports (mostly unreliable) arrived in Moscow of how targets were being exceeded. In 1929, people talked of fulfilling the plan in four years rather than five. Stalin officially backed this in June 1930 and posters appeared proclaiming ‘2+2=5’.

There were significant achievements, which fundamentally transformed the Soviet economy. In particular, hundreds of new factories and mines were set up in many regions, some of which had had no industrial developments before 1928. New rail links, hydroelectric schemes and industrial complexes (such as Magnitogorsk) were built.

Part of the reason behind Stalin’s push for rapid industrialisation was fear of the international situation. In 1931, Stalin pointed out the USSR’s relative economic backwardness (50 to 100 years) and said that the Soviet Union had to make this up in ten years.

#### Fact

Gosplan and Vesenkha were, respectively, the State General Planning Commission and the Supreme Council of the National Economy. Gosplan was based in Moscow and each Soviet republic had its own Gosplan that was subordinate to Moscow. Vesenkha existed from 1917 to 1932, and was responsible for state industry. There was great rivalry between Vesenkha and Gosplan.



### SOURCE A

It is sometimes asked whether it is not possible to slow down the tempo a bit, to put a check on the movement. No, comrades, it is not possible! The tempo must not be reduced! On the contrary, we must increase it as much as is within our powers and possibilities ... We are 50 or 100 years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or they crush us.

*Extract from an article written by Stalin in 1931, on the need to industrialise as quickly as possible. Quoted in Laver, J. 1991. Russia 1914–1941. London, UK. Hodder Arnold H&S. pp. 60–61.*

In December 1932, Stalin announced that the first Five-Year Plan had been fulfilled. This was an exaggeration – despite tremendous growth, no major targets had actually been met.

### The crisis year, 1932–33

The successes of the first plan created problems in the period 1932–33 when the second Five-Year Plan was drafted. Implementation costs had been much greater than allowed for by Gosplan, and the enormous increases in coal, iron and industrial goods proved too much for the railway system to cope with. At the same time, as urban populations rapidly expanded, there were soon housing shortages, which threatened continued industrialisation. Moreover, the effects of forced collectivisation led to food shortages, rationing and eventually famine (see page 46). In this situation, many workers changed jobs frequently. Managers had to increase wages and offer unofficial perks in order to retain skilled workers so that they could meet their targets.

### The second Five-Year Plan, 1933–37

Nonetheless, in 1933 Gosplan drew up the second Five-Year Plan, which was at first intended to create a fully socialist economy. However, the final draft, approved by the 17th Party Congress in January 1934, simply called for increased production and improved living standards, and the need to build on the achievements of the first plan. From 1934 to 1936, there were many successes – in particular, machine-production and iron and steel output grew rapidly, making the Soviet Union practically self-sufficient in these areas.

### The Stakhanovite movement

Part of the reason for the success of the second Five-Year Plan was the huge increase in labour productivity. In August 1935, Aleksei Stakhanov, a miner in the Donbas mining region, dug out a massive amount of coal in one shift (102 tonnes – the normal figure was 7 tonnes). Following Stakhanov's success, production targets were greatly increased as workers were urged to follow his example. Most industries had their own model workers, who received higher bonuses and other material advantages (e.g. new flats) as well as 'Heroes of Socialist Labour' medals. At the same time, the worst effects of forced collectivisation were over, allowing rationing to be abandoned in 1935.

#### Question

Who was Stakhanov and what was his significance for Stalin's industrialisation programme?

## The third Five-Year Plan, 1938–42

The industrialisation programme was hit by problems again in 1937, despite significant achievements and successes under the second plan. The problems included the growing impact of the purges, which saw thousands of Gosplan specialists, managers and experts either imprisoned or executed (see pages 36–37), and the worsening international situation, which resulted in funds being diverted to defence.

Consequently, the third plan was not formally approved until the 18th Party Congress in March 1939. By then, proposals to develop light industry and increase the production of consumer goods were being undermined by emphasis on heavy industry and defence. Nonetheless, huge increases in production were planned. **Molotov** claimed that the first two plans had laid the foundation for a socialist economy and the third plan would complete the process and enable the Soviet Union to begin the transition to communism. The third Five-Year Plan, however, was disrupted in June 1941, when Germany launched its invasion.

## Agriculture

From 1924 to 1926, the NEP had led to a gradual increase in agricultural production. However, despite a good harvest in 1926, state collections were 50% of what had been expected. Emergency measures were taken in some areas against *kulak* ‘speculators’ and *nepmen*, including the seizure of grain and increasing the taxes on *kulaks* to force them to sell more grain to the state. Low state purchases of grain in 1927 threatened hunger in the expanding towns and undermined increased industrialisation.

Thus, by the time of the 15th Party Congress in December 1927 (later known as the ‘collectivisation congress’), many communists saw continuing the NEP as blocking both agricultural and industrial development. However, Stalin argued that the problems could be overcome by strengthening co-operative farms, increasing mechanisation and supporting the voluntary collectivisation of farms. At this stage, there was no mention of forced collectivisation. In 1928, however, the problem of insufficient grain purchases continued. In Siberia, Stalin instructed local officials to increase state grain procurements. They seized more grain and closed markets – those who resisted were arrested. After the 1928 harvest, these actions (known as the Ural–Siberian method) began to result in serious unrest in rural areas and bread shortages.

In July 1928, at a Central Committee meeting, Bukharin managed to agree an increase in the price of grain and an end to the forcible measures. However, Stalin was determined that industrial development should not be disrupted by any diversion of money to the *kulaks*. After the meeting, Stalin ordered that emergency actions should continue.

The crisis in agriculture continued. By the end of 1928, a combination of a fall in sales of grain to the state and a crop failure in the central and south-eastern regions of the USSR led to dramatic increases in free-market prices, a further slump in grain deliveries to the state and the introduction of rationing during the winter of 1928–29. During 1929, the forcible Ural–Siberian method was used in most of the Soviet Union, and the NEP was destroyed in all but name. In November and December 1929, Stalin (having defeated the right at the 16th Party Conference in April) launched a programme of forced collectivisation and called for the *kulaks* to be ‘liquidated as a class’.

**Vyacheslav Molotov (1890–1986)** Molotov was a great supporter of Stalin, becoming a member of the Politburo in 1926. He backed Stalin’s economic policies (as well as the Great Purge). From 1939 to 1949 he was commissar for foreign affairs. He continued to hold high office after Stalin’s death, but was removed from the Central Committee in 1957.

## Question

Why were Bukharin and the right opposed to Stalin’s policy of forced collectivisation?

**kolkhoz** A *kolkhoz* was a co-operative or collective farm operated by a number of peasant families on state-owned land. Peasants could use a *kolkhoz* rent-free in return for fulfilling the state grain procurement quotas. Any surplus was divided amongst the members, according to how much work they had done for the *kolkhoz*. Each family was also allowed access to a small plot of land and to keep some animals. Before 1930 these collective farms were set up on a voluntary basis, but after 1930 forced collectivisation was common. A *kolkhoz* should not be confused with a *sovkhoz*, which was a state farm, with the workers being paid a regular wage.

## Collectivisation of agriculture

Stalin was determined to resolve the crisis in agriculture before the spring sowing for the 1930 harvest. As an emergency measure, a massive grain procurement campaign was launched. Officials, determined to avoid punishment for failure, arrested, deported and confiscated the property of any peasant who failed to hand over their grain quota. In all, some 16 million tonnes were collected – in some areas over 30% of the entire crop was taken.

## Campaign against the *kulaks*

To bring about lasting changes in order to safeguard industrialisation plans, Stalin decided the *kulaks* needed to be ‘liquidated’ as a class. He called for this in December 1929. Action was taken first against *kulaks* who resisted the grain collections, although ‘identification’ of *kulaks* often went beyond Stalin’s definition of a peasant with two horses and four cows.

## Mass collectivisation, 1930

Action against *kulaks* was stepped up after January 1930 to organise the setting up of collectives. Initially, persuasion was the main method, but Stalin pressed for rapid results, and violence was increasingly used. The *kulaks* were divided into three categories: two groups, ‘counter-revolutionaries’ and ‘exploiters’, were given harsh punishments – execution or deportation, respectively.

Richer peasants often destroyed their crops and livestock rather than hand them over to the local *kolkhoz*, or they raided the *kolkhozes* to re-take their property. Local parties were given targets of how many households should be collectivised. Official figures identified about 4% of households as *kulaks*, but in the end some 15% of households were affected. Around 150,000 people were forced to migrate to poorer land in the north and east.

By March 1930, it was reported that 58% of peasant households had been collectivised – but the process provoked serious resistance. In March 1930, Stalin was pressurised by the Politburo into calling a halt. Official policy returned to voluntary collectivisation, and many peasants – wrongly classified as *kulaks* – had their property restored. By October 1930, only about 20% of households were still collectivised.

## Collectivisation, 1930–37

The retreat from collectivisation in 1930 was only temporary: once the 1930 harvest had been secured, collectivisation resumed in earnest. By 1931, 50% of Soviet households were in collective farms – it was 70% by 1934, 75% by 1935, and by 1937 the official figure was 90%. Between 1929 and 1932, over 2500 Machine Tractor Stations (MTS) were established to supply seed and to hire out machinery to local *kolkhozes*.

Behind these statistics, there was great upheaval and confusion, which resulted in a dreadful famine in the years 1932–33. The first sign of problems came in October 1931, when many agricultural areas were affected by drought. Famine first appeared in Ukraine in the spring of 1932. It spread to several more areas, especially parts of the North Caucasus, and eventually became the worst famine in Russia’s history. The worst was over by 1933, but some areas were still affected by serious food shortages in 1934. Despite this rural catastrophe, Stalin persisted with forced collectivisation and high state grain procurements. Millions died.



Historians are still not agreed on the total number of deaths – in part, because the Great Purge and the Great Terror in the second half of the 1930s make it difficult to establish the number of deaths resulting solely from the famine (see pages 36–37).

After 1933, agriculture did revive, although grain production only increased slowly. In 1935, it finally surpassed pre-collectivisation figures (75 million tonnes). Livestock numbers increased even more slowly, and in fact did not exceed pre-collectivisation levels until 1953. As a result, life on the collectives remained very hard for most of the 1930s.

### Question

What happened in several important agricultural areas of the Soviet Union in the years 1932–33?



A Soviet photograph of a pro-collectivisation demonstration in 1930. The banner reads: 'We demand collectivisation' and 'Liquidate the kulaks as a class'

## How successful were Stalin's economic policies?

### Did Stalin plan his 'revolution from above'?

Many historians have suggested that Stalin did not have a 'master plan' that he decided to implement in 1928, once he had defeated his opponents in the Communist Party. They point to the fact that changes came about in both agriculture and industry because of unforeseen problems arising from the NEP. It can also be argued that Stalin's constant interference – especially by increasing the targets – prevented the plans from being coherently and successfully implemented.

### Questions

Does this photo show that many peasants wanted collectivisation?  
What are the value and the limitations of this source for a historian trying to find out about the degree of support for Stalin's policy?

In particular, Stalin's initial response to the grain crisis of 1927–28 is seen by some historians as an emergency short-term measure that triggered off a sequence of developments that led to more and more radical decisions being taken. Lewin, for example, argues that Stalin did not really know where his policies might take the Soviet Union.

Others, such as Tucker, argue that Stalin clearly intended to modernise the Soviet Union, and adopted deliberate agricultural and industrial policies to do so, once he considered that political factors enabled him to begin. Others go on to argue that Stalin was deliberately attempting to complete the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 – once he felt politically secure, he consciously launched a 'second revolution from above'.

### How reliable are the statistics?

Official statistics about the increases in productivity achieved by the Five-Year Plans, produced during and after Stalin's rule, are highly suspect. For the period 1928–40, the official figure for increased industrial production is 852%. Similar doubts apply to figures relating to specific industries. However, most historians, such as Alec Nove, accept that there were tremendous increases, especially in heavy industry.

#### SOURCE B

Production table of first and second Five-Year Plans. The 'real' figures in the table are those calculated by British economic historian Alec Nove, as opposed to Soviet claims.

Production in 1928		First Five-Year Plan		Second Five-Year Plan	
		Real	Planned	Real	Planned
Electricity (million Kwhs)	5.05	13.4	17.0	36.2	38.0
Coal (million tonnes)	35.4	64.3	75.0	128.0	152.5
Oil (million tonnes)	11.7	21.4	22.0	28.5	46.8
Pig iron (million tonnes)	3.3	6.2	8.0	14.5	16.0
Steel (million tonnes)	4.0	5.9	10.4	17.7	17.0

Todd, A. 2001. *The Modern World*. Oxford, UK. Oxford University Press. p. 95.

One problem with the official statistics is that many factory managers were fearful of being punished for non-fulfilment of targets, so they claimed production figures that were higher than those actually achieved. Another problem was the lack of skill of many of the industrial workers in state enterprises. Many were ex-peasants, who had little basic training – most were under 29, and less than 20% had five years' experience of factory work.

Nor was production helped by ‘storming’. This involved workers and machines working for 24 hours or more at a time, in order to meet or surpass targets. Machines frequently broke down, so disrupting production.

## Impact on workers

In order to meet the high targets, new work practices were introduced. In 1929, an **uninterrupted week** was introduced, with shift work organised so that factories were not idle at the weekend. Absenteeism and late arrival were punished by loss of one’s job and factory housing. After 1931, such offences were criminalised and punished by imprisonment or sentence to a labour camp. This strict discipline led many workers to change jobs frequently, especially once the plans had ended unemployment and created extra employment.

Overall, most historians agree that the rushed pace of industrialisation – especially during the first plan – drastically reduced living standards, especially via food shortages and rising prices, as well as continued housing shortages. According to John Barber, even recovery during the mid 1930s did not restore living standards to pre-1928 levels. However, the plans did end the high unemployment of the 1920s and the huge increase in the numbers of workers (including many women) enabled joint family incomes to increase. Those peasants who became industrial workers also experienced improvements in their standard of living, and many younger women (who under the tsars might have become domestic servants) found employment in offices. Many workers also benefited from the opening up and expansion of education from 1929, especially technical colleges and universities – designed to increase the skills and hence the productivity of the workforce.

## The Gulag

As early as 1929, in order to overcome immediate labour shortages, the OGPU was instructed to establish timber camps in the remoter regions of the country – initially to earn foreign currency via the export of timber. In 1930, the OGPU set up a special department to run them – the Chief Administration for Corrective Labour Camps (Gulag). From 1934, all prisons, camps and colonies were under Gulag control. Conditions were hard and food was often scarce. This was particularly so in the Kolyma camps, where prisoners worked the goldfields under extremely primitive conditions. Prisoners (*zeks*) were used to undertake huge construction projects, such as canals and railways. Many were deported ex-*kulaks* or workers who had committed labour discipline offences, and many more came from those ‘purged’ during the 1930s.

## Collectivisation

Collectivisation was intended to solve a serious shortfall in the amount of grain needed to feed the urban population. However, the destructive resistance by *kulaks* and the disruption caused by deporting about 2.5 million people to the Gulag in 1930–31, led to a serious and sudden drop in food production, and to a famine in the years 1932–33.

Historians are not agreed on the total number of famine deaths – estimates vary from Stephen Wheatcroft’s 3.5 million to Conquest’s 7 million. However, deaths resulting from famine were not the only deaths that can be attributed to the process of collectivisation in general. Again, historians are divided – estimates of the total number of deaths including the famine range from 6 million (Wheatcroft) to 20 million (Steven Rosefielde).

**uninterrupted week** (also known as the ‘continuous work week’). The uninterrupted week meant four days of work, then one day off.

### Historical debate

Previously, some historians had estimated that the number of prisoners in forced-labour camps grew from about 30,000 in 1928 to about 2 million in 1932. By 1938, there were an estimated 8 million *zeks* – about 8% of the total workforce. However, since glasnost and the collapse of the Soviet Union, historians such as R. W. Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft have used newly available evidence and estimate that, by 1939, the total detained in such camps was just below 3 million. A similar debate surrounds the numbers who perished in the Gulag.

### Historical debate

There has been considerable debate amongst historians about the numbers who died during Stalin’s regime, and whether Stalin or Hitler was responsible for more deaths. Some have included the children who might have been born if the adults had not died in Stalin’s Russia. Do you think this is a legitimate method?



### Activity

Using the information in the chapters of this book which you have already read, and any other materials you have used, write a couple of paragraphs to explain the reasons why Stalin launched a 'second revolution from above'.

### Fact

Between 1941 and 1945, the Soviet Union suffered staggering losses; the USA was the only power to emerge richer from the war. According to the historian Chris Ward, by 1945, 25% of the USSR's pre-war capital stock had been destroyed. It was even worse in those western regions of the USSR that had been occupied by Axis forces – there, the figure was 66%, while, according to Robert Service, population losses were an incredible 25%. As the Axis forces retreated in 1944–45, they carried out systematic destruction – hardly a mine, factory or collective farm remained intact. In addition, over 1700 towns and over 70,000 villages were razed to the ground. One result of this deliberate destruction was that over 2.5 million civilians were forced to live in makeshift underground hovels. By May 1945, the Soviet economy was in turmoil and the Soviet people were traumatised.

The economic results of collectivisation are also an area of controversy, although historians are agreed that, after 1928, grain deliveries to the state increased – despite total agricultural production suffering a serious decline in the 1930s. One group of historians supports the orthodox standard model, which argues that, while agricultural output declined, collectivisation shifted resources and funds from rural to urban areas, and so allowed rapid industrialisation. Michael Ellman, for example, claims collectivisation provided food, labour and funds for the first Five-Year Plan; others argue that, had the NEP continued, industrial growth rates would have been much lower than those achieved by the Five-Year Plans. However, historians such as James Millar and Holland Hunter offer a revisionist argument, claiming that collectivisation was an economic disaster that made little contribution to the industrialisation programme.

## Economic reconstruction after the Second World War

During the Second World War, nearly 100,000 *kolkhozes*, 2000 *sovkhoses* and almost 5 million homes were partially or completely destroyed, and over 17 million cattle were lost. Railways, roads and bridges were also destroyed in large quantities. Retreating German armies stripped the occupied areas of all the industrial equipment and agricultural produce they could carry, and destroyed the rest. After the war, with the USA and Britain refusing to agree to massive reparations from Germany, it was clear that the Soviet Union would have to rely on its own resources for reconstruction.

### The fourth Five-Year Plan, 1946–50

Stalin outlined a 15-year programme for long-term recovery, and a fourth Five-Year Plan was announced in March 1946. Hopes were dashed that the pre-war drive for industrialisation and collectivisation might be eased, but the harsh labour laws and methods of the 1930s did not reappear. Emphasis was placed on re-building heavy industry and on reviving agriculture. However, civilian needs were also given priority – within nine months of the end of the war in Europe, over 2.5 million homeless people had been re-housed.

The first year of the plan was not very successful. However, once the surviving mines and factories had re-opened and war industries switched back to industrial production, the industrial revival took off. By 1950, Stalin was claiming that the targets set had already been exceeded and that production levels were equal to or higher than those for 1940. These were exaggerations, but a surprisingly rapid and extensive industrial recovery was being made.

### Agriculture

The revival of agriculture was less successful. Even before 1941, agricultural production had been insufficient, but the effects of war were disastrous. In many areas, the collective system had totally collapsed and many peasants had grabbed land to work as private plots and sold produce on the black market. In September 1946, Stalin announced that all previously collectivised land would be reclaimed, but the drought that hit many areas and the genuine lack of labour resulted in a poor harvest. The reduced number of farm animals also led to a drop in meat production. However, things began to improve after 1946. By 1950, state meat procurements were just about back to 1940 levels, although the 1950 harvest was still about 15% below the figure for 1940. Significantly, by 1950, almost half of agricultural production was still in the hands of the private sector, despite the existence of over 250,000 *kolkhozes*.

## The fifth Five-Year Plan, 1951–55

The fifth Five-Year Plan, which ran from 1951 to 1955, set relatively lower targets than the previous plan. The Cold War resulted in increasing amounts of state funds going to the defence industry. Despite this, tremendous improvements had been made by the time of Stalin's death in 1953. Rationing had ended in 1947, and real wages (which by 1947 were only about 60% of 1940 levels) began to rise steadily from 1948; by 1952, they had surpassed the 1940 levels.

## What was the position of women in Stalin's Russia?

There were fundamental differences between fascism/Nazism and Marxism/communism over the emancipation and role of women in society.

In 1926, a new Family Code consolidated earlier rights (see Fact box, right), and also gave women in 'common law' marriages the same rights as those in registered marriages. In Muslim regions, where feudal forms of social structure remained, women were a subject class. The communists raised the minimum age of marriage in these regions to 16 (it was 18 in the European parts of Soviet Russia), and polygamy and bride money were banned. They also organised mass political activity, known as the *khudzhum*, to mobilise women to oppose traditional practices. At the same time, education was provided equally for both males and females. State nurseries and workplace crèches and canteens were provided to enable mothers to work outside the home.

However, under Stalin some of these reforms and benefits were reduced or removed. Fear of war was growing following Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933, and Soviet population growth was in decline. For these reasons, from 1935 Stalin decided on policies to promote 'traditional' family values in order to increase the Soviet population. Although most of the rights established by the 1926 Code remained intact, a new family law was introduced in 1936. This made divorce more difficult, with a rising fee for each divorce, and restricted abortion to those required for medical reasons only. In addition, in order to encourage bigger families and so raise the birthrate, tax exemptions were given to families with large numbers of children. From 1944, only registered marriages were recognised, children born outside marriage were no longer allowed to inherit property from their father, and divorce became even more difficult and expensive. During the Second World War, medals were awarded to mothers with large families and unmarried people were taxed more heavily.

However, women in particular benefited from new welfare reforms introduced under Stalin – a free health service, accident insurance at work, the expansion of kindergartens for working mothers with children, and paid holidays for many workers. Equal educational provision continued. Nonetheless, the provision of sufficient and adequate housing continued to be a problem.

In employment, women had traditionally been found mainly in agriculture, textiles and services. Their position improved considerably under the Bolsheviks, and even more so under Stalin's rule. Women were actively encouraged to play their part in the economic development of Soviet Russia, and all employment was thrown open to women, who had the same rights as men. By 1939, a third of all engineers and 79% of doctors were women.

### Fact

Before 1924, the Soviet government had tried to liberate women and establish equality between the genders. Steps were taken to weaken the traditional family, which was seen as contributing to the exploitation of women. Left-feminist Bolshevik leaders such as Alexandra Kollontai pushed hard for this, although Lenin's views were more conservative. Early reforms included free contraceptive advice. Abortion was legalised in 1920 and made available free on demand. Marriages were to be performed in brief civil ceremonies in register offices, and divorce was made much easier – all that was necessary was for one partner to request it.

### Fact

Many Muslim women removed their veils at mass meetings on International Women's Day, 1927. This continued in the following years and hundreds of women in traditional areas were raped and killed by male fundamentalists for 'outraging' Islamic customs.

### Fact

By 1934, the divorce rate in Moscow was 37% and there were over 150,000 abortions for every 57,000 live births. Population growth dropped and there was an increase in the number of abandoned children. Between 1923 and 1928, the population had grown by 4 million a year – in 1928, the rate of population growth had been 24%. But from 1928 to 1940, rates of population growth fell almost continuously.



Women learning to write as part of the literacy campaign, using the new Russian alphabet, imposed in the late 1920s

In 1928, the number of women listed as 'workers-employees' had been 2,795,000. By 1939, this had risen to just over 13 million. By 1933, women made up 33% of the industrial workforce, rising to 43% by 1940.

Despite the emphasis on family life during the 1930s, women of all ages continued to work. There were many women 'hero-workers' in the Stakhanovite movement, though in a smaller proportion than men; by 1936, a quarter of all female trade unionists were classified as workers who had exceeded their production targets. However, access to the higher administrative posts was unequal and the patriarchal tradition was still widespread in society, leaving many

working women with the bulk of household chores. Despite these realities, the attitude of the Stalinist state to women was very different from that in Nazi Germany. Nazis considered women to be inferior to men and thought they should be confined mainly to domestic concerns. Communists believed in total equality between the sexes in education, employment and the law.

### SOURCE C

Though women were restricted in their access to the highest jobs and had to cope with the pressures of running a household and a job, they were regarded as an integral element in the construction of the new community. Stalin's rhetorical claim in 1938 that 'Woman in our country has become a great might', if it still disguised the social reality of discrimination, it nonetheless exposed a priority very different from that of the Third Reich.

Overy, R. 2004. *The Dictators: Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia*. London, UK. Allen Lane/Penguin Books. p. 260.

## What were Stalin's policies towards religion and ethnic minorities?

### Religion

Under the tsars, the Russian Orthodox Church had been the national Church of the empire. As Marxists, the Bolsheviks had always seen religion and the



Churches as aspects of class-divided societies which tried to reconcile the lower classes to poverty, inequality and exploitation, and to uphold the privileges of the ruling classes. Marx described religion as ‘the opium of the people.’

After the November Revolution, the Bolsheviks did not see religion as a threat – freedom of religion was allowed and churches were not closed. However, lands owned by the Churches were confiscated, and Church and state legally separated. In addition, registration of births, marriages and deaths became secular rather than religious. In 1921, the giving of religious instruction to those under 18 was banned and anti-religious campaigns were allowed. However, in 1927, the Orthodox Church was granted official recognition in return for promises to stay out of politics and to be loyal to the Soviet regime.

Then, in 1928, Stalin began a vigorous anti-religious campaign, involving the closure or confiscation of places of religious worship. Church bells were melted down into scrap metal for use in the new blast furnaces. By the time of the Nazi invasion in 1941, nearly 40,000 Christian churches and 25,000 Muslim mosques had been closed down and converted into schools, cinemas, clubs, warehouses and grain stores, or Museums of Scientific Atheism.

In 1929, worship was restricted to ‘registered congregations’, and the 1936 Constitution made pro-religious propaganda (such as study groups and Bible circles) a crime. This particularly hit the various Protestant sects, especially evangelical groups such as the Baptists, many of which were seen as having links to religious groups abroad. In 1930, Church leaders were banned from conducting religious services – those who resisted were arrested and imprisoned. Many thousands of Church leaders and priests were sent to the Gulag, or even killed. In 1932, a new ‘uninterrupted work week’ was introduced, partly to prevent church attendance.

The anti-religion drive spread to cover Buddhism and the Armenian and Georgian Churches, as well as Islam. In the Islamic republics of the USSR, **Sharia courts** were abolished; the frequency of ritual prayers, fasts and feasts (which interfered with the working day) was reduced; Muslim women were granted equality and wearing the veil was forbidden. In 1935, pilgrimages to Mecca were made illegal.

However, religious belief and worship persisted – the 1937 census showed that 57% of the population still defined themselves as believers.

Stalin’s attitude to religion was variable. In the 1936 Constitution, priests regained the right to vote (which they had lost in 1918); in 1937, while the central authority of the Orthodox Church was recognised, 50 bishops were imprisoned or shot for counter-revolutionary activities. Then, during the Second World War, Stalin removed many restrictions on the Orthodox Church. In 1943, the post of patriarch or head of the Russian Orthodox Church (which had disappeared in 1925) was re-established as part of the new Soviet patriotism.

Stalin also allowed the re-opening of churches – by 1947, about 20,000 existed, along with 67 monastic houses. Although it had some aspects of a state–Church concordat, this accommodation had its limits. In 1944, Stalin revived anti-religious propaganda once a Soviet victory seemed certain. While Orthodox priests and congregations were still kept under observation, Protestants and Catholics continued to suffer more severe persecution, especially in Ukraine and the Baltic republics re-annexed in 1940.

**Fact**

In 1923, the League of the Godless (known as the League of Militant Atheists from 1929) was set up to turn people against all religion. By 1933, it had over 5.5 million members.

**Fact**

The 1936 Constitution was often known as the Stalin Constitution. It claimed the Soviet Union was socialist and listed various individual rights, but political freedoms were not honoured.

**Sharia courts**

These are the courts that apply Sharia law in most Muslim societies, based on a combination of sources, including the Qu’ran, the teachings of Mohammed and rulings by Islamic scholars. The Bolsheviks were mainly opposed to this as they saw Sharia law as oppressing women.



A front cover of *Bezbozhnik* ("The Godless"), an anti-religious magazine published in Moscow in the 1920s and 1930s; it shows the Church and religion keeping the Russian people in superstition and ignorance

**Great Russian chauvinism** This term refers to a form of nationalism associated with Imperial Russia, whereby the non-European parts of the empire were forced to adopt European Russian language and culture. After 1917, Stalin increasingly took this approach – leading to a clash with Lenin over the 'national question', shortly before he died.

### Ethnic minorities

Tsarist Russia had been a multi-national empire, with Slavonic groups in the western and central European parts and mainly Muslim and Asiatic groups in the central and eastern areas. After the 1917 Revolution, the Bolsheviks campaigned against Slav and **Great Russian chauvinism**. Native languages were tolerated and even encouraged through literacy campaigns, and a degree of self-determination was allowed. The early Communist Party allowed all the major nationalities – including Soviet Jews – to have separate party sections.

However, this changed in the 1930s under Stalin. Once he had decided on his 'revolution', Stalin's desire for central control led to greater assimilation of the various national groups, in order to achieve a 'Soviet' identity. Many historians see Stalin's policies as those of a Great Russian nationalist. For example, Russification of education was accompanied during the 1930s and 1940s by a clear policy of equating Soviet patriotism with Great Russian nationalism. Russian became the official language.

By 1936, Stalin had divided central Asia into five separate republics, in order to weaken any pan-Turkic loyalties (many Turkic people wanted to join together in one state). According to Ward, a semi-colonial relationship developed between Moscow and these republics. According to some Soviet calculations published under Gorbachev in the late 1980s, almost 3.3 million non-Russians were deported to special settlements in the 1930s and 1940s, while a vigorous policy against Soviet Jews was also followed.

However, Richard Overy states that Stalin was not a Russian nationalist, suggesting that his policies were political and strategic rather than ethnic or racial. In the face of growing threats from Japan and Nazi Germany, Stalin was trying to construct a Soviet patriotism to unite all nationalities in a common commitment to building socialism and defending the Soviet 'motherland'. Stalin's actions were directed against what he saw as a reactionary nationalism (i.e. anti-socialist and anti-Soviet). Many of the resettlements were due to the fear – and later the results – of war. For example, national groups living on the Soviet borders were moved if they shared ethnic origins with potential enemies.

Immediately after the Second World War, there were more violent measures against ethnic groups accused of collaborating with the Nazi invaders. Thousands were imprisoned or resettled in areas far from their original homes. However, this declined after 1945.

## Jews

Before 1917, there were 5 million Jews in Russia. They suffered considerable persecution under the tsars. As a result of this persecution, Russian Jews were the first to develop **Zionism**.

In 1917, all anti-Semitic laws were abolished. Many of the early Bolshevik leaders (such as Trotsky) were Jews themselves. However, in common with their attitudes to the Christian and Islamic religions, the Bolsheviks had opposed the activities of Jewish religious leaders and Zionists. Hence, Yiddish was an acceptable language; Hebrew – because of its religious connotations – was not.

Under Stalin, between 1926 and 1931, the number of Jewish workers in industry more than doubled and, by 1939, 77% of Jewish workers were wage earners in industry and offices. Thus hopes for rapid and full integration and assimilation were high. Nonetheless, anti-Jewish prejudices began to re-emerge in some sections of the population – especially in rural areas – in the campaigns against 'subversives' and 'saboteurs' during the purges. However, it is important to note that the Jews arrested in the 1930s were arrested – like Russians and other non-Russians – as suspected counter-revolutionaries or reactionary nationalists, rather than as Jews. In fact, in the Gulag population of the late 1930s, Jews were actually under-represented.

**Zionism** This term refers to a movement for the re-establishment of a Jewish nation. Because of persecution throughout Europe, a minority of Jewish leaders during the 19th century came to believe that Jews should have their own state. At first, these Zionists considered several possible locations, including parts of Africa and Latin America; eventually, they decided on Palestine. Between 1881 and 1891, over 10,000 Jews from all over the world settled there. Soviet Jews supporting Zionism were seen as disloyal.



In 1926, Soviet Jews were granted a special 'national homeland' settlement in part of the far eastern region; in 1934, this became an autonomous republic – but only about 50,000 settled there. In 1939–40, the USSR gained an extra 2 million Jews by incorporating the east of Poland and the Baltic republics – Zionism was especially strong in these areas. This, and the Nazi invasion of 1941, led to strong campaigns against Zionism – thousands of rabbis and community leaders were arrested.

Those Soviet Jews who survived the Nazi death squads and were part of the intelligentsia suffered from some persecution after the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948. They were called 'Zionists' and 'rootless cosmopolitans', and emigration to Israel was banned. Following accusations that Jewish doctors in the Kremlin were planning a coup, several Jewish academic and cultural figures were sacked from positions of responsibility and several were arrested. Rumours began to circulate that Stalin intended to deport all Jews to the 'national homeland' in the far east of the USSR. Just before the 'unmasking' of the so-called Doctors' Plot, 26 were executed. This persecution ended with the death of Stalin in 1953 – although discrimination against Zionists continued because of their alleged links to and support for Israel.

**Fact**

That Stalin's regime kept racism in check is illustrated by the thousands of Ukrainians who, once removed from Soviet control after the Nazi invasion, eagerly co-operated with the SS and participated in the round-up and murder of Ukrainian Jews.

However, such policies were essentially anti-Zionist rather than anti-Semitic as far as Stalin and the rest of the government were concerned. Racism and anti-Semitism clearly existed against Jews and between other ethnic groups, but the Soviet state was strongly against all forms of overt or violent racial discrimination. Communists – unlike the Nazi Party in Germany – believed all races were equal and welcomed inter-marriage as a way of assimilating the different national and ethnic groups. Hence those policies that affected many Jews under Stalin were politically, not biologically, motivated, and were not intended to be genocidal.

## **What impact did Stalinism have on education, young people and the arts?**

### **Education**

One aspect of the crusade against religion was the spread of state education. The early Bolsheviks realised that an educated workforce was vital if they were to create a modern socialist industrial society – education was thus seen as a priority in providing the skilled workers needed for industrial and technological expansion. Mass provision of primary education – with equal opportunity for all – had been their first aim, in order to overcome the high illiteracy rate that was inherited from tsarist Russia. Education was made free, comprehensive and co-educational. At first, the Commissariat of the Enlightenment, which organised education, tried to encourage individuality and creativity; there was little political restriction on work in science and the arts; and physical punishment was banned.

Under Stalin, the provision of secondary and higher education expanded. In 1927, the 15th Party Congress greatly increased expenditure on education. As a result, primary and secondary schooling grew immensely – from 7.9 million students in 118,558 schools to 9.7 million in 166,275 schools by 1933. By 1939, illiteracy had been almost eradicated: 94% of those aged 9–49 in towns could

read and write; in rural areas, the figure was 86%. The proportion of working-class students in higher technical education doubled after 1928 to about 62% as a result of a class-quota system that operated until 1935; thereafter, the percentage dropped to about 45%. However, this was still a marked improvement on pre-1917 Russia.

## Young people

From the beginning, the early communists wanted to influence and recruit young people. In 1918, they formed a communist youth organisation. At first this was radical and, unlike Nazi youth organisations (see pages 101–02), largely independent of the adult party. Age of entry was 15 (reduced to 14 in 1949) and membership continued until 21. However, membership was not compulsory. Again unlike the Nazi youth movements, entry was closely controlled: youths had to be sponsored by an adult communist. In the 1920s, a junior organisation was set up for those aged 10 to 15: this was known as the Pioneers. By the 1940s, most children of school age belonged to this organisation.

During the power struggle in the 1920s, the radicalism and independence of the youth movement was ended, as many sections tended to support Trotsky and the Opposition. In 1926, it became the Communist Union of Youth (or **Komsomol**). In 1939, it was directly affiliated to the party. Membership rose quickly from 4 million to 9 million by 1939, and to 16 million by the time of Stalin's death in 1953.

As in Nazi Germany, there was a militaristic element to some Komsomol activities, with an emphasis on national service, but unlike in Nazi Germany, this included girls as well as boys. In fact, all students in universities, higher and middle schools had to do some military training.

Stalin's main aim concerning young people was to ensure that future workers would be skilled enough to play their part in Russia's industrial and scientific development. From the early 1930s, Stalin insisted that education and school life became more strict. Thus the libertarian trends of the 1920s were reversed: for example, school uniforms, report cards and test results were reintroduced, and teaching became more formal. In 1943, co-education in urban areas was replaced with single-sex schools.

Education was specifically geared to the needs of the state, as well as being designed to make all citizens educated and cultured. One aim was the creation of a new 'socialist citizen' who accepted collectivist rather than individualistic ideals. Later, as fear of war increased, nationalism was stressed in history teaching, with tsars such as Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great being referred to as national heroes. In order to ensure that he could control what people were taught and thought, Stalin had teachers and university lecturers arrested if they were suspected of opposing such principles.

However, as in Nazi Germany, there were examples of youth lifestyle rebellion. Mostly, such young people opted out by listening to forbidden music (especially jazz) or simply avoiding Komsomol activities. There were many small, secret youth organisations in the Soviet Union before 1941, and again after 1945. However, open political revolt was rare, and all rebels were quickly rounded up by state security.

**Komsomol** This is the Communist Union of Youth, set up for young people aged 18–28. It provided volunteers for various party programmes and policies, and also assisted the police and the Red Army. Many went on to join the Communist Party as full members.

### Fact

Two examples of secret youth organisations were the Enlightened Communist Youth and the Communist Party of Youth. In 1945, the Enlightened Communist Youth claimed they were a better kind of communist, while in 1948 the unofficial Communist Party of Youth discussed political issues outside those permitted by the state.

## Culture

During the early 1920s, there had been a flourishing of modern art. Lenin and Trotsky were just two of the Bolshevik leaders who supported avant-garde artists. They tended to let people write what and how they liked – provided it was not overtly ‘counter-revolutionary’. However, under Stalin, state control was tightened – all writers had to belong to the Union of Soviet Writers and to write about aspects deemed compatible with ‘socialist realism’. If you were not a member, your works would not be published. This affected newspapers, magazines, novels, poems and plays – all of which had to show support of Stalin, the Communist Party and Soviet Russia, and to praise ordinary workers, or show peasants as happy with their lives on the new collective farms. As the 1930s progressed, and fears of war increased, nationalism became another theme that writers and artists were expected to portray favourably.

These controls applied to all creative artists – including musicians, film makers, painters and sculptors. All works of art had to show the progress and successes achieved under Stalin and communism. Those that didn’t were censored, and many artists were denied work opportunities, or ended up in the labour camps of the Gulag.

## End of unit activities

- 1 Carry out some research into the economic and human impact of Stalin’s agricultural policies. Then write a couple of paragraphs to summarise the different estimates of the number of deaths resulting from forced collectivisation, and list the ways in which different historians have disputed the various calculations.
- 2 In pairs, carry out further research into the role and status of women in Stalin’s Russia. Then present your findings in the form of two charts – one to show how the lives of women improved during his rule, and another to highlight the ways in which women experienced a worse life than during the early 1920s.
- 3 Find out more about the experiences of religious groups in the period 1928–41. Then draw up a list of the main religious groups, giving details of their treatment, and highlighting any similarities and differences. Finally, make an assessment of the success of Stalin’s policies against religion.
- 4 Carry out an investigation into the ways in which ethnic and national minorities were treated under Stalin. Then produce two arguments – one for and one against – the proposition that ‘The Stalinist state was not a racist state’.



### Theory of knowledge

#### History and science

What are the similarities and differences between the methods used by historians and scientists to establish the ‘truth’? Is scientific knowledge always more ‘objective’ than historical knowledge?



# End of chapter activities

## Paper 1 exam practice

### Question

What, according to Source A below, were Stalin's advantages over his rivals in the period 1924–29?  
[2 marks]

### Skill

Comprehension of a source

#### SOURCE A

What these posts [general secretary of the Communist Party and chair of its Control Commission] gave him was the power of patronage, the right to appoint individuals to official positions in the party and government. He used this power to place his own supporters in key positions. Since they then owed their place to him (he fired as well as hired), Stalin could count on their support in the voting of various committees ... Whatever the ability of individuals who opposed him or the strengths of their arguments, he could always out-vote them. Stalin's advantages over his rivals had been increased ... by the 'Lenin Enrolment' [an expansion of party membership]. The new members were poorly educated and politically unsophisticated but they understood that the privileges that came with party membership depended on their being loyal to those who admitted them. They provided the general secretary with a reliable body of votes in the various party committees at local and central level.

Lynch, M. 1990. *Stalin and Khrushchev: The USSR 1924–64*. London, UK. Hodder Arnold H&S.

### Examiner's tips

Comprehension questions are the most straightforward questions you will face in Paper 1. They simply require you to understand a source *and* extract two or three relevant points that relate to the particular question.

As only 2 marks are available for this question, make sure you do not waste valuable exam time that should be spent on the higher scoring questions by writing a long answer here. All that is needed are a couple of brief sentences, giving the necessary information to show that you have understood the message of the source. Basically, try to give one piece of information for each of the marks available for the question.

## Common mistakes

When asked to show your comprehension/understanding of a particular source, make sure you do not comment on the wrong source. Mistakes like this are made every year. Remember, every mark is important for your final grade.

## Simplified markscheme

For **each item of relevant/correct information** identified, award 1 mark – up to a **maximum of 2 marks**.

## Student answer



## Examiner's comments

The candidate has selected **one** relevant and explicit piece of information from the source that clearly identifies one important advantage Stalin had over his rivals – this is enough to gain 1 mark. However, as no other point/advantage has been identified, this candidate fails to gain the other mark available.

## Activity

Look again at the source and the student answer above. Now try to identify **one** other piece of information from the source, and try to make an overall comment about the source's message – this will allow you to obtain the other mark available for this question.

## Summary activities

- 1 Produce eight sets of revision cards – one for each of the following topics: origins and rise of Stalin; ideology and the nature of Stalin's state; establishment and consolidation of Stalin's rule; Stalin's domestic policies – industry; agriculture; women; religion and ethnic minorities; and education, young people and the arts – covering (via bullet points) the main policies and developments in the period 1928 to 1953. To do this, use the information from this chapter and any other resources available to you.
- 2 Make sure you have attempted all the various questions that appear in the margins – many of these are designed to help you understand key events and turning points. There are also questions designed to develop your skills in dealing with Paper 1-type questions – such as comprehension of sources, and assessing sources for their value and limitations for historians. Remember – to do these sorts of questions, you will need to look at aspects such as origin, nature and possible purpose. Don't forget – even if a source has many limitations, it can still be valuable for a historian.

**Ideology and the nature of Stalin's state**

**Origins and rise of Stalin**

**Establishment and consolidation of Stalin's rule**

**Stalin's domestic policies**

**Industry**

**Stalin's domestic policies**

**Agriculture**

**Stalin's domestic policies**

**Women**

**Stalin's domestic policies**

**Religion and ethnic minorities**

**Stalin's domestic policies**

**Education, young people and the arts**



## Paper 2 practice questions

- 1 Explain why Stalin was able to defeat his main opponents and succeed in the power struggle by 1929.
- 2 'It was the mistakes of his opponents, not his charisma and abilities, that enabled Stalin to rise to power.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?
- 3 How far was the doctrine of 'socialism in one country' the main reason why Stalin won the power struggle during the 1920s?
- 4 'The Soviet Union was a one-man, not a one-party, dictatorship in the period 1929–53.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?
- 5 Examine and evaluate Stalin's use of terror during the 1930s in establishing and maintaining his regime in the USSR.
- 6 To what extent were Stalin's economic policies successful in modernising the Soviet Union?

## Further reading

Try reading the relevant chapters/sections of the following books:

- Deutscher, I. 1970. *The Prophet Unarmed: Trotsky 1921–1929*. Oxford, UK. Oxford University Press.
- Fitzpatrick, S. 1994. *The Russian Revolution*. Oxford, UK. Oxford University Press.
- Laqueur, W. 1990. *Stalin: The Glasnost Revelations*. New York, USA. Scribner.
- Lee, S. 1987. *The European Dictatorships, 1918–1945*. London, UK. Routledge.
- Lewin, M. 2005. *The Soviet Century*. London, UK. Verso.
- McCauley, M. 1981. *The Soviet Union Since 1917*. London, UK. Longman.
- McCauley, M. 1995. *Stalin and Stalinism*. London, UK. Longman.
- Medvedev, R. A. 1971. *Let History Judge: The Origins and Consequences of Stalinism*. London, UK. Macmillan.
- Overy, R. 2004. *The Dictators: Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia*. London, UK. Allen Lane/Penguin Books.
- Service, R. 1997. *A History of Twentieth-Century Russia*. London, UK. Allen Lane/Penguin Books.
- Service, R. 2004. *Stalin: A Biography*. London, UK. Pan.
- Volkogonov, D. (trans. Shukman, H.). 1991. *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy*. New York, USA. Grove Weidenfeld.
- Ward, C. 1993. *Stalin's Russia*, London, UK. Hodder Education.
- Williams, B. 1997. *Lenin*. London, UK. Longman.
- Wood, A. *Stalin and Stalinism*, London, UK. Routledge.



# 3 Hitler and Nazi Germany

## 1 Origins and rise, 1918–33

### Key questions

- How did the political circumstances of Germany after 1918 contribute to the rise of Nazism?
- What part was played by the economic conditions of the 1919–29 period?
- How did the Nazi movement develop between 1919 and 1929?
- How far did the circumstances of 1929–33 open the way for Hitler's rise to power?

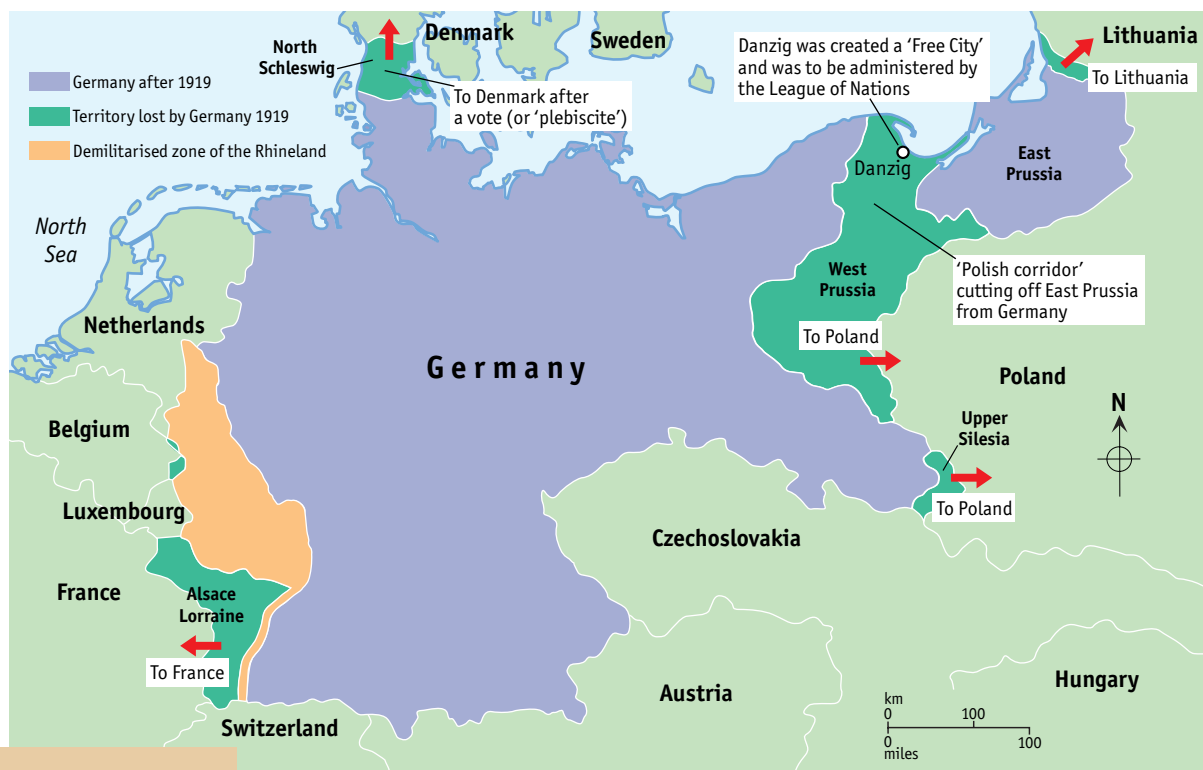
### Overview

- The Weimar Republic, which was set up in 1919, proved to be politically weak. It faced both left-wing communist rebellion and right-wing conservative and nationalist opposition, focused on the humiliating peace treaty, the Treaty of Versailles.
- Economic conditions also proved unfavourable. When the French and Belgians invaded the Ruhr in 1923, hyperinflation resulted, ruining middle-class savings. When US loans were withdrawn, following the Wall Street Crash of 1929, Germany fell into depression.
- Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party thrived on the weaknesses of the Weimar Republic. Promises to restore German prosperity, provide jobs and 'smash' the Treaty of Versailles proved to be what German voters wanted to hear.
- In March 1930, the country's last democratic government – the 'Grand Coalition' – collapsed and subsequent chancellors relied on the president's right to issue decrees (under article 48 of the Weimar Constitution). By July 1932, the Nazis were the largest party in the Reichstag (parliament).
- President Paul von Hindenburg was persuaded to appoint Hitler as chancellor on 30 January 1933 following 'backstairs intrigue', which Hitler had worked to his own advantage.
- The Reichstag Fire permitted a further law that allowed the imprisonment of communists and helped to increase support for the Nazis in the March 1933 elections. Hitler forced through an Enabling Act, which gave him dictatorial powers over Germany.

### Timeline

- 1918 Nov:** Germany is defeated in First World War; a republic is declared
- 1919 Jun:** Weimar Republic is forced to accept the harsh Treaty of Versailles
- 1923 Jan:** French and Belgian troops invade the Ruhr; massive inflation results
- Nov:** Hitler attempts the Munich Putsch and fails
- 1924 Feb:** Hitler is imprisoned in Landsberg Fortress (and released early in December)
- 1929 Oct:** Wall Street Crash leads to unemployment in Germany
- 1930 Mar:** Müller's Grand Coalition collapses and Brüning becomes chancellor
- Sep:** Nazis win 107 seats in elections (18.3% of the vote)
- 1932 Feb:** unemployment reaches 6 million
- Apr:** Hindenburg beats Hitler in presidential elections
- Jun:** von Papen replaces Brüning as chancellor
- Jul:** Nazis win 230 Reichstag seats becoming the largest single party
- Nov:** Nazis win 196 Reichstag seats – a sign that their support has passed its peak
- Dec:** von Schleicher becomes chancellor
- 1933 Jan:** Hitler becomes chancellor
- Feb:** Reichstag Fire is blamed on the communists
- Mar:** Nazis win 288 Reichstag seats; Enabling Act gives Hitler dictatorial powers for four years





### Friedrich Ebert (1871–1925)

Friedrich Ebert was a socialist leader who took over government in November 1918 after the Kaiser's abdication. As elected president of the Weimar Republic from February 1919, he faced political instability, the humiliation of the Treaty of Versailles, economic problems resulting from the war, the invasion of the Ruhr and hyperinflation.



**Treaty of Versailles** This was the peace treaty imposed on Germany after the First World War by the victorious allies – Britain, France and the USA.

*The impact of the Treaty of Versailles on the borders of Germany*

## How did the political circumstances of Germany after 1918 contribute to the rise of Nazism?

Before the First World War, Germany had been ruled by the authoritarian Kaiser Wilhelm II. Although the German constitution of 1871 had made provision for a Reichstag (elected parliament), this had never been allowed to develop effectively, causing a good deal of political tension. It was partly to deflect attention away from political troubles that the Kaiser had pursued an ambitious foreign policy, which in turn led to the First World War in 1914.

The war destroyed the imperial regime. As defeat threatened in 1918, the Kaiser tried to install a more liberal government. However, the country descended into chaos with strikes and mutinies. The Kaiser abdicated on 9 November 1918 and a republic was declared.

A new socialist government under **Friedrich Ebert** signed an armistice to end the war in November 1918 and, in January 1919, a new democratic constitution was drawn up in the town of Weimar. The armistice came as a shock to the Germans, who had been encouraged to believe that their country would be victorious. Nationalists claimed that the German army had been 'stabbed in the back' by politicians who made peace when the army could have fought on.

The **Treaty of Versailles** in June 1919 caused further anger. Germany lost 13% of its territory in Europe, plus all of its colonies. It was left with severely restricted armed forces, a demilitarised Rhineland in the west and a corridor of land given to Poland, dividing East Prussia from the rest of Germany. By forcing the



Germans to accept war guilt and binding them to pay reparations (finally fixed at £6.6 billion in 1921), the humiliation of Germany seemed complete. Although **self-determination** was applied to other parts of Europe, Germany was left with many ethnic Germans living outside its borders and **Anschluss** (union) with Austria was expressly forbidden.

The new constitution also contained some significant weaknesses, which were to cause problems in later years. The voting system was based on **proportional representation**. This produced coalition governments and allowed small parties to gain representation in the Reichstag. Constant governmental changes (with 14 coalitions between February 1919 and June 1928) helped weaken what support there had been for democratic government.

The constitution also gave considerable power to the president, who was to be elected every seven years. The president appointed the chancellor (who ran the government) and, under article 48 of the Weimar Constitution, had the power to rule by decree in an emergency. This power was used responsibly by the first president, Ebert, but the second, the old First World War general Paul von Hindenburg (1925–1934), chose chancellors from 1930 who could not command a majority in the Reichstag and allowed article 48 to be used to pass measures for which these chancellors could not get Reichstag approval.

The political weaknesses of the Weimar Republic left it exposed to continual political threats in its early years. The **Spartacus League** (*Spartakusbund*), an extreme left-wing socialist movement, attempted to overthrow the Republic in January 1919. There was also trouble from communists in the Ruhr in March 1920 and in 1923 in Saxony and Thuringia.

Similarly, the right-wing **conservative élite** was lukewarm, if not hostile, towards the Republic. German conservatism and nationalism remained strong and most ex-army officers, judges, senior civil servants and university professors resented the new style of parliamentary rule. This continuation of nationalist values favoured the development of right-wing extremism, of which Nazism was to be one example, in Germany in this period.

*Street fighting in Berlin between government troops and the Spartacus League, during the Spartacist uprising, January 1919*



**self-determination** This term refers to the right of racial groups to be settled in a country of their own race and ruled by their own people.

**Anschluss** This is the term used to refer to the joining together of Austria and Germany. Hitler carried this out in 1938 to create the greater German Reich (state).

**proportional representation** Under this system of elections, electors vote for a party rather than a candidate. Parties can then choose deputies from a list, according to the number of votes cast for that party. The number of deputies in the Reichstag would therefore correspond proportionately to the number of votes that party received in the country as a whole.

**Spartacus League** Led by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, the Spartacus League was a radical socialist group. Its members were the founders of the KPD (German Communist Party), which was set up at a congress in Berlin held from 30 December 1918 to 1 January 1919. The group remained committed to violent revolution until about 1923, whereafter it contested Reichstag elections with some success. The KPD and SPD (Social Democratic Party) refused to work together, which was one factor that allowed the Nazis to come to power.

**conservative élite** This is the name given to traditionally right-wing aristocratic landowners, industrialists, senior army officers, judges and civil servants.

**SOURCE A**

In the eyes of the right, the Republic was associated with the surrender, a shameful and deliberate act of treachery, and the peace treaty, a further act of betrayal. The fact that the new republican institutions were democratic added to the hostility. It was openly said that loyalty to the fatherland required disloyalty to the Republic.

Bullock, A. 1962 (rev. edn). *Hitler, A Study in Tyranny*. Harmondsworth, UK. Penguin Books. pp. 58–59.

**Question**

Why was the Weimar Republic regarded as weak between 1919 and 1924?

**putsch** an attempt to overthrow the state.

**Freikorps** These were volunteer groups of demobilised soldiers who continued to fight for right-wing values.

German nationalists showed their contempt for the Republic in the military Kapp **Putsch** of March 1920 and the ‘White Terror’ of 1920–22, when 400 political murders occurred, many committed by the **Freikorps**. Hitler’s Beer Hall Putsch of November 1923, the first attempt of the Nazi Party to show its strength (see page 67), was yet another incident in this long line of political challenges. Although a failure, it reinforced the picture of the Weimar Republic as a struggling parliamentary democracy.

The Republic enjoyed a more stable period between 1924 and 1929, when moderate parties made gains. From 1928 to 1930, a ‘Grand Coalition’ commanded over 60% of the seats in the Reichstag. However, political problems had been submerged, rather than gone away. From 1929, as economic problems worsened, the parties of the Reichstag became so divided that in 1930 the Grand Coalition collapsed, opening the way for the total breakdown of the democracy.

**What part was played by the economic conditions of the 1919–29 period?**

**reparations** This term refers to a fine for war damage that was payable to Germany’s former enemies.

**passive resistance** This term refers to a refusal to work – in the Ruhr, for example, a refusal to work for the occupying troops of France and Belgium.

**hyperinflation** This term is used to describe a very high rate of inflation, when money is so devalued that prices rise constantly and excessive amounts are needed to buy everyday items. Effectively, the currency becomes worthless.

The costs of war and the impact of the wartime blockade, compounded by the Treaty of Versailles, undermined the German economy. Returning soldiers could not find work and valuable industrial land was lost. In 1923, when Germany could not meet the impossibly heavy demands for **reparations** set by the victorious allies in 1921, the French and Belgians occupied the Ruhr.

To pay welfare assistance to workers, who were ordered to meet the invasion of the Ruhr with **passive resistance**, the government over-printed paper money. This, plus the loss of production, provoked **hyperinflation**. Although hyperinflation was cured by a new currency in 1924, the loss of value in savings, which hit middle-class families particularly hard, caused lasting damage. Furthermore, a shortage of domestic investment, which forced the government to look for US loans under the 1924 Dawes Plan, was to place the economy in a dangerously dependent position.

Although the years 1925–29 saw some improvements, agriculture never shared in the boom. Prices remained low as farmers faced competition from Canada and the USA. However, it was the Wall Street Crash of October 1929 that once again sent the economy into crisis as the USA recalled its loans. This created the desperate economic conditions in which democracy broke down and the Nazis were able to rise to power.

## How did the Nazi movement develop between 1919 and 1929?

The **NSDAP** (National Socialist German Workers' Party) or Nazi Party was just one of a number of right-wing political opposition groups that developed in Germany in the early years of the Weimar Republic. Founded in Munich as the *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* or DAP (German Workers' Party) in 1919 by Anton Drexler, the party soon fell under the spell of **Adolf Hitler**.

After the war, Hitler worked as an army informant, 'spying' on left-wing political groups for the authorities. On 12 September 1919, he investigated Drexler's party. He was attracted by its philosophy and decided to join. By 1 April 1920, Hitler had left the army to become a full-time political agitator. He gave the party its new name, its drive and a new 25-point programme, combining nationalist, socialist, racist, anti-Semitic and anti-democratic ideas (see Unit 2). In July 1921, he became the party's chairman.

Since the Nazis refused to recognise the Weimar government, no candidates were put up for election before 1924, but the party steadily increased its membership and influence through the 1920s. In 1921, the SA (*Sturmabteilung* – originally a 'gymnastics and sports division', although it became a paramilitary force) was created and the *Völkischer Beobachter* (*People's Observer*) was established as a Nazi newspaper. Regional branches or *Gau* were established and, by the end of 1923, the party had 55,000 members, although this was still a tiny number compared with a national German electorate of 38 million.

The Nazis attracted ex-soldiers and members of the *Freikorps*, who supported the nationalist views of the party and seized on the opportunities it provided for jobs. It also attracted conservative lower middle-class workers, lower ranking Bavarian civil servants and students fired with desire for political change.

It was not until November 1923 that Hitler's name came to be known nationally when he attempted to seize control of the Bavarian government, as a preliminary to marching on Berlin. In 1922, Benito Mussolini had taken control in Italy through a 'March on Rome'. Hitler was eager to carry out a similar coup.

On 8 November 1923, Nazis interrupted a political meeting in a Munich beer cellar. Under duress, three right-wing Bavarian leaders, Gustav von Kahr, Otto von Lossow and Hans Ritter von Seisser, were persuaded to agree to Hitler's plan to march on Berlin and establish a new government. Immediately afterwards, however, Kahr contacted the police and army. On 9 November, Hitler and General Erich Ludendorff led a column of around 2000 armed Nazis through Munich. Shots were fired and Ludendorff was arrested. Hitler dislocated his shoulder when his companion was shot and both fell. Hitler escaped but was found and arrested on 11 November.

The Munich Putsch, or Beer Hall Putsch, failed, but it proved a propagandist success. At his trial for treason, Hitler claimed that his actions had been taken out of patriotic concern for his country. He was convicted of high treason, but he was only condemned to the minimum sentence of five years, thanks to a sympathetic right-wing judiciary.

Hitler actually served just nine months, at Landsberg Fortress, which according to the historian Ian Kershaw was 'more akin to a hotel'. He spent that period writing a semi-autobiographical book *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*) (see Unit 2).

**NSDAP** (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) This is the full name of the Nazi Party. Members were called 'Nazis' in the same way that the socialists were known as 'Sozis'. Nazi came from the NA of *National* and ZI of *sozialistische*.

### Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) Biography of early life

**1889** born in Branau, Austria, the son of a customs inspector

**1907** was refused admission to the Viennese Academy of Art

**1908** failed again to enter the Academy; lived rough in Vienna, painting scenes from postcards

**1913** moved to Munich in Bavaria, Germany

**1914** volunteered for military service and sent to the Western Front as a dispatch runner; became a corporal

**1918** was recovering from a poison gas attack when heard news of the armistice

**1919** returned to Munich and served in the army in an 'enlightenment project' to investigate new political groups



### Question

How successful was the Beer Hall Putsch?





Members of the SA during a training March outside Munich in 1923

**Fact**

Members of the SA were often called 'brownshirts' because of the colour of their uniforms. It was by chance that the SA adopted a brown uniform. A shipment of brown uniforms, intended for German troops in Africa, fell into Nazi hands and the historic decision was made to clothe them this way.

**golden years** This term refers to the period between 1925 and 1929 when the Weimar economy flourished with the help of US loans.

After 1924, the Nazi Party changed tactics, tightening party discipline and contesting Reichstag elections. Hitler exerted the *Führerprinzip* (see pages 74–75), demanding obedience because 'he knew best'. The SS (*Schützstaffel*) was set up in 1925–26 as Hitler's personal bodyguard and the SA was refounded in 1926, with its distinctive brown uniforms.

New party organisations were also created, for women, students, young people and teachers. These helped the party to direct its appeal to a wide spectrum of society and to make more people and institutions aware of Nazism. Although the relative prosperity of 1925–29 did not help, Nazis pursued some energetic recruitment, concentrating on the middle class and the farmers of northern Germany who did not benefit from Weimar's **'golden years'**. This yielded some success, although the results of the elections of May 1928 were disappointing – the Nazis won only 12 seats (2.6% of the vote).

However, Hitler gained more publicity by joining the DNVP (*Deutschnationale Volkspartei*, the right-wing German National People's Party) in campaigns against the 1929 Young Plan, which had been negotiated to ease the reparations burden. By December 1929, membership had risen to 178,000. Nonetheless, it would have been hard to predict at the end of 1929 that Hitler would become the German chancellor just over three years later.

## SOURCE B

No realist could have reckoned much to [the Nazis'] chances of winning power. For that, Hitler's only hope was a massive and comprehensive crisis of the state. He had no notion just how quickly events would turn to the party's advantage. But on 24 October 1929, Wall Street crashed. The crisis Hitler needed was about to envelop Germany.

Kershaw, I. 1998. *Hitler 1889–1936: Hubris*. London, UK. Allen Lane/Penguin Books. p. 311.

## How far did the circumstances of 1929–33 open the way for Hitler's rise to power?

The 1929–30 withdrawal of US loans and the collapse in the export market had catastrophic repercussions for Germany. The 'Grand Coalition', formed under Chancellor Müller in 1928, seemed powerless as unemployment soared from 2 million in 1929, to 4.5 million in 1931 and nearly 6 million in 1932.

Around a third of all Germans found themselves with no regular wages. This was fuel for extremist parties, such as the Nazis (and also the communists), who mocked the government's inaction and made wild promises that they held the key to future prosperity.

The Nazis played on their claim to be a 'national party' that would keep out communism, uphold law and order, return to traditional middle-class values and restore national strength. However, they had no specific formula to end the slump and their promises of full employment, subsidies to help German peasants and aid to small-scale traders remained vague.

With the break-up of the Grand Coalition in March 1930, there followed five Reichstag elections in three years. Chancellors Heinrich Brüning (March 1930–May 1932), Franz von Papen (June 1932–November 1932) and Kurt von Schleicher (December 1932–January 1933) struggled to rule without parliamentary majorities and were propped up by the use of the president's decree powers.

Meanwhile, the Nazis kept up the pressure with, according to the historian Alan Bullock, 'a display of energy, demand for discipline, sacrifice, action and not talk'. In the Reichstag elections of September 1930, the Nazis obtained 107 seats – a huge increase on its previous 12. Hitler also made capital out of the presidential elections of 1932 when he challenged von Hindenburg and forced a second vote.

In the Reichstag elections of July 1932, the Nazis won 230 seats and became the largest German party in the Reichstag. However, with just 37.3% of the vote, they had less than an outright majority and they were financially exhausted after two elections in quick succession. Hitler refused Hindenburg's offer of the vice-chancellorship, wanting only the 'top job', but he found it increasingly difficult to restrain the impatient SA, who believed that they should grasp power by revolution.

## Fact

Central to Nazism was the belief that the leader's 'will' was the source of all political authority. This *Führerprinzip* was cultivated even before Hitler became chancellor and could claim to be above the law. Hitler demanded unquestioning obedience. He was not prepared for others to challenge him – as the Strasser brothers tried to do in 1926 – nor was he prepared to bow to the will of the SA who pressed for a revolution in 1932–33, while he sought power by legal means.

## Fact

Between 1928 and 1932 the political parties became increasingly divided. On the left, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and communists (KPD) refused to work together. The formerly moderate Catholic Centre Party (*Zentrum*) became more right-wing. This left the moderate liberals without allies. The right-wing conservatives (DNVP) sought more authoritarian government and had some sympathy with the Nazis. Unable to agree on the necessary cuts needed after October 1929, the coalition broke up in March 1930.

## Fact

In the first round of the presidential elections, in March 1932, Hitler won 30.2% of the total votes cast and forced a second ballot. He visited 21 different towns by plane in a week and increased his share of the vote in the second round in April to 36.7%.

SOURCE C

On 8 August 1932, Joseph Goebbels wrote in his diary:

The air is full of presage. The whole party is ready to take over power. The SA down everyday tools to prepare for this. If things go well everything is alright. If they do not it will be an awful setback.

Bullock, A. 1962 (rev. edn). *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*. Harmondsworth, UK. Penguin Books. p. 218

Activity

Draw a horizontal timeline to illustrate the results of the Reichstag elections between September 1930 and November 1932. Beneath the line, add a few notes on each election to explain the significance of the result.

Another Reichstag election, in November 1932, saw Nazi support decline to 196 seats. This suggested that the Nazis' electoral fortunes had peaked. Joseph Goebbels, director of propaganda from 1929, commented, 'This year has brought us eternal ill luck. The past was sad, and the future looks dark and gloomy; all chances and hopes have quite disappeared.' Furthermore, the KPD, which had won 89 seats in July, increased their vote by 17% to obtain 100 seats in November. However, it was to the Nazis' advantage that the communists refused to cooperate with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) (who had 121 seats) and that the KPD's electoral victories and huge presence in the streets had the effect of frightening the conservative élite and encouraging them to turn to Hitler.

Chancellor von Papen found himself faced by a hostile Reichstag and even considered using the army to force its dismissal as a prelude to adopting a new German constitution. However, this course of action was opposed by von Schleicher, minister of defence, who feared civil war. Hindenburg tried to prop up von Papen's government but, when this proved impossible, he dismissed the chancellor and turned to von Schleicher to form a government. Von Schleicher became chancellor in December 1932.

Von Schleicher had rather optimistically hoped to be able to lure the more left-wing 'socialist' element of the Nazi Party, under Gregor Strasser, away from mainstream Nazism into a coalition with the SPD under his own control and, for a short time, a potential party split added to Hitler's anxieties. However, Hitler demanded and won 'total obedience' from his followers, and Strasser resigned. Von Papen, infuriated by von Schleicher's actions, was encouraged to look to Hitler as a potential ally in a Nazi-Nationalist coalition. The continuing difficulties faced by von Schleicher's government, whose refusal to increase tariffs on food imports had angered influential Prussian landowners, served to help Hitler's negotiations. By 28 January 1933, Hindenburg had no option but to dismiss von Schleicher and turn to von Papen once more. Both knew that a future government would have to include Hitler.

Both von Papen and Hindenburg were convinced, however, that the Nazis were in decline and that it was the right time to harness their energies. They believed the Nazi Party was still strong enough to counter the threat from the left, but that Hitler's position was too weak to threaten traditional élite rule. Consequently, they were prepared to offer Hitler the chancellorship, with just two Nazi cabinet posts for Wilhelm Frick and Hermann Goering, alongside nine nationalist ministers.



Hitler was thus summoned on 30 January 1933 to head a government with von Papen as his deputy. Hitler, Hindenburg and von Papen alike were content with their 'backstairs intrigue'. Von Papen believed that he had made a good deal and would be able to push Hitler 'into a corner' within two months. Hindenburg, too, had little idea as to what the consequences of his action would be. Only Hitler had a clear idea of where he was going.

Hitler called for immediate elections and mounted another massive propaganda campaign. He was helped by the Reichstag Fire on 27 February 1933, which gave him an excuse to blame the communists and ask Hindenburg to issue an emergency decree, 'For the Protection of People and State' (28 February). With the power to search, arrest and censor 'until further notice', the Nazis were able to remove opponents before the elections took place.

On 5 March 1933, the Nazis gained 43.9% of the total votes cast. While impressive, this left Hitler reliant on other parties to obtain the two-thirds majority needed to change the constitution. The conservative DNVP, which won 8%, offered support, but a deal had to be struck with the Catholic Centre Party, which had won 11.2%. This committed Nazism to protect the Church (see page 107). The emergency decree was also used to expel all communists from the Reichstag.

**Question**

What were the long-term and short-term factors that led to Hitler becoming chancellor in January 1933?

**Fact**

On 27 February 1933, the Reichstag building was burnt down. The Nazis claimed this was the work of a Dutch communist, Marinus van der Lubbe, acting on behalf of the KPD. However, there is no reliable evidence to prove this was the case. There has been speculation that Hitler or Goering and the SA provoked this incident as an excuse to act against their opponents. Almost 50 years later, the West German government pardoned van der Lubbe.

**The end of Weimar democracy**

Chancellors	Developments
 <p><b>Heinrich Brüning</b> March 1930–May 1932</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No majority in the Reichstag; relied on president's emergency decrees</li> <li>• Nazis became the second largest party with 18.3% of the vote in elections of September 1930</li> <li>• Government seemed weak and unable to control street violence although SA was banned in April 1932</li> <li>• Economic depression continued; proposed agrarian reforms angered the powerful Prussian landowners (Junkers) and Hindenburg; Brüning resigned</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Franz von Papen</b> June 1932–November 1932</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little Reichstag support and government formed from outside the Reichstag</li> <li>• Tried to gain Nazi support by lifting ban on SA (June 1932) – violence grew</li> <li>• Relied on presidential decrees and ended democratic government in Prussia</li> <li>• Nazis became largest party (37.3% of the vote) in July 1932; with communists, held over half the Reichstag seats</li> <li>• Nazis won 33.1% of the vote and communists 16.9% in November 1932; von Papen resigned</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Kurt von Schleicher</b> December 1932–January 1933</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persuaded Hindenburg to dismiss Brüning and von Papen but reluctant to be chancellor</li> <li>• Tried to ally with Gregor Strasser and 'socialist' Nazis, but Strasser refused</li> <li>• Relied on presidential decrees</li> <li>• Von Papen schemed against von Schleicher to get Hitler made chancellor with von Papen as vice chancellor; von Schleicher dismissed</li> </ul>

As the SA and SS whipped up support in the localities, in a piece of cleverly timed propaganda President Hindenburg was persuaded to stand alongside Hitler, in full military dress, at a ceremony of national reconciliation in Potsdam on 21 March 1933. Consequently, on 23 March, the Enabling Act was passed with only 94 SPD members voting against it. This was to provide the basis for Hitler's dictatorship. It virtually destroyed the power of the Reichstag by allowing the chancellor to issue laws without consultation for a period of four years.

### Question

What was the significance of the Enabling Act?

**Gleichschaltung** This refers to a co-ordination process whereby all German institutions were to conform to Nazi ideals.

### Historical debate

The historians A. J. P. Taylor and William Shirer linked the rise of Nazism to the aggressive nature of the 'new' German state forged by war in 1871. Karl Bracher emphasised the circumstances of Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. Marxist historians associate the rise of Nazism with capitalists' attempts to resist communism. More recently, Alan Bullock and Ian Kershaw have emphasised the personality of Hitler.



### Theory of knowledge

#### Historical determinism

Taylor has suggested that Hitler was a product of Germany's militaristic history and that the Germans never developed a democratic tradition because they preferred strong, authoritarian government – which Hitler continued. Is it possible to talk of 'national characteristics'? Can these account for, and perhaps excuse, a nation's actions?

It took Hitler just four months after the Enabling Act was passed to set up a single-party state. He was able to combine his legal powers and the threat of force to remove or Nazify those groups or institutions that might limit his power in a process known as **Gleichschaltung**. The constitution of 1919 was never formally abandoned and the Reichstag survived, but in the first six months of 1933, what lingering democracy there had been was destroyed. For further information on how Hitler consolidated his position, see Unit 3.

## End of unit activities

- 1 Make a diagram to illustrate why Hitler became chancellor of Germany in January 1933, using the following layout.

Long term	Short term	Catalyst	Specific event(s)

- 2 Find out more about those who voted for the Nazi Party in 1930–32. Research the level of support for the Nazis, explaining which aspects of Nazism each group found attractive and arrange your points under the following headings: working class; lower middle class (shopkeepers and office workers); upper middle class (businessmen, bankers and professionals); the élite (aristocracy, army officers, members of government); Protestants/Catholics; northern Germans/southern Germans; others.
- 3 Make a Powerpoint® presentation for your class displaying a variety of election posters used by the Nazis to win support before 1933.
- 4 Make a spider diagram to illustrate why parliamentary government collapsed in Germany in the years 1930–33.
- 5 Divide into two groups. One group should seek to support the view that Hitler's rise to power was inevitable in the context of Germany in 1918–33; the other should seek to support the view that there was nothing inevitable about the Nazis' rise (considering, for example, that the Weimar Republic could have survived or that power might equally well have gone to the communists). Each group should present its findings for a class debate.
- 6 What was the personal contribution of Adolf Hitler to the rise of Nazism? Make a four-column chart, with the headings, 'Personality', 'Leadership qualities', 'Communication skills' and 'Political strategy'. Under each heading, try to record as many points and examples as you can to support the importance of this attribute.



## 2 Ideology and the nature of the state

### Key questions

- To what extent was Nazi ideology rooted in the past?
- What did Hitler himself contribute to Nazi ideology?
- How important was the role of ideology in Nazi Germany?

### Overview

- Many of the elements that made up Nazi ideology were already to be found in 19th- and early 20th-century thought – for example, the belief in the superiority of the Aryan race, anti-Semitism, the cult of the leader or *Führerprinzip*, and the concept of the survival of the fittest, known as Social Darwinism.
- Hitler brought his own belief in German nationalism to the NSDAP and drew on the discontent in post-war Germany to establish a new doctrine of Nazism. In 1920, his 25-point programme set out the principles of nationalism, racialism, anti-Semitism and *Volksgemeinschaft* (community). In the 1920s and 1930s, there was an increasing emphasis on anti-communism, anti-feminism, the need to prepare for war to combat communism and obtain *Lebensraum* (living space) in the east, and on the aims of achieving racial unity, the elimination of the Jews and total authoritarian control.
- Ideology remained fluid throughout the 12 years of Nazi rule and was adapted according to circumstances. However, it was used to justify policies that seemed to make little practical sense, such as the murder of millions of Jews at a time when Germany was suffering an acute labour shortage.

A poster showing Nazi anti-Marxism and anti-Semitism; a Marxist 'angel' is walking hand-in-hand with a wealthy Jewish businessman and the text says: 'Marxism is the guardian angel of capitalism. Vote National Socialist.'



### Timeline

- 1908** Hitler begins to develop his ideas in Vienna
- 1919** Weimar Republic is established; Treaty of Versailles is signed, which influenced Hitler's thinking
- 1920** 25-point programme is introduced reconciling nationalism and socialism
- 1924** Hitler writes his semi-autobiographical *Mein Kampf* while in Landsberg Fortress
- 1933** Hitler becomes chancellor and is in a position to put ideology into practice
- 1942** final details of the Holocaust are established



Below is a list of Hitler's main ideas, with brief definitions:

Idea	Definition
<b>Supremacy of the state and <i>Volksgemeinschaft</i></b>	the belief that loyalty to the state is more important than any other loyalty; people should feel bound together by blood as a single community
<b>Social Darwinism</b>	the acceptance that life is a constant struggle and, without interference, the strongest will always win; this was indirectly derived from Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest
<b><i>Lebensraum</i></b>	the right of the superior German race to acquire living space for its peoples
<b>Pan-Germanism – <i>Herrenvolk</i></b>	the supremacy of the German Aryans as the master race
<b>Anti-democracy</b>	a conviction that democracy gives undue weight to weaker peoples and mediocrities
<b><i>Führerprinzip</i></b>	the principle that the leader's will is the source of all political authority; from this developed the 'cult of the leader'
<b>Anti-feminism</b>	the belief that a woman's role is as the bearer of future Aryans
<b>Anti-Marxism</b>	hostility to Marxism as an international creed that weakens nations
<b>Anti-Semitism</b>	a belief that Jews are the lowest race in the social hierarchy and should be persecuted
<b><i>Blut und Boden</i> (blood and soil)</b>	the belief that the blood of the community is rooted in the soil

## To what extent was Nazi ideology rooted in the past?

Most elements of Nazi **ideology** were absorbed from Hitler's study of works that grew out of the political, economic and scientific changes of the 19th century, as moulded by his own experience.

### The superiority of the German race

The idea of a superior German Volk (the *Herrenvolk* or people) originated in the writings of the philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder at the end of the 18th century, at a time when Germany was divided into many separate states. The term Volk (meaning a special race of people) was commonly used in the 19th century and the German philosopher Georg Hegel proved a powerful inspiration to subsequent German nationalists by suggesting it was the destiny of the Germans to emerge as a single people in a strong unified state.

**ideology** This term refers to a set of beliefs and ideas that characterise a political movement and provide the principles from which its policies derive.

Hitler's desire to unite all people of German race, create a sense of national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*), emphasise the superiority of the Germans and demand a strong German state can all be traced back to these ideas. This attitude is sometimes referred to as 'pan-German'.

## Anti-Semitism

The persecution of Jews was not unique to Hitler's Germany. European Jews had suffered for centuries, but by the mid 19th century most Jews outside Russia had been assimilated into their communities, and laws, for example confining them to ghetto districts, had been relaxed. However, the growth of industrialisation, which provided Jews with new opportunities for money making, had led to a revival of anti-Semitic feeling by the end of the century.

This rise in anti-Semitism was encouraged by writings such as those of the Frenchman Arthur Comte de Gobineau and the Germans Paul de Lagarde (an assumed name) and Julius Langbehn. Langbehn used vocabulary that foreshadowed Hitler's later ranting. Langbehn referred to the Jews as 'pest and cholera' and as 'poison' polluting the purity of the *Volk*. When the journalist Wilhelm Marr published *The Victory of the Jew over the German* in 1873, it was so popular that it went into 12 editions within six years.

Kaiser Wilhelm II and most of the conservative élite of late 19th- and early 20th-century Germany were anti-Semitic in their views, although they may not have expressed them in quite such an extreme form.

## The cult of the leader – the *Führerprinzip*

In the 1880s, the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche put forward the idea that, just as there were superior races, so there were superior individuals. He suggested that a man with the 'will to power' was needed to lead the lower orders and that such a leader would be naturally superior – an *Übermensch* (superhuman). This idea was to be used to justify the Nazi idea of the *Führerprinzip* or indispensable leader.

The contempt shown by Nietzsche for ordinary people was shared by the French psychologist Gustave Le Bon. His *Psychology of Crowds* (1895) portrayed most people as unthinking and easily swayed by their emotions. This too was a direct influence on Hitler.

## Struggle and the survival of the fittest

'The survival of the fittest' was a phrase first coined by the British philosopher Herbert Spencer in his *Principles of Biology* (1864). The idea came from the new scientific ideas about evolution that were put forward in Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859). Darwin had never expected his theories to be used to justify human action, but Social Darwinists distorted his ideas to argue that, just like animals, humans, races and states were driven by an instinctive fight for survival. They suggested that struggle and warfare were healthy activities that allowed the best to rise to the top while leaving the weak to perish. Furthermore, in the fight for the survival of the strongest state, individuals were unimportant.

A number of writers, including the German composer Richard Wagner, accepted these Social Darwinist ideas. Wagner's operas, based on German folklore, were to become favourites of Hitler. Wagner's son-in-law, the Social Darwinist Houston Stewart Chamberlain, was celebrated as the 'seer of the **Third Reich**'.

### Fact

Charles Darwin (1809–82) was a British naturalist who studied evolution. He came to the conclusion that animals become stronger and more adapted to their environment over time as weaker specimens die out, and features that are necessary for their survival become more pronounced. This is known as the theory of the 'survival of the fittest'.

### Question

Explain the link between Darwin's scientific theories and Hitler's racialism.

### Third Reich

This term describes the German state (literally empire) in the years 1933–1945. It was known as the 'Third Reich' because Germany had known two former empires. The Holy Roman Empire (962–1806) was referred to as the First Reich and the German Empire, which was established by Kaiser Wilhelm I in 1871 and lasted until 1918, was known as the Second Reich.

## What did Hitler himself contribute to Nazi ideology?

### The development of Hitler's ideas before 1914

Four of the basic elements of Nazi ideology – the superiority of the German race, anti-Semitism, the cult of the leader and the survival of the fittest – were already well established before Hitler emerged as a politician. Nazi ideology was also shaped by Hitler's own experience. His upbringing and his experiences in Vienna before the First World War (see page 67) helped to turn him into a fervent German nationalist and anti-Semite.

Hitler probably possessed a dormant anti-Semitism before his arrival in Vienna, but it was here that he observed and read pamphlets, newspapers and books that reinforced his prejudices. He attended the operas of Wagner and read the anti-Semitic Viennese newspaper the *Volksblatt* and the pro-Aryan monthly journal *Ostaria*, which carried the **swastika** logo.

Hitler's time in Vienna also taught him to despise democracy. He hated the 'mediocrity and compromise' that he witnessed from the public gallery of the Reichsrat (the Austrian parliament). He rejected the views of the Austrian social democrats, a socialist party devoted to the interests of the working man, but he approved of their methods. He learnt from the way they swayed the crowds through powerful speeches and threats.

Hitler also learnt from Austria's Pan-German Nationalist Party founded by Georg Ritter von Schönerer. Schönerer used the title Führer, held impressive rallies and adopted the 'Heil' greeting. This party wanted the 'racially superior' German-speaking lands of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to be reunited with the German Reich. Another major influence was Vienna's racist mayor, Karl Lueger, infamous for calling Budapest 'Judapest'. Hitler's 'ideal' party, bringing together elements that were both 'national' and 'socialist', seems to have been born in his mind through the fusion of these two Austrian parties.

### The development of Nazi ideology in the aftermath of war

The First World War ended disastrously for Germany in 1918. This provoked a bitter reaction in Hitler, who had served for four years as a soldier on the Western Front. He believed the armistice to be 'the greatest villainy of the century' – a view typical of many who accepted the myth that the German army had been 'stabbed in the back' by politicians.

The creation of the Nazi Party was part of this nationalist reaction, although the 25-point programme of 1920 included a number of other fundamental principles such as racialism, anti-Semitism, anti-democratic sentiment and the need to work together for the greater good of the community.

Hitler's ideas were brought together in *Mein Kampf*, which was written during his prison sentence in Landsberg Fortress after the failure of the 1923 Munich Putsch. The main messages of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* were:

- Germany had to fight international Marxism (communism) in order to regain her world power status.
- Marxism/communism was the invention of Jews intent on Jewish world domination.

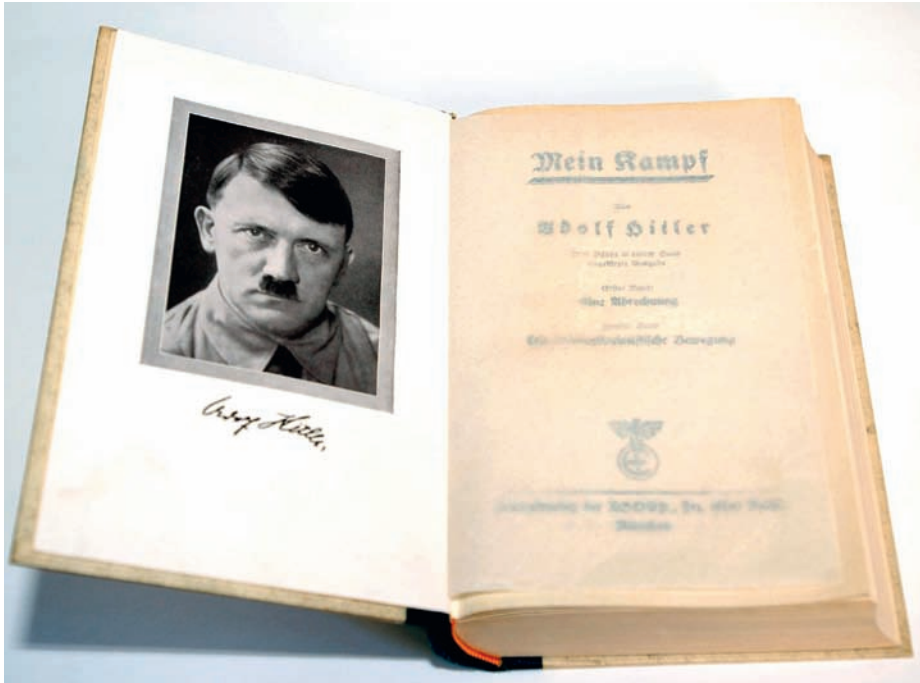
**Aryan** This is the term used to describe features from the Nordic/Anglo-Saxon racial heritage, which the Nazis claimed was superior to any other.

**swastika** This term refers to an ancient religious symbol in the form of a cross with the arms bent at right angles. It had been used by right-wing groups in Austria and was associated with Aryanism even before Hitler chose to adopt it. It became the best-known symbol of the Nazi party and was used on flags, arm-bands and badges.

#### Fact

Hitler's nationalist beliefs were first roused by his history teacher, Leopold Poetsch, a strong-minded nationalist who entertained his class with stories of Germany's past greatness. As a German-speaking Austrian, Hitler had no doubt that he was part of this great Germanic race and his conviction of German superiority sustained him during his years of drifting in Vienna. Whatever his own condition, Hitler was convinced that he was better than any of the cosmopolitan 'rabble' he was forced to associate with – particularly the Jews.





A first-edition copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), featuring the Führer on the frontispiece

- National Socialism was the only doctrine capable of fighting communism. Liberal 'bourgeois' or 'middle-class' democracy was the first stage to socialism and communism.
- Nazism had to prepare the population for war in order to obtain *Lebensraum* (living space) in the east. To achieve this there had to be racial unity, the elimination of Jews, authoritarian control and no tolerance of diversity or dissent.

The ideological principles of the Nazi Party in its early years were broader than those that subsequently dominated. In the early years, the party embraced socialism, with demands for the abolition of unearned income, the nationalisation of businesses and the closure of big department stores in favour of the small trader.

However, these socialist elements did not last long. Once the Nazis decided to contest Reichstag elections from May 1924, Hitler gradually came to realise that it was only by associating with big business and the middle classes that he could hope to win.

By the later 1920s, the nationalist aspects of Nazism were emphasised at the expense of the socialist. The nationalism that formed the core of Nazi ideology had a strong anti-communist element. This came in the wake of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the spread of communism in the politically and economically unstable post-war Germany (see page 65).

Anti-communism was also linked to Hitler's racial theories, as he identified prominent communists with Jews. Hitler's other drive – the need to prepare the Germans for war in order to obtain *Lebensraum* (living space) in the lands of the Slavs in the communist USSR – was also a reason for his anti-communism.

### Fact

Nationalised industries were run directly by the state. However, in order to retain support, the Nazis proposed that shareholders and owners of enterprises should be given compensation in return for their co-operation in this process.

### Questions

What is the difference between nationalism and Nazism? Was there anything new or unique about Hitler's ideology?

### Questions

What was the Nazis' political platform in the 1920s? What was the meaning of 'socialism' in the term 'National Socialism'?

Nazism also became an increasingly anti-democratic, anti-modern and anti-feminist movement. The Nazis regarded all that was new and forward-looking in the Weimar Republic as degenerate and weakening. This attitude was not, however, unique to Nazism, since other conservative and nationalist groups also disapproved of so-called 'modernism'.

What really set Nazi ideology apart was the way nationalist intolerance was combined with racial intolerance. Nazism embraced nationalist principles but added to them a belief in a new society to which only the racially pure within the state belonged. If the 'socialist' element of National Socialism still meant anything by the 1930s, it was this. Hitler himself put it clearly enough when he said 'We socialise human beings.'

## How important was the role of ideology in Nazi Germany?

Hitler's emergent ideology and vision for the future played a key role in his rise to power, attracting and inspiring followers. Once he was established as the German chancellor (1933) and Führer (1934), he devised policies in keeping with his fundamental beliefs.

### Question

According to Nazi ideology, which sections of society would be included within *Volksgemeinschaft*?

Through *Gleichschaltung* (see page 72) he co-ordinated all aspects of the state to serve his ends, and the idea of *Volksgemeinschaft* was spread through youth, community and workers' organisations such as Beauty of Labour and Strength through Joy.

The belief in the importance of competition and the survival of the fittest was seen in the way policies were carried out. Intolerance permeated the regime in its political consolidation and social policies. Nationalism underpinned Hitler's defiance of the Treaty of Versailles, while racialism led to actions against minority groups and virulent anti-Semitism, through a series of anti-Jewish actions and legislation.

However, while policies were shaped in the light of ideology, it was often the case that practical politics prevented ideological principles being carried out immediately, or in their entirety. The growth of Hitler's anti-Semitic policies, for example, displayed no coherent pattern. Persecution remained fairly low-key until 1935, and there was no Holocaust until the years of war. Even then, it did not come immediately. Similarly, it took six years before Hitler led his country to war. When he did so, women, who had been forced out of the workplace in 1933–34, were again encouraged back into factories.

Furthermore, the name of the party itself (NSDAP – National Socialist German Workers' Party) had become meaningless by the 1930s. Although the Nazi regime pursued a persistent 'nationalism', there was, by that stage, no longer any 'socialism' for the benefit of the working class driving their programme. Similarly, although Nazis continued to use the slogan *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil) to emphasise the pure racial qualities of the German agricultural worker (see page 108), it had become mere propaganda. The latter received scant consideration and once Hitler was entrenched in power, the Nazis provided little state aid. There was no national revolution in Germany, as had been promised in the early 1920s. Instead, Nazism denied the existence of class differences and channelled people's energy into national expansion.

Ideology was crucial to the success of Hitler as a single-party leader. However, Hitler controlled how ideology was used to further his own political ends. He was not driven simply by the desire to put ideological principles into practice, but had his own agenda and moulded Nazi ideology to fit it.

## End of unit activities

- 1 Draw up a chart with the main characteristics of Nazi ideology on the left-hand side and, when you have studied Units 3 and 4, add the policies that appear to carry out those beliefs on the right.
- 2 Discuss the following questions. Did Hitler's ideology offer:
  - a a new form of society
  - b a new social structure
  - c new values?
- 3 Carry out further research into the writers and thinkers from whom Hitler gleaned his views. You might produce a poster with summary details of the authors whose ideas came together in a new form in Hitler's ideology.
- 4 There were some radicals within the Nazi Party who placed a greater emphasis on the 'socialist' side of National Socialism than Hitler. Find out about the Strasser brothers and make a chart to show how their view of socialism differed from Hitler's.
- 5 Choose a section of *Mein Kampf* that reveals an important aspect of Hitler's ideology. Explain your chosen extract to the rest of your group.



### Theory of knowledge

#### Ideology and historical motivation

- Is ideology essential for political success?
- Does a firm ideology always bring intolerance?
- What is the main quality that defines an ideology? Should it be revolutionary? Should it be inspirational? (Can you suggest another quality?)
- What ethical issues arise from Hitler's racialist theories? Are we likely to judge such ethical considerations differently today from those living at the time?

### Question

Which policy areas might you expect to be particularly influenced by Nazi ideology? Why?

### Historical debate

The main area of historical debate relates to conflict between the intentionalist and structuralist schools of thought. Intentionalists (see page 89) argue that Hitler's policies were shaped by ideology and that he knew from a very early stage what he wanted to accomplish. They see Hitler's actions as part of a carefully conceived plan to translate ideology into action. Structuralists, on the other hand, believe that Hitler's actions were moulded by circumstance and that, while he had broad ideological principles, the actual detail of his policies evolved almost haphazardly.



# 3 Establishment and consolidation of Nazi rule

## Timeline

**1933 Mar:** Enabling Act is passed – the ‘Law for terminating the suffering of the people and the nation’ – giving Hitler dictatorial powers for four years

**Apr:** Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service is passed

**May:** all trade unions are dissolved and workers forced to join the DAF (the German Labour Front)

**Jul:** Concordat is concluded with the Pope whereby the Catholic Church is banned from political activity in return for a promise that its religious freedom will be upheld; law is passed against the formation of new parties (with KPD/SPD banned and other parties dissolving themselves, Germany becomes a one-party state)

**Nov:** elections are held in which the Nazi candidates win 92.2% of the vote

**1934 Jan:** law is passed for the reconstruction of the state, placing federal states under Reich governors

**Jun:** Night of the Long Knives – the SS kill SA leaders and other opponents of Hitler

**Aug:** Hindenburg dies and Hitler becomes head of state – Führer and Reich chancellor; army swears a personal oath of loyalty to Hitler

**1938 Feb:** army is reorganised to increase Hitler’s control

## Key questions

- How did Hitler consolidate his position and create a one-party state between March and July 1933?
- What part did propaganda and repression play in Hitler’s consolidation of power?
- Why did it take until 1938 for Hitler’s power to be fully consolidated?
- Was there any organised opposition to Nazi rule?
- Was Nazi Germany a totalitarian state and was Hitler ‘Master of the Third Reich’?

## Overview

- Without removing the old structures entirely, Hitler nevertheless ensured that the Nazi Party gained control over government at both central and local level.
- Hitler made sure that no sectional interests that might conflict with Nazism would be able to exist, by banning trade unions and other political parties and concluding a Concordat with the Catholic Church.
- Hitler made extensive use of propaganda to promote his dictatorship, but also relied on the repression of his enemies, including perceived enemies within the party – such as the SA, which was purged in the Night of the Long Knives.
- Hitler tried to bring all areas within the state under his control but the army was too powerful for him to challenge immediately and he did not assume complete control until 1938.
- There appeared to be little opposition to Nazi rule but, beneath the surface, political, ideological and religious hostility remained and an element of dissension continued in some groups of young people.
- Despite the consolidation of power, Hitler’s actual style of rule suggests that his position at the top of the party and state hierarchy was not as authoritarian as it might seem in theory. Some historians have described him as a ‘weak’ rather than a ‘strong’ dictator.





Hitler is welcomed by supporters at Nuremberg, 1933

## How did Hitler consolidate his position and create a one-party state between March and July 1933?

Between March and July 1933, all other political parties were forced to disband. The KPD (German Communist Party) had been banned under the presidential decree of February, after the Reichstag Fire, shortly after Hitler became chancellor. Many less extreme socialists had also been imprisoned, although the SPD was not officially banned until 22 June. Similarly, the DNVP (the right-wing nationalist party) lost its role once it became part of the Nazi coalition, and disbanded itself. On 5 July the Catholic Centre Party followed as part of the Concordat with the Pope, which was signed later that month (see page 107). The culmination of this activity was the Law Against the Establishment of Parties of 14 July 1933. This made it a criminal offence to organise any party outside the NSDAP. Consequently, although there was an election in November 1933, only the Nazis were able to stand and so took all the Reichstag seats.

Hitler's one-party state was a centralised state. In the localities, the Nazis had begun to infiltrate state (*Länder*) governments from early in 1933, seizing public buildings and newspaper offices, and from March many state governments had been forced to resign since they had proved unable to control SA violence.

**Länder** This is the name for the separate states within Germany. These had power over local domestic policy at the time of the Weimar Republic, which had a federal structure.

### Heinrich Himmler (1900–45)

Himmler became the head of the *Schutzstaffel* (SS) in 1929 and head of all German political police outside Prussia in 1933. He helped organise the Night of the Long Knives and in 1936 took over the Gestapo (the secret police). In December 1940, he established the Waffen SS. During the war, the SS Death's Head Units were put in charge of the concentration camps. In June 1944, Himmler took over the *Abwehr* (the military intelligence organisation) but his attempts to seek peace with the allies led to his arrest. Himmler committed suicide at the end of the war.



#### Fact

Some members of the SA favoured a 'second revolution' that would bring more socialist change to Germany. They wanted to implement the 25-point programme, but Hitler could not afford to alienate big business and the élite on whom he depended.

The Nazi government had already appointed many loyal commissioners to the states before a law passed in January 1934 formalised the situation. The old provincial assemblies of the *Länder* of Germany were abolished and all areas placed under the control of Nazi governors (*Reichstatthalter*) and subordinated to the Reich government in Berlin. These Nazi governors often also had positions as local Nazi *Gauleiters* (the party representatives in the area).

By the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service of April 1933, non-Aryans were forced to retire and Jews and other opponents described as 'alien elements' were purged from positions in the administration, courts, schools and universities. However, it was not until 1939 that membership of the Nazi Party became compulsory, and in the interests of efficient government there was a remarkable continuity of personnel.

The left-wing socialist trade unions were dissolved in May 1933 and the German Labour Front (DAF) under Robert Ley was set up to replace them. Membership was compulsory and employees could no longer negotiate over wages and conditions with employers. New academies, or 'fronts', also controlled the professions and teachers were, for example, required to join the National Socialist Teachers' League (NSLB), while in November 1933 university lecturers were required to sign a declaration in support of Hitler and join the Nazi Lecturers' Association.

Hitler's one-party state was legally established by 'the Law to Ensure the Unity of Party and State' (December 1933). However, the situation was not as simple as it sounds. Hitler allowed parallel institutions to develop rather than creating undiluted party rule, so there was competition within the state between different agencies, and sometimes between different branches of the Nazi Party itself. For example, in local government the minister-presidents of each *Land* were retained alongside the new Reich governors. Some intentionalist historians, such as Karl Bracher and Klaus Hildebrand, believe Hitler did this on purpose so that he could retain ultimate control. Structuralists such as Martin Broszat and Hans Mommsen believe that this situation was unintentional and resulted from Hitler's disinterest and neglect. Furthermore, although by the end of July 1933 most major interest groups had been brought under Nazi control and a one-party state had been created, Hitler was not secure until he had dealt with the radical wing of the SA, while the army had also largely survived Hitler's early measures unscathed.

### Night of the Long Knives

Hitler had been content to use the paramilitary SA to destroy the communist movement when seeking power. However, he was concerned about the SA's violent and sometimes uncontrollable behaviour and about the demands of its leader, Ernst Röhm, who had ambitions to place himself at the head of a merged SA and army. Röhm openly condemned Hitler's compliance with the élite in 1933 and called for a second revolution to complete the 'Nazi uprising'.

Hitler could not afford to upset the army, whose loyalty he needed. Since the army was hostile to the SA, he increasingly took the view that the SA had served its purpose and was expendable. When **Heinrich Himmler** and Hermann Goering (see page 86) spread rumours of a planned coup by the SA, Hitler decided that it was time to take action.

According to official pronouncement, Röhm and 85 others were killed in the Night of the Long Knives on 30 June 1934 in order to forestall a revolt. In



reality, the figure may have been nearer 200 and the reasons were far more complex. Not all the murders were of SA men. The Nazi Gregor Strasser (who had attempted to split the party in 1932) was shot, as was Kurt von Schleicher, the former chancellor. Von Papen was put under house arrest and was lucky to escape with his life.

The Night of the Long Knives helped to confirm Hitler's authority. He justified his actions to the Reichstag, two weeks after the event, by saying that he alone had acted on behalf of the German people at a time of emergency and he thus gained credit for a 'heroic' action. The Reichstag confirmed that Hitler's powers had no constitutional bounds and that his authority was derived from the will of the people and could not be challenged. In condoning his action, the Reichstag effectively made murder acceptable.

The purge also had other important consequences. Goebbels was able to portray Hitler as a man who had personally saved the country, and this helped in the growing cult of the Führer. The purge also left the way open for Himmler's SS to assume dominance in Germany, while Hitler gained the support of the army commanders. When **Hindenburg** died in August, all members of the armed forces swore a personal oath of loyalty to Hitler. Henceforward, Hitler combined the chancellorship and presidency.

## What part did propaganda and repression play in Hitler's consolidation of power?

### The use of propaganda

One of Hitler's first tasks as chancellor, in March 1933, was to set up a new Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda under the control of **Goebbels**. Hitler believed that the masses, for whom he had little respect, could easily be won over through regular exposure to propaganda in schools, towns and the workplace, and in their leisure pursuits. Consequently, the ministry established separate chambers to oversee the work of the press, radio, theatre, music, the creative arts and film.

The ministry controlled the press through censorship and by allowing the Nazi publishing house, Eher Verlag, to buy up private newspapers until by 1939 it controlled two-thirds of the press. A German news agency regulated the supply of news and Goebbels held a daily press conference with editors to ensure the right messages arrived in print. Editors were held responsible for their papers and were liable for prosecution if they published unapproved material.

The Nazis made extensive use of the radio as a medium for reinforcing Nazi rule, with the Reich Broadcasting Corporation, set up in 1933, controlling all that was broadcast. Workplaces, shops, cafés and blocks of flats were expected to relay important speeches through loudspeakers for all to hear, while in the home, the *Volksempfänger* (people's receiver) became a standard item. These radio sets had a limited range, preventing individuals from listening to foreign broadcasts, and they were deliberately sold cheaply. Consequently, ownership of sets increased from under 25% of households in 1932 to over 70% by 1939 and the population could be subject to daily exposure to Nazi views.

Stamps carried Nazi slogans and posters bearing Nazi quotations were put up in offices and public buildings. Furthermore, the 'Heil Hitler' salute became the official form of greeting and helped reinforce enthusiasm for the leader.

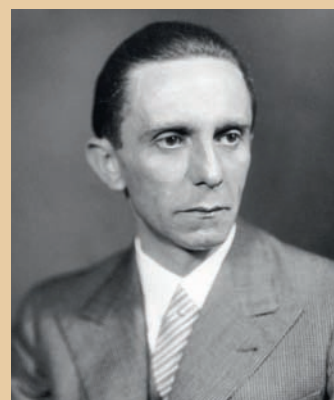
### Paul von Hindenburg (1847–1934)

Paul von Hindenburg was commander-in-chief of Germany's forces on the Eastern Front from 1914. He retired from public life in 1918, but returned in 1925 to stand as president. He held this post until his death but grew increasingly senile and may not have appreciated the consequences of his decisions in 1930–33 to allow the use of article 48, which undermined parliamentary democracy and allowed Hitler to come to power.



### Paul Joseph Goebbels (1897–1945)

Goebbels joined the Nazi movement in 1924 and became director of Nazi propaganda in 1929. In 1933, he became minister for enlightenment and propaganda. He committed suicide shortly before Hitler, in Hitler's bunker in Berlin in 1945.



**Fact**

The 'cult of Hitler' was almost like an alternative religious cult, giving Germans something to believe in. Nazi propaganda portrayed Hitler as all-powerful and all-knowing. The media carried details of what he wore, said and did, and posters and books of photographs were sold. He was depicted as a father figure, a friend of children and a leader who really cared about his people. He was also portrayed as a strong man and a powerful statesman. Anything that showed a human 'failing', such as wearing glasses, was carefully erased.



A Nazi poster from c. 1935 depicting Adolf Hitler bearing the German flag at the head of a vast army, with the caption 'Es Lebe Deutschland!' ('Long Live Germany!')

The cinema was another propaganda tool, although the Nazis used film less effectively than the radio. Nevertheless, all films were censored and 'degenerate' artists forbidden. Light-hearted entertainment – even romances, thrillers and musicals – had to conform to Nazi ideological principles.

**Activity**

Find out about some Nazi films and the messages they tried to convey. You could start with films such as *Hitlerjunge Quex* (1933) about the Hitler Youth, *Triumph des Willens* (*Triumph of Will*) (1934) about the Nuremberg Rally, *Der Ewige Jude* (*The Eternal Jew*) (1940), *Jud Süß* (1940) reinforcing anti-Semitism, and *Ich Klage An* (1941) (*I Accuse*) about euthanasia.

It was hard to avoid the propagandist messages in Nazi Germany. Even culture became a form of propaganda, with concert halls bedecked in swastikas (see Unit 4). There were constant meetings, rallies, festivals, such as that established to celebrate Hitler's birthday and the anniversary of his appointment as chancellor, and sporting events that provided opportunities to extol Nazism.

Of course, it is not easy to evaluate the success of propaganda, since the German people were also subject to a number of other influences, most notably repression. However, the very ubiquity of propaganda must have played some role in strengthening the regime. Propaganda was, according to the historian David Welch, more successful in reinforcing than in countering existing attitudes. Insofar as it was able to do that, however, it must take some credit for the ease with which Hitler was able to consolidate his rule.

## The use of repression

The consolidation of Nazi rule also involved considerable infringement of personal liberty. Repression took various forms, ranging from comparatively mild censorship and intimidation through warnings and job dismissal to arbitrary arrest, imprisonment, a period in a concentration camp or even execution. Under Hindenburg's decree of February 1933 (see page 71), 300,000 communists were rounded up and 30,000 executed. The decree allowed imprisonment without trial for an indefinite period for anyone deemed dangerous to the state. In March 1933, there was a further decree against malicious gossip and, thereafter, any critical comment or unauthorised action could lead to arrest.

The police were centralised under Himmler as Chief of Police from 1936. Himmler was also *Reichsführer SS* and head of the *Gestapo*, the main security agent of the state. There was also the SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*), or security police, headed by Reinhard Heydrich and in 1939 the Reich Main Security Department was set up to oversee all this security apparatus. The individual was made well aware of the consequences of non-conformity, be it political, racial or moral. The state employed a stream of informants, including the dreaded 'block wardens', who paid regular visits to individuals' homes, creating an image of power that must have helped to reinforce obedience.

Even when those arrested were given a trial, the law courts were no longer impartial. Under the 1933 Civil Service Law, judges whose political beliefs conflicted with Nazism lost their positions. Lawyers had to be members of the Nazi Lawyers Association and were required to study Nazi ideology, so although the law itself did not always change, it was interpreted differently by Nazi lawyers. This was summed up by Ernst Hüber, who was at the time a prominent constitutional law professor at the University of Kiel. He defined the Nazi concept of law, stating that the individual can be judged by the law only from the point of view of the individual's value for the *völkisch* (people's) community. The law was re-interpreted according to the will of the Führer and the 'best interests' of the German community.

Although the concentration camps were not extermination camps in the years before 1939, they could be brutal places in which prisoners were forced to work for long hours on meagre rations. Between 1933 and 1939, around 225,000 Germans were convicted of political crimes and a further 162,000 were placed in 'protective custody' in prison without trial.

## Why did it take until 1938 for Hitler's power to be fully consolidated?

Even after the Night of the Long Knives and the army's oath of loyalty in August 1934, Hitler knew that the army was the one institution that still retained the power to prevent his ambitions from being realised. Hitler was therefore careful not to cause trouble, and left the army structurally unchanged until 1938. However, every attempt was made to Nazify the institution through the adoption of the swastika insignia, Nazi training schemes and indoctrination. Hitler referred to the army as the 'second pillar of the state', working alongside the Nazi Party and, since most officers shared Hitler's nationalist aspirations, the relationship was reasonably successful. The army favoured the Nazis' enforcement of law and order, and Hitler's repudiation of the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles in March 1935, restoration of conscription and promise to expand the peacetime army to more than 500,000 men also met with favour.

**SS (*Schutzstaffel*)** The SS – and its subsection the SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*), the security service – was a highly trained and élitist Aryan organisation with extensive powers as a military force and as political police. The SS ran the concentration camps, beginning with Dachau in March 1933. They joined with the Gestapo (see below) in 1934 and in 1936 Himmler became *Reichsführer SS*. By 1939, the SS Death's Head Units guarded the concentration camps and SS men ran racial superiority and genetic programmes, controlled labour supplies and factories and by 1940 had their own fighting units, the *Waffen SS*, to rival the regular army.

**Gestapo (*Geheime Staatspolizei*)** The Gestapo was the state secret police force, established by Goering in April 1933. It served to root out and intimidate potential opposition. However, the number of Gestapo officers was limited and many were engaged in routine bureaucratic work, so the regime had to rely on spies and informers. This has led to the conclusion that the survival of the Nazi regime rested on the compliance of the public, who were prepared to betray their colleagues and neighbours, rather than on an atmosphere of terror. For example, Robert Gellately put forward the theory that surveillance was dependent on the reports provided by ordinary German people rather than a ubiquitous force of the Gestapo.

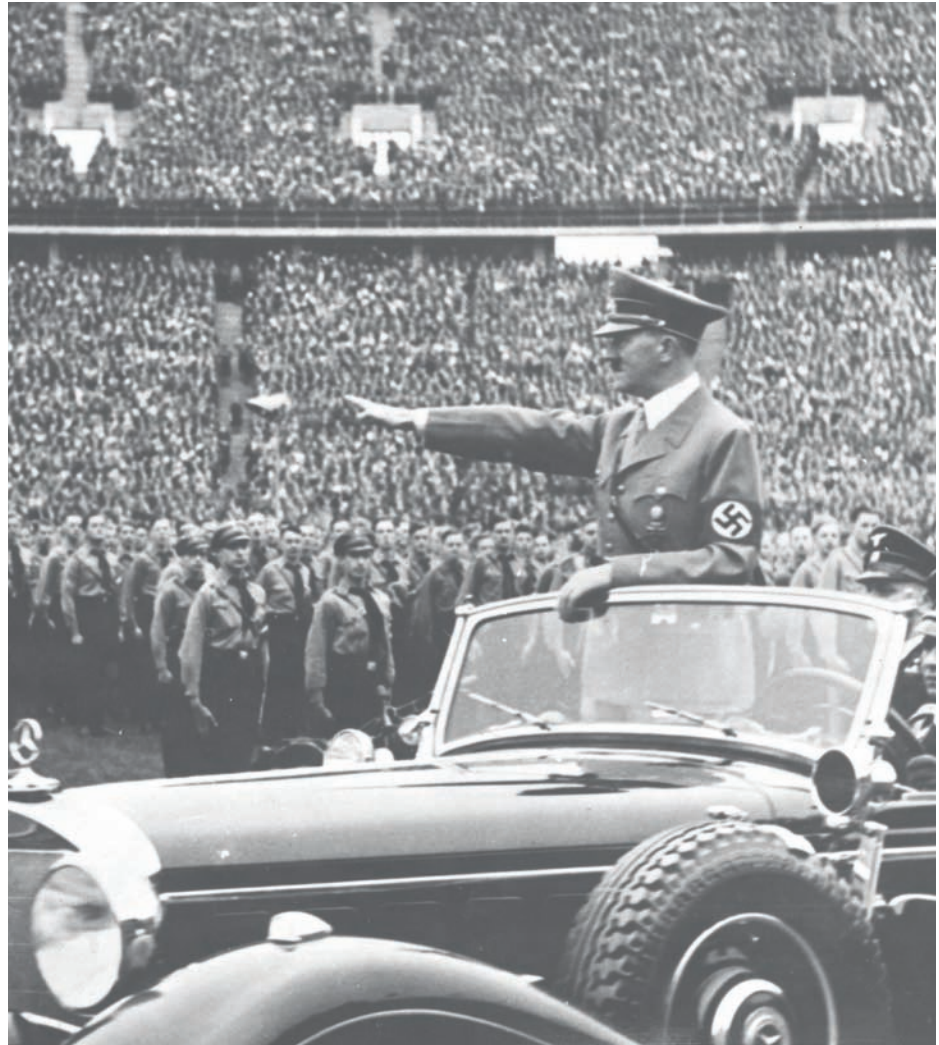
### Discussion point

Do you consider propaganda or repression more important in the consolidation of power in a totalitarian state such as Hitler's? Why?



**Hermann Goering (1893–1946)**

Goering joined the Nazi Party in 1923 and after 1933 became minister of the interior and prime minister of Prussia, taking control of the Gestapo. He helped establish the concentration camps, arranged (with Himmler) the Night of the Long Knives and ran the 1936 Four-Year Plan. He was also behind the purge of Werner von Blomberg and Werner von Fritsch in 1938. In February 1938, he became head of Germany's armed forces and in 1939 Hitler's deputy and heir. He was in charge of the *Luftwaffe* (air force) during the war and found guilty at the Nuremberg Trials of German war criminals in 1945–46. He committed suicide before he could be hanged.



Adolf Hitler giving a Nazi salute to a crowd of soldiers at a Nazi rally, 1 May 1938

However, there was some friction, which grew in proportion to Hitler's military ambitions. Some generals condemned the pace of rearmament, and the commander-in-chief, Werner von Fritsch, complained that Hitler was 'rushing everything far too much and destroying every healthy development'. There was also concern about the role of the SS, which Hitler had always claimed to be a domestic police force, but which expanded markedly after the destruction of the SA. The *SS-Verfügungstruppe* (eventually known as the *Waffen SS*) was established to be 'part of the wartime army' in August 1938. This caused considerable unease among the professional army leadership. The *SS-Totenkopf* (Death's Head) units were also expanded as a reserve military force and, according to the historian Bernd Wegner, 'it was no longer a question of whether the SS units would be allowed to share in military conquests in the years to come; the disputes now concerned only their assignment, size and organisation.'

Another argument concerned Hitler's expansionist policies themselves. The army favoured the reversal of the Treaty of Versailles and limited conquest to restore the old empire. However, it was strongly against the idea of war with Russia, the traditional ally of the Prussian Junkers (the landed nobility of Prussia, who dominated the officer class of the German army), and did not support Hitler's policies of *Lebensraum*. Top army generals were critical when, at

the Hossbach Conference of 5 November 1937, Hitler laid down aggressive plans for rapid expansion in the east. The plans were summarised in the 'Hossbach memorandum'. Only **Goering** spoke in Hitler's favour; von Fritsch and Hitler's war minister, General Werner von Blomberg, opposed the plans.

Consequently, in 1938 Hitler contrived to dismiss the war minister General von Blomberg, alleging that the woman he had just married in January had been a prostitute. Commander-in-Chief von Fritsch was also dismissed, on the grounds of alleged homosexuality (which was later disproved, although he was never reinstated).

With the departure of von Blomberg and von Fritsch, Hitler became his own war minister, so combining his position as supreme commander (the president's role) with an additional political role. To reinforce his intentions, he changed the name of the War Ministry into the 'High Command of the Armed Forces' (the OKW) and Wilhelm Keitel was appointed as its chief. In practice, Keitel was little more than an office manager and worked under Hitler's direct control.

These changes were accompanied by a drastic reshuffle of those who had failed to support Hitler's ideas. Sixteen generals left the army and 44 were transferred. Although many aristocratic officers still remained suspicious of Hitler, this effectively brought Hitler's consolidation of power to a close.

Hitler's popular triumphs, beginning with the remilitarisation of the Rhineland in 1936 and embracing Anschluss with Austria and entry into Czechoslovakia in 1938, made him virtually unassailable and the new generation of commanders such as Heinz Guderian and Erwin Rommel became his faithful followers.

## Was there any organised opposition to Nazi rule?

There would seem to have been very little opposition to Nazi rule in Germany. This has been explained by the propaganda, repression and general success of Hitler's policies both at home and, until 1943, abroad. However, there were acts of defiance, of both private and public nature.

In private, individuals might read banned literature, listen to foreign news broadcasts, protect Jews and other Nazi victims or even refuse to join Nazi organisations or contribute to campaigns. Some, particularly among the young, listened to American jazz music or even joined the Swing Movement or Edelweiss Pirates (see page 102), while others simply grumbled or told anti-Nazi jokes. Such 'opposition' is difficult to measure and, of course, not all such behaviour was politically inspired.

There was also more overt public opposition. Some brave socialists, for example, continued to distribute anti-Nazi leaflets or write slogans in public places. Others protested by emigrating and joining the SPD in exile, which operated from Prague and organised underground groups such as the Berlin Red Patrol and the Hanover Socialist Front. In November 1939, a socialist cabinet-maker, Georg Elser, planted a bomb in a beer hall where Hitler was speaking, although it failed to kill him, since the Führer left the hall early. The KPD also formed underground cells, particularly in Berlin, Mannheim, Hamburg and central Germany, from where they issued leaflets attacking the regime. The *Rote Kapelle* (Red Orchestra) was a resistance network that gathered information to send to the Russians, but it was broken up in 1942.

### Fact

In the 1930s, the term 'homosexual' was commonly used to describe a sexual relationship between people of the same sex, which was then illegal. Nowadays, following changes in attitudes and the law, the term is regarded by many as offensive and the terms gay, lesbian and bisexual are widely used and regarded as more acceptable.

### Historical debate

Tim Mason, a Marxist historian, has suggested that absenteeism, strikes and sabotage amongst workers were common, and Richard Overy has indicated that certain working-class areas were 'no-go' zones for Nazi officials. Kershaw has produced evidence of public grumbling, while Detler Peukert has identified extensive resistance among the young people of Cologne and Hamburg. Gellately, however, has produced evidence to reinforce the traditional picture that most ordinary Germans were ready to accept or support the Nazi regime.

### Question

If you had lived in Nazi Germany, would you have become involved in opposition?

### Question

How might a historian measure the extent of opposition to Nazism?

### Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–45)

Bonhoeffer was an academic theologian who strongly opposed Nazism. In 1940, he was banned from preaching and publishing. He joined the underground resistance, working with other opponents such as Ludwig Beck. He was sent to Buchenwald concentration camp in 1943 and executed in 1945.

### Fact

General Ludwig Beck opposed Hitler's expansionist plans in 1938 and, following his dismissal, attempted to overthrow Hitler in a series of plots involving other army officers. These included two attempts to kill Hitler with a bomb in 1943. There were a number of army officers involved in other resistance activities, notably in the Kreisau Circle. Claus von Stauffenberg's bomb plot of July 1944 came very close to killing Hitler.

### Activity

Find out more about the resistance activities of Ludwig Beck, the Kreisau Circle and the July Bomb plotters. What impelled the participants to resist Hitler?

**polycratic** This is a system of government made up of overlapping bodies such as ministries, party organisations and special agencies.

**cumulative radicalism** This is the process whereby policies and actions become more extreme.

Opposition to Hitler might also be seen in the action of judges who refused to administer 'Nazi' justice, and of churchmen, such as Bishop Galen (see page 107) and Pastor **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**, who spoke out against Nazi policies. One centre of opposition was the Kreisau Circle, which met at the home of Helmut von Moltke. Here, aristocrats, lawyers, SPD politicians such as Julius Leber, and churchmen such as Bonhoeffer engaged in discussion as to how to remove Hitler. The group held three meetings in 1942–43 before being broken up by the Gestapo.

Opposition also festered within the army. Between June 1940 and July 1944, there were six attempts on Hitler's life, all led by army officers. Following the last of these, the July Bomb plot of 1944, over 5000 army officers were executed, including Ludwig Beck, Hans Oster and Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg. Even the Nazi's own intelligence agency, the *Abwehr*, was rife with resistance workers. The head of the agency, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, supported resistance activities and did what he could to protect Jews.

The universities, most notably Munich University, were another centre of organised resistance in wartime. At Munich University, Hans Scholl formed the White Rose group in 1941. Members distributed pamphlets and revealed the truth about the Nazi treatment of Jews and Slavs. In 1943, they became even more daring and painted anti-Nazi slogans on public buildings. However, the members were caught, and Hans Scholl, his sister Sophie and other members of the movement were executed. Such activities and the alternative youth culture that flourished in a number of parts of Germany showed that not all young people were readily indoctrinated by the regime.

## Was Nazi Germany a totalitarian state and was Hitler 'Master of the Third Reich'?

By 1938, outward appearances gave the impression of an effective and successful totalitarian regime. At its head was an all-powerful Führer with unlimited power which filtered down through his Reich cabinet and state governors to keep everyone in line. In theory, the party and state worked together, but studies of Nazi rule both at local level and in central government have suggested that the regime was not as effectively run as was once thought.

It is now more common to see the Nazi regime as a confused, **polycratic** system. This is because Hitler superimposed the party structure on to the state that he took over and deliberately generated competition within it. For example, within the Chancellery, made up of Hitler's close friends and followers, he allowed competences to overlap so that no one was quite sure who was responsible for what. There was, for example, considerable conflict between the authority of Goering and Albert Speer (see page 98) over the economy. Similarly, the Civil Service found some of its work was bypassed by party members (see Unit 4).

According to the historian Broszat, Hitler created a 'confusing system of "empires"'. He believes this accounts for the '**cumulative radicalism**' that marked the Nazi regime. Broszat claims that policies grew more extreme because party leaders were constantly trying to go one stage further to please or impress Hitler.

This confusion fitted with Hitler's ideological belief in the survival of the fittest. Hitler encouraged competition. It provided an opt-out if things went wrong



and left him to intervene only when it suited him. Having no clearly organised pattern to government also appealed to Hitler's fundamental laziness and lack of interest in bureaucratic detail.

Although Hitler had plenty of fanaticism and charisma, routine governmental business failed to interest him. He was not an early riser and preferred to spend his days reading the newspaper, going for walks, watching feature films and talking with his cronies. It was well known that Hitler preferred to talk rather than to listen and that, when he did listen, he only heard what he wanted to hear – so much so that subordinates often withheld information they feared might displease him. From 1934, Hitler actually played very little part in the meetings of the Reich cabinet. From 1937, it ceased to meet altogether.

Hitler spent a considerable amount of time at his mountain retreat, the Berghof in the Bavarian Alps. Although government papers were conveyed to him for his signature, wherever he might be, there was no guarantee he would read them. Very often it was the case that individuals had to fight for access to the Führer to get approval for actions.

Hitler avoided making decisions as far as possible and, when he did so, often made them on the spur of the moment, perhaps over lunch or tea without full reference to all the facts. He had to be caught at the right time and patient Nazi officials had to be prepared to wait for a chance or casual remark which they could then claim to be the 'authority' of the Führer.

This state of affairs did not help a regime that depended on Hitler's decisions to run smoothly. According to structuralist historians such as Mommsen, Kershaw, Jeremy Noakes and Broszat, the Third Reich was not a powerful totalitarian state and Hitler was a 'weak' dictator. Although the authority of the Führer was never questioned, these historians argue that the formation of policy and decisions about its implementation were such a matter of guesswork, as ministers and officials sought to 'work towards the Führer', that the regime was chaotic.



### Theory of knowledge

#### Historical interpretation

Broszat and Mommsen were the first to put forward a 'structuralist' interpretation of Nazi Germany as a mixture of competing institutions. These views ran contrary to those of Bracher (see below).

### SOURCE A

In the 12 years of his rule in Germany, Hitler produced the biggest confusion in government that has ever existed in a civilised state. During his period of government he removed from the organisation of the state all clarity of leadership and produced a completely opaque network of competencies.

*Hitler's press chief, Otto Dietrich. Quoted in Williamson, D. and Fulbrook, M. 2008. OCR Democracy and Dictatorship in Germany 1919–1963. Oxford, UK. Heinemann. p. 19.*

Intentionalist historians, such as Bracher and Hugh Trevor-Roper, suggest that the overlapping of interests was deliberate and that Hitler was a powerful integrating figure at the centre of government. According to them, internal rivalries generated a degree of effectiveness, reinforcing Hitler's position and power. Hitler was able to take the praise for effective policies and blame others for ineffective ones – making himself a 'strong' dictator.

### Questions

- 1 How effectively did Hitler consolidate his power between March 1933 and August 1934?
- 2 Is the phrase a 'weak dictator' a contradiction in terms? Explain your views.



### Discussion points

- 1 Why did Hitler rely primarily on the law to help consolidate his power?
- 2 Why is Hitler's state regarded as right-wing? With reference to Chapters 1 and 2, is there really any difference between right-wing and left-wing states? Are these helpful terms?



### Theory of knowledge

#### History and ethics

What is a dictatorship? Is dictatorship always wrong? Is it possible to create a benign dictatorship?

### End of unit activities

- 1 Draw a flow chart to show the stages by which Hitler consolidated his rule.
- 2 Write an obituary for Röhm (who died on the Night of the Long Knives). You could decide whether your obituary is for a pro-Nazi German newspaper or a more neutral British one.
- 3 Imagine you are interviewing Hitler for a TV news programme at the end of 1934. Produce ten questions and (after swapping scripts with another member of your group) fill in the replies that Hitler might have given.
- 4 Find one piece of visual propaganda and one piece of contemporary written evidence illustrating the 'cult of Hitler'. Explain your findings to your group.
- 5 Make a chart on which you can record the arguments that Hitler was a strong dictator and those that suggest he was a weak dictator. Try to add historians' names to the arguments and where possible find quotations from their books to support what you write.



# 4 Domestic policies and their impact

## Key questions

- What factors influenced Nazi economic policy?
- How successful were the Nazis in bringing about economic recovery in the years 1933–39?
- How ready was Germany for war in 1939?
- How effectively did Speer manage the wartime German economy?
- What was the position of women in the Nazi state?
- How did the Nazis try to ensure the support of youth?
- How extensive was the persecution of minorities within the Nazi state?
- What was the relationship between the Nazis and the Churches within Germany?
- How did Nazism affect the arts and cultural life?

## Overview

- Nazi economic policy was incoherent and, despite having an ideological basis, was moulded by circumstances.
- Hjalmar Schacht helped the German economic recovery from 1933 but clashed with Hitler over rearmament and was dismissed.
- From 1936, Hermann Goering led the Four-Year Plan, aiming at self-sufficiency (autarky) but never fully succeeded.
- Germany was not ready for war in 1939 and the economy was near collapse in 1942, when Speer took command of reorganising the labour supply and the distribution of raw materials.
- The economy collapsed entirely in 1945 in the wake of Allied bombing.
- Nazi policy towards women was conservative, aiming to keep women 'in the home', but was inconsistent since women were encouraged back into the workplace in the war years.
- Young people were the focus of intense indoctrination through the Hitler Youth and the education system.
- There was an attempt to control the Churches through the Catholic Concordat and a separate Reich Protestant Church. However, neither was ever fully brought into line and attempts to spread an alternative pagan faith met with limited success.
- Minorities were persecuted for their political, social and racial non-conformity, with policies becoming ever more radical as the regime grew more secure. Attempts to create a 'Jew-free' society ultimately led to the Holocaust and the deaths of 6 million Jews.
- The experimental, modernist Weimar culture was rejected in favour of a controlled and conservative approach to the arts, which demanded that the arts should glorify Nazi values.

## Timeline

- 1933 Apr:** one-day boycott of Jewish shops and businesses; Civil Service Law
- 
- May:** public burning of 'un-German' books; Law for the Protection of Retail Trade
- 
- Jul:** Concordat with Catholic Church
- 
- Sep:** the German Chamber of Culture, Reich Food Estate and Reich Economic Chamber are created; Reich Entailed Farm Law
- 
- 1934 Aug:** Schacht becomes minister of economics
- 
- Sep:** New Plan comes into effect
- 
- 1935 Sep:** Nuremberg Laws – Jews are deprived of rights
- 
- 1936 Apr:** *Lebensborn* (Spring of Life) programme is launched
- 
- Oct:** Four-Year Plan is drawn up with Goering in charge
- 
- Dec:** membership of Hitler Youth becomes compulsory
- 
- 1937 Mar:** Pope issues *Mit Brennender Sorge* (*With Burning Anxiety*) criticising racism
- 
- Nov:** Schacht resigns as minister of economics and is replaced by Goering
- 
- 1938 Nov:** *Reichskristallnacht* (Night of the Broken Glass) – anti-Jewish pogrom
- 
- 1939 Aug:** euthanasia programme is launched
- 
- 1941 Aug:** Bishop Galen protests against euthanasia
- 
- Dec:** gassing of Jews in mobile vans in Chelmo begins
- 
- 1942 Jan:** Wannsee Conference to co-ordinate 'final solution' of Jewish question; Speer takes control of the economy





A Hitler Youth group, 1939

## What factors influenced Nazi economic policy?

Despite promises to make Germany prosperous again, Hitler had no clear economic programme when he became chancellor in 1933. In the 25-point programme of 1920 (see Unit 2), the Nazis had claimed to want to respond to the needs of small farmers (29% of the working population) and smaller urban traders. However, as with much of what Hitler said in his quest for power, he displayed little depth of commitment once he reached the top. Indeed, as the likelihood of power had grown nearer, he had increasingly looked to reassure big business, which could fund his campaigns and make his dreams a reality.

There was some token acknowledgement of the 'socialist' aspects of National Socialism in the policies of early 1933. All peasant debts – a total of 12 billion Reichsmarks – were suspended between March and October 1933 and high tariffs put on many imported foodstuffs. The setting up of the **Reich Food Estate** under Richard Darré, the minister of food and agriculture, gave peasant farmers guaranteed prices for their produce. The Reich Entailed Farm Law (September 1933) provided small farmers with security of tenure by forbidding the sale,

**Reich Food Estate** This was an organisation that controlled food production and sales, setting targets, quotas and prices.

confiscation, division or mortgaging of any farm between 7.5 and 10 hectares (18.5 and 25 acres) that was owned by Aryan farmers. Similarly, there was a gesture towards helping urban traders in the Law for the Protection of Retail Trade (May 1933). Among other measures, the law forbade the setting up of new department stores.

Although such measures fulfilled one aspect of the Nazis' professed concerns, they always took second place to the Nazis' predominant desire, which was to strengthen Germany to fight a future war. It was the 'national' aspect of the party's name that was the real driving force behind Nazi economic policy. This produced the concept of *Wehrwirtschaft* – a defence economy that would provide for Germany's needs in a future war.

### SOURCE A

*In February 1933, a week after coming to power, Hitler announced:*

For the next four to five years the main principle must be everything for the armed forces. Germany's position in the world depends decisively upon the position of the German armed forces. The position of the German economy in the world is also dependent on that.

Noakes, J. and Pridham, G. (eds). 2000. *Nazism 1919–45: Vol. 2, State, Economy and Society 1933–39: A Documentary Reader*. Exeter, UK. University of Exeter Press. p. 263.

This principle became even more important after 1936, and necessitated a 'managed economy', whereby the state regulated economic life. *Wehrwirtschaft* included the pursuit of self-sufficiency, or autarky, which drove out 'socialist' ideas by demanding the development of modern large-scale farms. It also encompassed the acceleration of rearmament, which required the support of big business. Hence, between July 1933 and December 1936, over 1600 new **cartel** arrangements were put in place.

The historian Richard Grunberger has estimated that, while only 40% of German production was in the hands of such monopolies in 1933, it was 70% by 1937. Many industrialists and companies became closely associated with the regime – for example, Krupp, the arms and steel manufacturer, and I. G. Farben, which produced chemicals.

However, as Hitler said to building workers in May 1937, 'the decisive factor is not the theory but the performance of the economy'. Bracher has echoed this point, arguing that 'at no time did National Socialism develop a consistent economic or social theory'. Ideological ideas could be contradictory and there was a conflict between the continuance of private ownership and increased state direction.

Furthermore, the practical need to provide the German people with a reasonable standard of living was difficult to reconcile with a commitment to rearmament. Hitler never fully resolved this conflict between '**guns and butter**'.

**cartel** A cartel is an agreement between companies to work together to reduce production costs and improve efficiency.

### Fact

Krupp factories supported Hitler with weapons and armaments while I. G. Farben built chemical plants. During the war, Krupp ran factories using slave labour in occupied countries and in 1943 Alfred Krupp was made minister of the war economy. I. G. Farben built a plant producing synthetic oil and rubber at Auschwitz, where 83,000 slave labourers worked. I. G. Farben also held the patent for the Zyklon B gas, which was used in the gas chambers. At the Nuremberg Trials, Krupp was sentenced to 12 years in prison and 13 directors of I. G. Farben were sentenced to one to eight years.

**guns and butter** This phrase had been used by historians writing about the Nazis' preparations for war. The Nazis could not invest heavily in rearmament (guns) while maintaining standards of living (butter). There was also literally a shortage of fats in Germany – both for consumption (butter, margarine and lard) and for industrial purposes (grease).

### Hjalmar Schacht (1877–1970)

Although not a Nazi Party member, Schacht helped raise funds for the party in the 1930s. In August 1934, he was made minister of economics. However, he protested against extreme anti-Semitism and opposed Hitler's demand for increasing expenditure on rearmament. He resigned as minister of economics in November 1937 and as president of the Reichsbank in January 1939. In 1944, he was charged with being involved in the July Bomb Plot. At the Nuremberg Trials, he was found not guilty of war crimes.

### Fact

Each rank-and-file RAD member was assigned to a work 'battalion' in one of 40 districts and was supplied with a spade and a bicycle.

**deficit financing** This term refers to the practice of spending more government money than is received. The difference is made up by borrowing.

**bond** A bond is the contract accompanying a loan. The creditor is promised that they will be paid back at some point in the future and in the meantime annual interest is paid on the amount lent.

## How successful were the Nazis in bringing about economic recovery in the years 1933–39?

Unemployment had peaked at 6 million (a sixth of the working population) in July 1932 and, when Hitler became chancellor in 1933, Germany's exports were just 39% of the 1928 level. Reducing unemployment, stimulating the economy and addressing the balance of payments problem, which resulted from the collapse of the export market, were issues the Nazis had to address if they were to retain credibility and support. To help with this, in March 1933, Hitler appointed Dr **Hjalmar Schacht** as president of the Reichsbank. Schacht was a non-Nazi who was well respected by the business community.

In June 1933, a law to reduce unemployment was passed. This included:

- government spending on public works schemes – *Arbeitsdienst*
- subsidies for private construction/renovation
- income tax rebates/loans to encourage industrial activity.

Other measures that helped to combat unemployment included:

- emergency relief schemes
- recruitment into the Reich Labour Service (RAD) formed in 1934 – through which the unemployed were sent to work on various civil, military and agricultural projects
- a law for the construction of 7000 km (4350 miles) of motorway – the *Autobahnen*
- specific regulations – for example, that no machinery could be used for road-building when surplus labour was available
- an expansion of the party and national bureaucracy
- discouragement of female labour (see pages 99–101), including marriage allowances to remove women from the labour market
- in March 1935, conscription and an increase in rearmament.

In order to stimulate the economy, tax concessions were offered to businesses, and Schacht also raised money for investment through 'mefo bills'. These were credit notes, issued by the Reichsbank and guaranteed by the government. The bills were a means of '**deficit financing**'. They were paid back with interest after five years from the increased government tax revenue they helped to generate. Repayments on mefo bills accounted for 50% of government expenditure in 1934–35.

Mefo bills permitted subsidies and agreements, such as that to match private investment in the car industry. This helped to stimulate housing, road construction and a variety of industries. Among these was the rearmament industry, although it was not the main growth area before 1936.

Schacht also took action to erode Germany's debt and improve the balance of payments position. In 1933 controls were introduced to limit the drain of Germany's foreign exchange by paying foreign debts in Reichsmarks.

In July 1934, debt repayment was stopped altogether and creditors were given **bonds** instead. Although creditor countries opposed this move, they failed to co-operate to put pressure on Germany. Consequently, the Nazis were able to push ahead with the New Plan of September 1934, devised by Schacht, who was promoted to minister of economics that year. The New Plan supported:



- increased government regulation of imports
- the development of trade with less developed countries
- the development of German trade with central and southeast Europe.

The New Plan led to a series of trade agreements, particularly with the Balkan and South American states, which provided for the import of vital raw materials. Since these were paid for in Reichsmarks, they encouraged such countries to buy German goods in return. According to William Shirer, 'Schacht's creation of credit, in a country that had little liquid capital and almost no financial reserves, was the work of a genius.'

Other influences that helped the revival of the economy included the avoidance of labour troubles with the dissolution of the trade unions, the banning of strikes and the creation of the DAF in May 1933, and the Nazis' continued use of propaganda to increase the illusion of success and prosperity and maintain confidence. There were also other 'windfalls', such as the seizure of Jewish property and Austrian assets, following the Anschluss of 1938.

### Did the Nazis perform an 'economic miracle'?

Unemployment fell from 6 million to 2.5 million within 18 months of Hitler's coming to power. By 1936 it stood at 1.6 million and, with subsequent expansion, by 1939 it had fallen below 200,000. Economic investment increased and public expenditure reached 23.6 billion Reichsmarks in 1939 – a considerable advance on 17.1 billion Reichsmarks in 1932 and 18.4 billion in 1933.

#### SOURCE B

What we have achieved in two and a half years in the way of a planned provision of labour, a planned regulation of the market, a planned control of prices and wages, was considered a few years ago to be absolutely impossible. We only succeeded because behind these apparently dead economic measures we had the living energies of the whole nation.

*From a speech by Hitler to the Reichstag, 1935. Quoted in Hite, J. and Hinton, C. 2000. Weimar and Nazi Germany. London, UK. John Murray. p. 217*

However, despite Hitler's talk of a new 'determination', the economic situation when he took office was not as bad as he liked to suggest. Thanks to Brüning, reparations had ended and unemployment had begun to fall after July 1932. Work creation schemes had been established and the world economic recovery from late 1932 had laid the basis for the so-called 'Nazi economic miracle'. Furthermore, despite considerable economic achievements, the Nazis' economic policies were not a total success. Reserves of foreign currency remained low and the balance of payments continued to be in deficit – and grew worse after 1936, when Schacht's influence declined. Rearmament put a strain on the economy and, although real wages increased overall, the price of food rose to the detriment of the poorer peasants and urban workers.

#### Fact

Following the Austrian Anschluss with Germany in 1938 (see page 65), Austrian Jews were forced to declare their land, personal possessions, bank and savings accounts, securities, insurance policies and pension payments. These assets, totalling over \$800 million, were gradually expropriated as Jews were deprived of their possessions and given jobs as forced labourers or removed to the Austrian concentration camp Mauthausen. By February 1939, 77.6% of Austrian Jewish shops and businesses had been seized.

#### Fact

Between 1932 and 1939 unemployment in Germany fell from around 6 million to less than 200,000. However, around 4 million had been absorbed into the *Wehrmacht* (armed forces). This meant that, in reality, only about 2 million extra jobs had been created over six years. These were mostly in the manufacture of armaments, which was necessary to equip the 4 million members of the *Wehrmacht*.



*Inside the Krupp factory in Essen, 1933*

Historians who question the strong dictator theory (e.g. Kershaw and Overy) would argue that there was no coherent Nazi economic policy, so it is wrong to ascribe the term 'Nazi economic miracle' to what happened after 1933. Despite Nazi claims, most economic policies were not carefully thought through and evolved according to political whims.

### **How ready was Germany for war in 1939?**

By 1936, Hitler had grown impatient with Schacht's commitment to financial orthodoxy. This commitment made Schacht anxious to curb public expenditure, encourage more exports and slow down the pace of rearmament as it was

straining the balance of payments. Consequently, in August 1936, the Four-Year Plan was announced, with Hermann Goering as its director.

- Emphasis was to be placed on self-sufficiency, or autarky; plants were to be built for the production of *ersatz* (substitute) synthetic materials, such as artificial rubber (known as Buna), which could be made from acetylene.
- Special encouragement was to be given to the chemical industry and the development of synthetic fuel (such as using coal to produce oil).
- Steelworks were to be developed, using the lower grade ores that were available within Germany (the Hermann Goering steelworks was erected in compliance with this).
- Emphasis was to be placed on the production of heavy machinery.
- The office of the Four-Year Plan was to issue regulations controlling foreign exchange, labour, raw materials distribution and prices.
- Targets for private industry were to be established through six sub-offices with special responsibilities for production and distribution. (These were: raw materials; labour force; agriculture; price control; foreign exchange; and the Reichswerke Hermann Goering, the steel plant that co-ordinated rearmament.)

The Four-Year Plan extended Nazi control by setting up a ‘managed economy’ in co-operation with big business. Private industry continued, but failure to conform and meet expectations could result in the business being taken over. The plan had some success and there was a growth in output in all the key areas. However, overall targets were not met (especially those for synthetic fuel, rubber, fats and light metals) and the production of synthetic substitutes proved costly. For example, to produce one tonne of oil, it took six tonnes of coal. By 1939, Germany still imported a third of all its raw materials, including iron ore, oil and rubber, and there remained a shortage of foreign exchange to buy necessary imports.

The development of the plan was also impeded by bureaucratic inefficiency and internal rivalry, while the need to maintain the production of consumer goods for the German people impeded the priorities of the plan.

Tim Mason, a Marxist historian, has argued that the German economy had reached a crisis point by 1938 and that this was so serious that it drove Germany to war. Mason claims that the economy had been put under strain by rearmament. He argues that the regime, which had consistently favoured capitalist big business over the workers, was unable to demand the ‘sacrifices’ necessary to pursue its ends, such as wage reductions. Consequently the conflict between ‘guns and butter’ threatened unrest among the working classes and led Hitler to divert attention by going to war before he was really ready to do so. However, according to Overy, the decision to go to war caused, rather than was caused by, an economic crisis. He argues that the outbreak of war was decided by the ending of appeasement, not an economic need.

Most historians agree that, whatever the reason, Germany was not fully prepared for war in 1939. Taylor, for example, has stressed that Hitler was unable to concentrate on rearmament because he needed to keep up consumer production. Burton Klein has put forward the view that Germany was ready for a short war of **Blitzkrieg**, but not for total war, which Hitler never intended. In support of this view, he has pointed to the ‘quite modest’ scale of economic mobilisation in 1939 and to the 30% rise in the production of consumer goods between 1936 and 1939.

### Fact

The Four-Year Plan was designed to gear the economy in support of the Nazis’ political objectives, but its actual significance has provoked debate. According to Overy, ‘It was the foundation of preparation for total war.’ E. H. Carr has claimed, ‘It was not an attempt to switch from rearmament in breadth to rearmament in depth.’ Nevertheless, the memorandum that launched the plan asserted that ‘the German armed forces must be operational within four years’ and ‘the German economy must be fit for war within four years’, suggesting a more gradual development.

**Blitzkrieg** This term refers to ‘lightning warfare’ – an attack conducted with such speed that the enemy is overwhelmed even before it can put all its forces into action.



**Fact**

In August 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact, under which both nations agreed not to go to war with each other and (in a secret clause) to divide Poland between them. Hitler's invasion of Poland began on 1 September 1939, while the Soviet Union's invasion from the east began on 17 September.

**Albert Speer (1905–81)** Speer, a young architect, joined the Nazi Party in 1932 and became a member of the SS. Hitler commissioned him to design the Reich Chancellery in Berlin and Party Palace in Nuremberg. In 1942, Speer was made minister of armaments. He raised production but clashed with other leaders. At the Nuremberg Trials, he was sentenced to 25 years in prison. On his release in 1966, he published his memoirs, in which he claimed to be uninterested in politics and to have known nothing of the Holocaust. However, Trevor-Roper has described him as 'the real criminal of Nazi Germany', because he saw faults and did nothing.

**Fact**

Todt was killed in an air crash, having just left Hitler's headquarters. It has been suggested that Hitler wanted to get rid of him in order to promote Speer, who was immediately given Todt's job. When Goering arrived shortly afterwards, Hitler ordered him to remain in charge of the Four-Year Plan and air force. This was probably because Goering was closely associated with the military, while Speer was a personal protégé and seen by Hitler as more pliable. Hitler hoped Speer could bring the party and industry into closer partnership through his contacts.

Overy has also argued that, although Hitler was undoubtedly preparing for war, he was not yet ready in 1939. This theory is backed up by Hitler's speech at the Hossbach Conference in November 1937. In this speech, Hitler argued that Britain and France would not fight for Czech independence and that Poland could be taken without a general war.

The Nazi–Soviet Pact of 1939 (Hitler's 'deal' with Joseph Stalin to divide Poland between them) also fits the view that Hitler planned to absorb Poland peacefully and use Polish resources for economic build-up before launching into full-scale war, perhaps in 1942. When Hitler's plans for peaceful expansion failed in September 1939, Hitler told Goering that he wanted 'complete conversion of the economy to wartime requirements'. It is likely that it was at this stage that target dates had to be brought forward and a new acceleration applied.

## **How effectively did Speer manage the wartime German economy?**

When war broke out, the Nazi rearmament programmes were only half completed. Consequently, the early German victories were more the result of their enemies' weaknesses and their own military tactics, than that of superior German armaments. However, these victories gave a false sense of confidence. Resources within Germany were not used efficiently. For example, the army could call up any worker, regardless of his skills or employment, women remained in the home, and few prisoners of war were set to work. (The proportion of prisoners in work had still only reached 40% by 1942.) Furthermore, there was no central authority to direct labour.

Hitler's failure to defeat Britain at the end of 1940 and the Soviet Union after the invasion of June 1941 created a situation that the German economy had never been prepared to deal with. Rather than a short war of Blitzkrieg, it had to sustain a long war. To achieve this, Fritz Todt was made minister of armaments and munitions in March 1940. He died in February 1942 and was replaced by **Albert Speer**.

Todt laid the foundations for Speer by setting up a series of committees with chairmen from industry to rationalise production. However, he had only limited success because of military interference. Erhard Milch (Goering's deputy at the Air Ministry) also organised aircraft production through committees linking producers and contractors but suffered the same level of army bureaucracy.

Speer's role in enabling Germany to continue the war to 1945 was to be of immense importance. Although he fought constant battles against other Nazi leaders, such as Goering, Himmler and Martin Bormann, as well as obstructive local *Gauleiters*, he managed to turn wartime production round.

In April 1942, Speer persuaded Hitler to establish a Central Planning Board to organise the allocation of raw materials and ensure that a larger proportion went into armaments. The Central Planning Board:

- set norms for the multiple use of separately manufactured parts to reduce unnecessary duplication
- provided for substitution in raw materials and ensured the development of new processes
- increased industrial capacity (sometimes by converting existing plant)

- placed bans or limits on the manufacture of unnecessary goods
- set schedules and issued output comparisons
- organised the distribution of labour, machinery and power supplies.

Speer worked extremely hard, overseeing everything himself. Hitler remained unrealistic and never fully understood Germany's economic position. He was reluctant to endorse rationing or to cut consumer production, which was kept at only 3% below peacetime levels in 1942.

In the organisation of labour, Speer had to counter the prejudice of both Hitler and Fritz Saukel, who was officially responsible for the supply of labour. In January 1943, it was agreed that German women could be conscripted into the factories, but the order continued to be frequently ignored.

However, labour supplies were maintained with the use of 7 million foreign workers (both male and female) transferred to German factories. Although forced labour could be unreliable (particularly when workers were living on meagre rations), statistics would certainly support Speer's success in increasing wartime production.

In the first six months of Speer's control, overall armament production rose 50% – guns 27%, tanks 25% and ammunition 97%. Work continued despite military losses, defeats and allied bombing raids. There was a monthly average of 111,000 tonnes of bombs dropped on Germany in the second quarter of 1944 – many falling on fuel plants and refineries. Yet, from the production of 3744 aircraft in 1940, factories reached a peak production of 25,285 planes in 1944. By rebuilding works to protect them from enemy bombing raids, 5000 new planes were still built in the first four months of 1945.

However, not even Speer could overcome Germany's inherent disadvantages in the war. In the end, bombing and shrinking resources, as Germany's enemies advanced from east and west, caused the economy to crumble in 1945. By 1945, 400,000 civilians had been killed in bombing raids, and towns, cities and factories lay in ruins. Transport had completely broken down and oil was unobtainable.

According to Mommsen's view of Nazism's destructive capacity, economic destruction was the product of Hitler's personal obsession, as summed up in his order to Speer in 1945 to destroy transport and factories lest they fall into enemy hands. He claimed, 'The Germans have failed to prove worthy of their Führer. I must die and all Germany must die with me.' Fortunately, Speer countermanded the order, but there is no doubt that the Nazi economy had ultimately failed.

## What was the position of women in the Nazi state?

Hitler had very clear views about the position that women should hold in the Nazi state.

Hitler looked back on female emancipation during the Weimar Republic with disfavour. According to Nazi propaganda, the duties of women were as mothers, housewives supporting their husbands, and community organisers.



### Theory of knowledge

#### History and economics

Are economic needs the driving force of History?

### Questions

Did the Nazis perform an economic miracle in Germany in the years 1933–42? How successful was Nazi economic policy? To what extent was Nazi economic policy driven by ideology?



According to Nazi ideology, a woman's primary role was as a mother, whose duty was to bear further Aryans

To encourage motherhood, birth control centres were closed, abortion was made illegal unless necessary for the eradication of 'genetic defects', and maternity benefits were increased. Income tax allowances for dependent children were raised and large families enjoyed concessions on expenses such as school fees and railway fares. In 1935, the *Lebensborn* (Spring of Life) project encouraged unmarried women with good racial credentials to become pregnant, with selected SS men as the fathers. 'The Honour Cross of German Motherhood' or 'Mothers' Cross' was established in May 1939 to encourage all women to 'bear a child for the Führer'.

However, only the genetically pure were allowed to procreate. From 1935, couples needed a certificate of 'fitness to marry' before a marriage licence could be issued. From 1938, 'unproductive' marriages could be ended. After 1941, couples found cohabiting after their marriage had been banned were sent to concentration camps. Mothers who failed in their duty to support their children's education as 'national comrades', for example attending the Hitler Youth (see page 101), could also face having their children removed.

To facilitate their role as mothers and alleviate male unemployment, legislation and propaganda were used to remove women from the workplace. By the

Law for the Reduction of Unemployment of June 1933, women were encouraged to leave work on marriage with the support of generous loans.

**Fact**

Marriage loans provided just over half an average year's earnings. They had a low interest rate of 1% per month over eight and a quarter years. They were reduced by a quarter and repayments delayed by a year on the birth of each healthy child, so after having four children a couple owed nothing. At first, loans were only granted if a wife gave up her job, but the regulations changed in 1937. By 1939, 42% of all marriages were loan assisted.

**SOURCE C**

The slogan 'Emancipation of Women' was invented by Jewish intellectuals. If the man's world is said to be the state, his struggle, his readiness to devote his powers to the service of the community, then it may perhaps be said that the woman's is a smaller world. For her world is her husband, her family, her children and her home.

*From Hitler's speech to the National Socialist Women's League, 8 September 1934. Quoted in Noakes, J. and Pridham, G. (eds). 1984. Nazism 1919–1945: Vol. 2, State, Economy and Society 1933–1939: A Documentary Reader. Exeter, UK. University of Exeter Press. p. 449.*

In 1934, all married women were forced out of careers in medicine, the legal profession and the Civil Service. They were even declared ineligible for jury service, supposedly because they could not think logically. Similar beliefs placed



politics out of women's reach. In a striking contrast with the 1920s, women were banned from senior positions in the Nazi leadership and there were no female Nazi members of the Reichstag. Education also discriminated against women. Only 10% of university entrants were female until a shortage of professional and technical experts in the later 1930s led to a relaxation of policy.

Similarly, when a labour shortage began to affect rearmament plans in 1936, some women were once more drawn back into factories. Compulsory agricultural labour service was introduced for women under 25 in 1939 and, from January 1943, women aged 16–45 could be conscripted for the war effort.

Speer later wrote of his struggle to get Hitler to agree to the need for female mobilisation, but the Nazis got round the apparent contradiction in policies by arguing that in wartime the whole of Germany had become the 'home' where women were required to serve.

Nazi policies towards women were therefore contradictory. While they claimed to promote the importance of family values, they encouraged an independent youth that placed the party above the family. While they extolled conventional morality and the importance of marriage, they also permitted illegitimate births and easier divorce, and advanced compulsory sterilisation for those with genetic defects. While they told women to stay in the home, from 1936 women were encouraged to return to the factories. While female education was initially discouraged, by the war years women were encouraged to enter universities and train for professional roles.

## How did the Nazis try to ensure the support of youth?

Young people were very important to the Nazis. According to Hans Schemm, leader of the Nazi Teachers' League, 'those who have youth on their side control the future'. Consequently, much effort was put into winning over this new generation through youth movements and the control of education.

In July 1933, Hitler appointed Baldur von Schirach as 'youth leader of the German Reich'. By the end of 1933, von Schirach had control over all youth organisations, except for those Catholic organisations exempted under the Concordat (see page 107).

Membership of the Hitler Youth (*Hitlerjugend*: HJ) became compulsory in 1936 and in March 1939 the Catholic youth groups were finally closed down. The Hitler Youth was divided into various sections.

Boys		Girls	
<i>Pimpfen</i> (cubs)	6–10 years	<i>Junge Mädel</i> (JM)	10–14 years
<i>Deutsches Jungvolk</i> (DJ)	10–14 years	<i>Bund Deutscher Mädel</i> (BDM)	14–18 years
<i>Hitlerjugend</i> (HJ)	14–18 years	<i>Glaube und Schönheit</i> (League of Faith and Beauty)	18–21 years

### Fact

During the years of the Weimar Republic, women had been granted the vote and enjoyed greater equality with men than under the Nazis. They had been encouraged to pursue higher education, to take up professional posts and to participate in politics as members of the Reichstag.

### Fact

Prolific mothers were awarded medals, with the inscription 'The child ennobles the mother.' These were given annually on 12 August, the birthday of Hitler's own mother. The recipients had to be 'of German blood and hereditarily healthy'. There were three categories:

- bronze – for those who had four or five children
- silver – for those who had six or seven children
- gold – for those who had eight or more children.

### Fact

Tests for admission to the *Pimpfen* included:

- recitation of Nazi dogma and all the verses of the 'Horst Wessel Song' (the Nazi Party anthem)
- map reading
- participation in pseudo war games and charitable collections
- sporting standards – 60 metres (66 yards) in 12 seconds; long jump of 2.75 metres (3 yards)
- participation in a cross-country march.

### Fact

Members of the Hitler Youth took an oath and vow to the Führer: You, Father, are our commander! We stand in your name. The Reich is the object of our struggle, It is the beginning and the Amen.

**Fact**

*Napolas* (national political educational institutions) were set up from April 1933 and in 1936 fell under the influence of the SS. They produced highly trained youngsters for the armed forces. Classes were known as platoons and the routine of the school was based on that of a military camp with a communal style of living and sporting drill before breakfast. The Adolf Hitler Schools were strongly influenced by the Hitler Youth. The ten *Ordensburgen* were party-controlled Nazi colleges, set up from 1937, with an emphasis on physical training.

**Fact**

A pupil had to reach the required standard in sport before he or she could move to the next class. Sport was an examination subject for grammar school entry (and a child could be refused entry to secondary school if he or she had a serious physical handicap) and for the school-leaving examination. Persistently unsatisfactory sporting performance could be the grounds for expulsion.



**Theory of knowledge**

**Teaching History**

Is it right for governments to control what is taught in schools? What is acceptable and what is not? Does the teaching of History serve a specific purpose? If so, what?

**Fact**

Many scientists emigrated from Nazi Germany, including 20 past or future Nobel Prize winners. Among them was Albert Einstein.

Nazi youth organisations were governed by two basic aims: to train boys for war and girls for motherhood. At every level there were uniforms, competitions, expeditions, sports, musical activities, theatrical productions and artistic displays to take part in. There was incessant activity and competition, which penalised the weak or uncommitted. Values of honour, discipline and self-sacrifice were encouraged, with contempt for moderation, intellect and sensitivity. Youths were even encouraged to spy on their parents and report aberrant attitudes.

Generally, the *Hitlerjugend* was well received by young people. However, some young people disliked the regimentation and, by the later 1930s, alternative, illegal youth groups began to attract growing numbers. These included the working-class Edelweiss Pirates, and the middle/upper-class Swing Movement, whose members rejected Nazi values by dancing to American jazz (black) music and wearing American-style fashions.

The German education system was also used to inculcate Nazi values and, in May 1934, a centralised Reich Education Ministry was established under Bernhard Rust. No substantial change was made to the structure of the education system, apart from the establishment of a new series of élite schools including *Napolas*, Adolf Hitler Schools and the *Ordensburgen* (see Fact box, left). However, there was a radical revision of the curriculum.

Biology, History and German became the means for conveying Nazi philosophy. In Biology, racial differences and the Nazis' interpretation of Darwin's theory of selection and survival of the fittest were emphasised. History was designed to 'awaken in the younger generation that sense of responsibility towards ancestors and grandchildren that will enable it to let its life be subsumed in eternal Germany'. German lessons encouraged a consciousness of the nation and there was an emphasis on folklore. Ideology even entered the curriculum in a lesser way in Maths, where problems were posed in ideological language. At further education colleges and universities, new subjects such as genetics, racial theory, folklore, military studies and the study of German borderlands made an appearance. There was also a huge emphasis on sport, which occupied a minimum of five hours a week, giving the gymnastics teacher a new status. This was at the expense of religious education, which ceased to exist as a subject in the school-leaving examination in 1935. There was also differentiation between the curriculum for males and females, with the latter emphasising home economics.

Teachers and lecturers were also subject to Nazi controls. Some were dismissed under the 1933 Civil Service Law and in 1939 all teachers became Reich civil servants. The National Socialist Teachers' League and National Socialist Lecturers' League organised special 'camps' to reinforce Nazi values. At these camps, all teachers below the age of 50 were expected to participate in sport. The teaching profession was required to be actively anti-Semitic, and 'Jewish' theses, such as Einstein's theory of relativity, were banned.

It is hard to gauge the effect of Nazi youth policies, but the willingness of millions of young people to fight for the Nazi cause when war broke out must suggest some degree of success. However, the quality of educational provision declined and extra youth activities sapped young peoples' energies. Furthermore, there was active discrimination against women and Jews and, in wartime, evacuations and the conscription of teachers further disrupted education.

## How extensive was the persecution of minorities within the Nazi state?

Those who failed to fit Nazi criteria for *Volksgenossen* were subject to intimidation and persecution. Ideological enemies have already been considered in Units 1 and 2, but two other important minority groups suffered:

- asocials such as habitual criminals, the work-shy, tramps and beggars, alcoholics, prostitutes, gay men and lesbians, and juvenile delinquents
- biological outsiders, including those suffering hereditary defects that were considered a threat to the future of the German race and those who were regarded as a threat because of their race, such as gypsies and Jews.

### Asocials

In September 1933, 300,000–500,000 so-called beggars and tramps were rounded up. Some (mainly the young unemployed) were given a permit (*Wanderkarte*) and had to perform compulsory work in return for board and lodgings, but the ‘work-shy’ were dealt with under the Law Against Dangerous Habitual Criminals, 1933. They were sent to concentration camps and made to wear a black triangle. They could also be compulsorily sterilised, since ‘social deviance’ was considered to be biologically determined. In summer 1938, another big roundup took place under the ‘Work-shy Reich’ programme. Those arrested were mostly sent to Buchenwald. Of the 10,000 tramps incarcerated during the Third Reich, few survived.

In 1939, the Reich Central Agency for the Struggle Against Juvenile Delinquency was established and a youth concentration camp set up in Moringen near Hannover in 1940. Here, youths were subjected to biological and racial examination and those deemed unreformable were sterilised. If the 1940 Community Alien Law had been carried out, all those considered deficient in mind or character would have been similarly treated, but this policy was abandoned because of the war.

### Biological outsiders

In July 1933, the Nazis introduced a law demanding the compulsory sterilisation of those suffering from specified hereditary illnesses. These included some illnesses that had a dubious hereditary base, such as schizophrenia and ‘chronic alcoholism’. Heredity courts were established to consider individual cases and, between 1934 and 1945, around 350,000 people were sterilised under this law. People who had been sterilised were forbidden to marry fertile partners.

### Euthanasia

The Nazis also launched a propaganda campaign to devalue people with mental or physical disabilities as ‘burdens on the community’. This culminated in the euthanasia programme, which began in summer 1939. Practised in secret, the programme initially targeted children under 3, but it was later extended to children up to 16 years of age. By 1945, 5000 children had been murdered by injection or deliberate starvation. In order to extend this programme to adults, carbon monoxide gas was used in six mental hospitals in various parts of Germany. By August 1941, when the programme was officially stopped because of public outrage, 72,000 people had been murdered. However, between 1941 and 1943, the secret programme ‘14F13’ led to the gassing of 30,000–50,000 in the concentration camps, on the grounds of mental illness or physical incapacity.

**Volksgenossen** Literally ‘race comrade’, this term refers to a person who was racially pure and was therefore considered worthy of German citizenship.

#### Fact

Prisoners in Nazi concentration camps were made to wear badges, usually triangles, to identify them. These were sewn on jackets and shirts and were seen as badges of shame. Political prisoners (socialists, communists) had red triangles; habitual criminals, green; gay men and lesbians, pink; and certain religious people, purple.

#### Fact

The euthanasia programme began when the parents of a severely disabled boy petitioned Hitler for the right to kill him. Hitler agreed and ordered that other cases be dealt with in the same way.

#### Fact

Protests against euthanasia were led by the Catholic Bishop Galen. However, there was no similar Church-led protest against attacks on Jews.



**Fact**

Gypsies were given different coloured papers according to their origins. The pure, *Sinti*, gypsies received brown papers, the *Mischlinge* were given blue and 'nomads' received grey. There was a suggestion that the *Sinti* (who had kept their race 'pure') should be assigned areas in Bohemia and Moravia where they could live traditionally as 'museum specimens'. However, the war stopped this from becoming more than a plan.

**Fact**

Mengele's 'research' included an attempt to change eye colour by injecting chemicals into children's eyes, experiments involving the amputation of limbs, or the injection of deadly viruses and shock treatments.

**Gypsies**

The Nazis persecuted gypsies, because of their alleged inferior racial character. There were only around 30,000 gypsies in Germany, but they were included in the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, which banned marriage between Aryans and non-Aryans. Physical traits were analysed and efforts made to distinguish between pure gypsies and half-gypsies (*Mischlinge*) at the Research Centre for Racial Hygiene and Biological Population Studies.

From December 1938, gypsies were registered and, from 1940, deported to Poland to work in camps. In December 1942, they were transferred to Auschwitz and subjected to medical experiments carried out by Dr Josef Mengele, a Nazi German SS officer known as the 'Angel of Death'.

Mengele supervised the selection of incoming prisoners to determine who should be killed, who would become a forced labourer, and who would be used for human medical experiments. Most of those Mengele experimented on died, either from the experiments or later infections. He also had people killed in order to dissect them afterwards.

It was not just the gypsies who suffered such cruelty, but of the 20,000 gypsies sent to Auschwitz, around 10,000 were murdered. Probably a total of around half a million gypsies were killed in occupied Europe.

*Nazi troops hold anti-Semitic placards in front of a locked shop in an organised boycott of German Jewish businesses in Berlin, 1933; one of the signs reads 'Germans defend yourselves! Don't buy from the Jews!'*



## Jews

Although there were only about 500,000 Jews in Germany itself (less than 1% of the population), and most had been thoroughly assimilated into the German community, Jews were portrayed by the Nazi regime as a serious racial threat and the root cause of Germany's ills.

The first state-sponsored act of persecution was a one-day boycott of Jewish shops and businesses in March 1933. The action was largely taken to fulfil SA demands and was not repeated, since the economy was too fragile and fear of international repercussions too great. The government continued to issue contracts to Jewish firms, although Jewish civil servants were dismissed under the Law for a Restoration of a Professional Civil Service, 1933. Persecution increased from 1935, with the announcement of the 'Law for Protection of German Blood' (Nuremberg Laws), which banned marriage between Jews and Germans and deprived Jews of German citizenship.

In 1938, persecution escalated as the regime grew increasingly radical. Jews were no longer awarded public contracts; all Jewish property valued at over 5000 Marks had to be registered and could not be sold; Jews could no longer be employed in businesses; Jewish doctors, dentists and lawyers were forbidden to offer services to Aryans; all Jewish children were required to bear the names Israel or Sarah in addition to other names; and Jews were obliged to carry identity cards and have their passports stamped with a 'J'.

On *Reichskristallnacht* (Night of the Broken Glass), 9/10 November 1938, there were attacks on synagogues, businesses, homes and shops – leaving broken glass (like 'crystal') everywhere. Hundreds of Jews were injured, 91 murdered and 20,000 sent to concentration camps on 'the night the national soul boiled over'. The official excuse for the attacks was the murder by a Jew of Ernst von Rath, a German diplomatic official in Paris. In reality, this orgy of violence was orchestrated by Goebbels.

Increasing numbers of Jews emigrated between 1934 and 1939, as they were expelled from economic life, schools, cinemas, universities, theatres and sports facilities. In cities, they were even forbidden to enter areas designated 'for Aryans only' and, in January 1939, Hitler threatened 'the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe' in the event of war.

The invasion of Poland in September 1939 added 3 million Jews to the German empire. Jews were placed in ghettos where they were forbidden to change residence, were subject to a curfew, had to wear a yellow star on their clothing and were compelled to perform labour service.

A final attempt to rid the German Empire of Jews – the Madagascar Plan of summer 1940 – had to be abandoned after Hitler's failure to conquer Britain left the British in control of the sea. This left millions of European Jews facing death – through malnutrition and hard labour, and by mass shootings as the Germans advanced into Russia from June 1941. Following the Wannsee Conference of January 1942, Jews were gassed in the extermination camps created at Auschwitz, Chelmo, Majdanek and Treblinka, an event ambiguously referred to as the 'final solution'. Around 6 millions Jews died in the camps. The operation was shrouded in secrecy, but the fact that scarce resources were diverted to facilitate this Holocaust at a time when the Germans were struggling in the war gives some indication of the irrationality of Nazism.

### Fact

Before 1933 in Germany, 17% of bankers, 16% of lawyers and 10% of doctors and dentists were Jews. Jews were also influential in the clothing and retail trades.

### Fact

Himmler had encouraged an emigration policy for Jews since 1934, but it met with limited success. Only 120,000 of around 500,000 Jews had left Germany by 1937 – and many had subsequently returned. The annexation of Austria in 1938 had added 190,000 Jews to the German Reich and led to an intensified emigration policy whereby 45,000 were forced to leave Austria in six months. During 1939, 78,000 more Jews were forced out of Germany and 30,000 from Bohemia and Moravia in Czechoslovakia.

### Historical debate

No written order to exterminate the Jews exists. However, intentionalists such as Christopher Browning and Andreas Hillgruber believe orders were given in the summer of 1941 when it was felt Russia would soon collapse. Goering's order to Reinhard Heydrich, Himmler's deputy in the SS, on 31 July 1941, 'to bring about a complete solution of the Jewish question within the German sphere of influence in Europe' supports this. However, structuralists such as Mommsen and Broszat believe the order came in the autumn when the policy of Jewish resettlement east of the Urals was wrecked by Germany's failure to defeat Russia.

## What was the relationship between the Nazis and the Churches within Germany?

### Fact

German Protestantism was associated with patriotic support for the state, nationalism and right-wing political views. So, like the Nazis, German Protestants disliked the political left and Marxism. The Roman Catholic Church was also anti-Bolshevist and keen to show its national loyalty.

Germany contained both Protestants (58% of the population) and Catholics (32%), as well as other religious groups. Some of these, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, refused to compromise with the regime and were deported to concentration camps.

The mainstream Churches proved much easier to influence. This is partly because the Protestant and Catholic Churches shared a good deal of common ideological ground with Nazism, in their dislike of Marxism, their conservatism, belief in family values and underlying anti-Semitism (even if in principle they spoke against it).

However, Hitler's determination to set up an Aryanised social community left little room for religion. He feared an outright attack on the Churches would do more harm than good, but he wanted to restrict the Churches to a purely spiritual role. This ran counter to the desire of most churchmen to maintain the Church's role in other activities such as youth groups.

### The Protestant Church

The Protestant Church, which had Lutheran and Calvinist branches, had never been fully united and, with the rise of Nazism, a 'German Christian' movement emerged calling for a new national 'People's Church'. This was mainly supported by young pastors and theology students who saw the Nazis' 'national uprising' as the opportunity for religious as well as political renewal. The German Christians described themselves as the SA of the Church and adopted uniforms, marches and salutes. Their motto was 'the swastika on our breasts and the cross in our hearts'.

In May 1933, Hitler set up the Reich Church with the help of the German Christians, and he appointed a Reich bishop to co-ordinate the Protestant churches under his authority. In July, **Ludwig Müller** took this position and German Christians were appointed as state bishops and given other senior positions in the Church.

Some German Christians even wanted to remove the Old Testament from religious practice, calling it 'Jewish'. However, not all members of the Protestant Church approved of the German Christians and certainly not of their more outspoken devotees.

In September 1933, a group of 100 pastors headed by **Martin Niemöller** set up the Pastors' Emergency League to resist the German Christians and defend traditional Lutheranism. Some members of this League were arrested, including Bishop Meiser of Bavaria and Bishop Wurm of Württemberg in 1934, provoking mass demonstrations.

In October 1934, the Pastors' Emergency League formally broke with the Reich Church to form their own Confessional Church. This led Hitler to abandon his attempt to impose direct control on the Protestant Church through the Reich bishop. The bishops of Bavaria and Württemberg were reinstated and orthodox officials and bishops allowed to continue in their positions.

### Ludwig Müller (1883–1946)

Ludwig Müller held strongly nationalist and anti-Semitic views and was a staunch Nazi supporter. He became influential in the association of German Christians and in 1933 was appointed as the country's Reich bishop of the Protestant Church. However, he was increasingly marginalised and committed suicide in 1946.

### Martin Niemöller (1892–1984)

Niemöller was a co-founder of the Confessional Church. In 1933, he was working as a Protestant pastor in Berlin where he initially welcomed Hitler as chancellor. However, he opposed Hitler's efforts to politicise the Church. He was arrested in 1937 for his outspokenness and sent to Sachsenhausen concentration camp. During his time in prison he repudiated his earlier anti-Semitism. He was released by the Allies in 1945.



This left the Protestant Church divided into three:

- the 'official' Reich Church under Müller, which co-operated with the regime but tried to retain organisational autonomy
- the German Christians, who tried to control the Reich Church but whose influence declined
- the Confessional Church, which formed an oppositional Church and was subject to harassment from both the state and other Church authorities but had strong support in some areas.

From 1934, the Church suffered less from direct persecution than from attempts to curb its activities. **Confessional schools** were abolished, religious teaching downgraded in schools, and young people's time taken up with the Hitler Youth to such an extent that attendance at Sunday services as well as participation in other Church activities was hindered. The weakening of the Church was, however, sporadic and unco-ordinated, because of the way the Nazi state was run, with some *Gauleiters* being far more anti-religious than others.

## The Catholic Church

The Catholic Church came to terms with the Nazis, agreeing to the dissolution of the Centre Party and, in July 1933, signing a Concordat. According to the Concordat, the Vatican recognised the Nazi regime and promised not to interfere in politics. In return, the state promised not to interfere in the Catholic Church, which would keep control over its educational, youth and communal organisations.

However, between 1933 and 1939, the Nazis increasingly tried to go back on their promises. They used propaganda insulting the clergy and Catholic practices to encourage anti-Catholic feeling. Catholic schools were closed and had almost disappeared by 1939. Catholic organisations and societies were also removed. For example, in 1936, Church youth organisations were disbanded when the Hitler Youth became compulsory.

In 1937, Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical *With Burning Anxiety* (*Mit Brennender Sorge*), attacking Nazi beliefs. This was smuggled into Germany and read out in Catholic churches. However, his successor in 1939, Pius XII, failed to condemn Nazism outright and has been criticised for his tolerance of the regime.

Bishop Galen's protest against euthanasia in 1941 was the most outspoken criticism to come from a Catholic prelate but, although between a third and a half of Catholic clergy were harassed by the regime, only one Catholic bishop was expelled and one imprisoned for any length of time, suggesting that protest against the Nazis was limited.

## The German Faith Movement, neo-Paganism and 'positive Christianity'

Moves to weaken the Church were not always well co-ordinated. In the mid 1930s, a 'Church Secession' campaign deliberately encouraged Germans to abandon the Churches. Some members of the Nazi Party, though not Hitler himself, encouraged the pagan German Faith Movement. This embraced several beliefs that fitted well with Nazism, including a belief in *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil) ideology and the rejection of Christian ethics.

**confessional school** This term refers to a state school in which specific Church teaching was allowed. During the Weimar Republic, confessional schools dominated the education system, with 55% of primary and secondary schools being Lutheran, 28% Catholic, and 15% non-denominational. The remainder followed other religious faiths.



## Theory of knowledge

### History and guilt

The Catholic Church faced post-war accusations of collaborating with Nazism and the Vatican issued a formal apology for failing to oppose the Holocaust in 1998. Were these accusations fair? Has the apology made any difference? Can an apology ever atone for mistakes made in the past?

**Fact**

Other pagan influences included the use of ancient Germanic names for the names of the months, the removal of Church holidays from special status and campaigns against the use of the crucifix.

Although it remained a small sect, at its height the German Faith Movement had around 200,000 supporters and was particularly strong among the SS. Paganism also influenced policy. For example, carols and nativity plays were banned from schools in 1938 and the word 'Christmas' was forbidden and replaced by Yuletide in the war years.

Overall, the record of the Churches in the period of Nazi domination is not one of which they were to feel proud in later years. As organisations, they almost completely surrendered to the Nazi political leadership, although the breakaway Confessional Church and some individual clergymen (see profiles on Niemöller and Bonhoeffer) were able to stand out as symbols of religious opposition to Nazism.

However, Christianity as such does not seem to have been affected. Church attendance remained steady, and even increased in the war years, making Christian belief an obstacle to a fully totalitarian state.

## **How did Nazism affect the arts and cultural life?**

The Nazis believed that Germany's impressive cultural history placed the arts in a unique position in German society. Both élite art, such as classical music, paintings, sculpture and theatre, and the more popular arts such as film, radio broadcasting and light entertainment were perceived as media for reinforcing Germans' shared statehood and race. Nazis despised the modernist styles of the 'decadent' Weimar era and looked to exploit 'traditional' art forms that were unadventurous, of high moral standing, dominated by Aryanism and that glorified a mythical past.

The main themes of the arts included:

- 'blood and soil', in which the peasant was cast as the representative of the 'pure' Aryan blood of the German people and his struggles with the soil and the weather were glorified
- anti-feminism, as reflected in the 'Gretchen Myth', with its emphasis on pre-industrial images of women
- anti-Semitism, which permeated all aspects of composition and performance as well as colouring the themes of literature and film
- order, as reflected in a return to the classical tradition (particularly in sculpture and architecture), with solidity of style and a sense of dominance and purpose which served to underpin Nazi notions of the superiority of the state and the permanence of the Reich.

Goebbels was made minister of propaganda and popular enlightenment in 1933 and his office imposed rigorous censorship on all art forms, encouraging only those that conveyed a suitable propaganda message. In May 1933, Goebbels co-ordinated a 'burning of the books'. This symbolically and physically destroyed works associated with Jews, Bolsheviks and 'Negroes', as well as anything seen as 'decadent' and 'un-German'.

The annual Great German Art exhibition was another propaganda pageant, and the Reich *Kulturkammer* (Reich Chamber of Culture) ensured that only arts 'suitable' for the masses were permitted. An individual's artistic tastes could become the subject of a report by their local block warden.

**Fact**

Weimar culture is epitomised in the works of the playwright Bertolt Brecht, the musician Kurt Weill, the artist George Grosz and the architects of the Bauhaus movement. Investigate some of their works and compare them with what followed during the Nazi era.

Many artists were expelled, or went into voluntary exile. For example, the conductors Bruno Walter and Otto Klemperer, the composers Schönberg, Hindemith and Kurt Weill, and the singers Marlene Dietrich and Lotte Lenya all left the country.

In the concert hall, the works of the Jewish composers Mahler and Mendelssohn were banned. Modernist paintings were removed from art galleries. The Nazis also tried to prohibit American jazz and foreign dance-band music, which was referred to as *Niggermusik*.

However, some artists remained and helped to give the regime respectability. Composers such as Richard Strauss, who became the first president of the Reich Chamber of Music, and singers such as Elizabeth Schwarzkopf, performed for the regime.

The spread of the *Volksempfänger* (people's receiver), a mass-produced radio found in over 70% of German homes by 1939, increased the number of listeners who could enjoy German classical music, which was mixed with light entertainment and traditional Germanic tunes and songs. Composers such as Anton Bruckner and Richard Wagner became popular heroes and attracted a mass following, as concerts were filmed to reach a wider audience, and skilfully edited shots of the audience reaction were displayed to reinforce the desired patriotic message.

The Wagnerian Bayreuth Festival was turned from an élitist minority interest into a great popular festival, as were art exhibitions and some theatrical performances. Attendance at arts events was subsidised and encouraged through works outings and special 'Strength through Joy' or Hitler Youth events. However, in popularising the arts, the Reich *Kulturkammer* often resorted to commissioning second-rate artists, as well as forcing those who possessed real talent into narrow and restrictive paths.

Films were seen as a useful popular diversion – partly propagandist and partly to provide relaxation and to offer a 'shared experience', binding the community together. Sound was relatively new and was developed to great effect in feature films. The Reich Film Chamber controlled both the content of German films and the foreign films that could be shown.

Some great producers, such as Leni Riefenstahl, flourished and produced works of art, even if the ideological themes were controversial. However, some films lacked subtlety and *The Eternal Jew* was so horrific that members of the audience fainted and box office receipts fell away. The cinema was used to show newsreels before the main picture and admission was restricted to the beginning of a programme, so all filmgoers had to sit through a certain amount of propaganda.

The impact of Nazism on the arts was contradictory. Not everything produced in Nazi Germany was an artistic disaster, but much individual creativity and inspiration was lost in the interests of *Gleichschaltung* (see page 72) and the desire to use culture as a propagandist tool. Some positive advances occurred despite, rather than because of, Nazi values. Music suffered the least, since it was played as written, but other art forms were reduced to fake posturing. After the war, artistic expression in West Germany seemed to pick up where the Weimar Republic had left off, almost as though the Nazi era had never existed.

#### Fact

The most famous films of the era, *Hitler Youth Quex* (1933), *Jud Süß* (1940) and *Ohm Krüger* (1941) (which was about British atrocities during the Boer War), all had clear political messages. However, the messages were conveyed subtly and the films are deemed to have some artistic merit. Leni Riefenstahl, who produced the *Triumph of Will* (1935) about the Nuremberg Party Rally and *Olympia* (1938) on the 1936 Olympic Games held in Berlin, was a particularly innovative and talented director.



## End of unit activities

- 1 Draw up a table to show the economic concerns of the Nazi government at key dates during the Nazis' time in power and their success in dealing with these issues:

Key stages in the development of the Nazi economy			
	Main policies	Success?	Failure?
1933–36			
1936–42			
1942–45			

- 2 Find out more about Schacht, Goering and Speer. Make a case for which of these men helped the Nazi government the most in his economic policies and actions. This could lead to a class debate.
- 3 Draw a diagram to show the various influences to which young people were subject in Nazi Germany.
- 4 Choose one aspect of Nazi culture and prepare a Powerpoint® presentation for your class in which you show how that art form was used as propaganda in this period.
- 5 Who gained most from the Nazi economy? Research the impact of economic policy on each of the following groups (you may like to divide these between members of your class):
  - big business
  - small traders
  - peasant farmers
  - factory workers.
- 6 Draw a spider diagram to show the influences behind changes to education in the Nazi era.
- 7 Find out more about alternative youth movements – the Swing Movement, the Edelweiss Pirates and the White Rose group.
- 8 Make a summary chart assessing whether the Nazis' social policies in the following areas were a success or a failure:

Area	Policies	Success?	Failure?	Comment
Women				
Youth				
Education				
Religion				
Minorities				
Culture and the arts				

What are the problems in assessing the success of Nazi social policy?

- 9 Why did the German Churches not offer more resistance to the Nazi regime?

# End of chapter activities

## Paper 1 exam practice

### Question

What message is suggested by Source A below about the *Führerprinzip* (the personal importance of Hitler in Nazi leadership)  
[2 marks]

### Skill

Comprehension of a source

#### SOURCE A

My German comrades!

I speak to you today ... first, in order that you should hear my voice and should know that I am unhurt and well and secondly that you should know that there has been a crime unparalleled in German history. A very small clique of ambitious, irresponsible and, at the same time, senseless and stupid officers have concocted a plot to eliminate me and, with me, the staff of the High Command of the *Wehrmacht* [armed forces]. The bomb planted by Colonel Count Stauffenberg ... seriously wounded a number of my true and loyal collaborators ... [but] I myself am entirely unhurt, aside from some minor bruises, scratches and burns. I regard this as a confirmation of the task imposed upon me by Providence ... The circle of these traitors is very small and has nothing in common with the spirit of the German *Wehrmacht* and, above all, none with the German people. It is a gang of criminal elements, which will be destroyed without mercy.

*From a personal radio broadcast made by Hitler to the German people on 21 July 1944, following the failure of the July Bomb Plot. Quoted in Noakes, J. 1998. Nazism 1919–1945: Vol. 4, The German Home Front in World War II: A Documentary Reader. Exeter, UK. University of Exeter Press. p. 111.*

### Examiner's tips

Comprehension questions test your basic understanding of a source and your comments need to be supported by some specific detail from that source. Ideally, you should try to make two or three separate points, providing a sentence on each. Since there are only 2 marks available for this question, answers should not be too long.

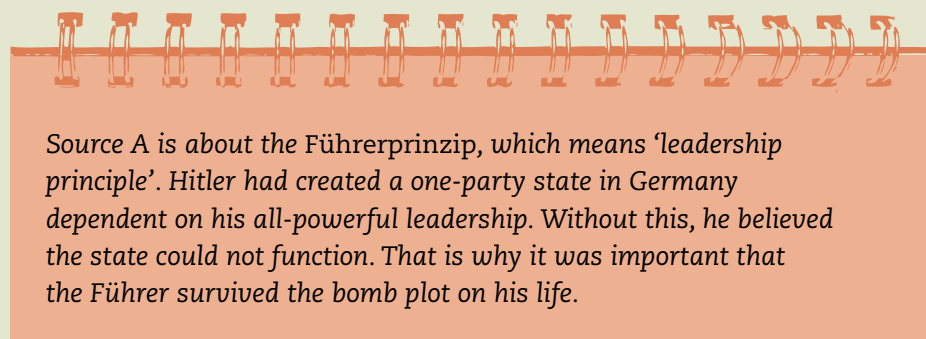
## Common mistakes

It is easy to comment about the topic of the source rather than the source itself. Try to keep to the specific content of the source rather than providing extraneous own knowledge.

## Simplified markscheme

For **each item of relevant/correct information** identified, award **1** mark – up to a **maximum of 2** marks.

## Student answer



## Examiner's comments

The candidate has shown an excellent knowledge of the *Führerprinzip*, but has failed to comment directly on the source. There is a brief link in the last sentence to the occasion but there is no direct reference to the specific timing, relevance or detail of the speech. This answer would therefore only be worthy of 1 mark.

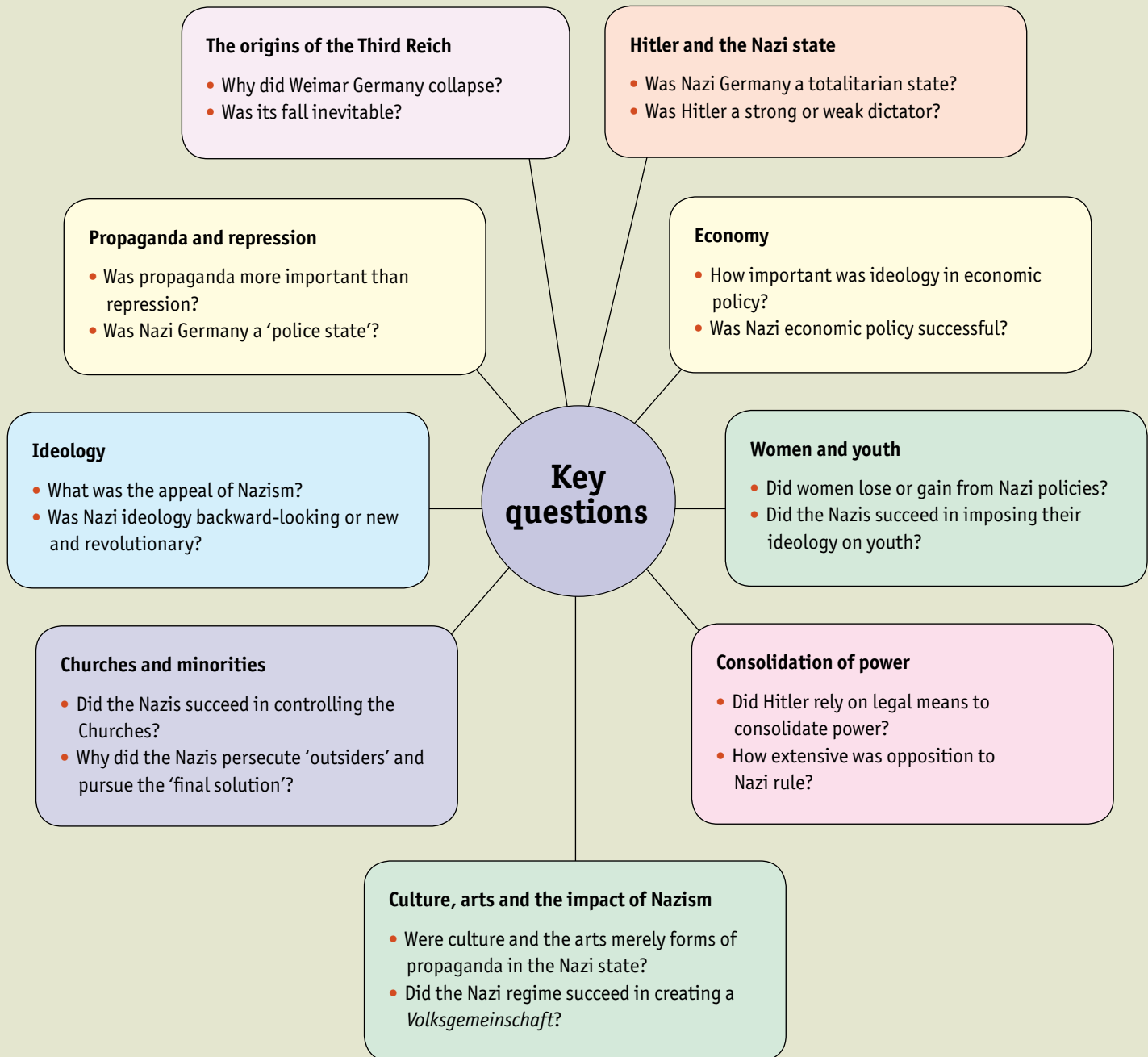
## Activity

Look closely at the source and see how many examples of statements demonstrating or explaining the *Führerprinzip* you can find. Look at the content and the meaning conveyed in Hitler's use of language and the references he makes. Could you, for example, comment meaningfully on the sentence 'I regard this as a confirmation of the task imposed upon me by Providence ...' or draw a message from the last sentence?

## Summary activity

Nazi Germany has been the subject of much historiographical debate. The diagram on the next page raises some key questions that have taxed historians trying to understand the truth of the Nazi German state. Having considered the issues they raise in the course of this chapter, you should be in a position to tackle them yourself. There are no easy answers. As with so much in History, the answers are likely to involve a compromise between support for different sides of the debate. However, it is in thinking through these compromises that you can hope to get nearer to understanding the complexities of the Nazi state.





## Paper 2 practice questions

- 1 Analyse the methods and conditions that enabled Hitler to rise to power in Germany.
- 2 Assess the importance of ideology in Hitler's rise to power.
- 3 Evaluate the way in which Hitler was able to consolidate his rule between January 1933 and the end of 1933.
- 4 How successful were Hitler's economic policies?
- 5 Examine the status and role of women in Nazi Germany.
- 6 To what extent were the lives of ordinary German families affected by Nazism in the years 1938 and 1939?

## Further reading

Try reading the relevant chapter/sections of the following books:

- Bessel, R. 1987. *Life in the Third Reich*. Oxford, UK. Oxford University Press.
- Evans, R. J. 2003. *The Coming of the Third Reich*. London, UK. Penguin Books.
- Evans, R. J. 2005. *The Third Reich in Power*. London, UK. Penguin Books.
- Evans, R. J. 2008. *The Third Reich at War*. London, UK. Penguin Books.
- Grunberger, R. 1971. *A Social History of the Third Reich*. London, UK. Penguin Books.
- Housden, M. 1996. *Resistance and Conformity in the Third Reich*. London, UK. Routledge.
- Kershaw, I. 1985. *The Nazi Dictatorship – Problems and Perspectives of Interpretations*. London, UK. Arnold.
- Kershaw, I. 1998. *Hitler 1889–1936: Hubris*. London, UK. Penguin Books.
- Kershaw, I. 2000. *Hitler 1936–1945: Nemesis*. London, UK. Penguin Books.
- Overy, R. 2004. *The Dictators: Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia*. London, UK. Allen Lane/Penguin Books.
- Stackelberg, R. and Winkle, S. A. (eds). 2002. *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*. London, UK. Routledge.



# 4 Mao and China

## 1 Origins and rise, 1894–1949

### Key questions

- What was China like in the early 20th century?
- How did Mao Zedong achieve leadership of the Chinese Communist Party?
- Why did civil war break out in China in 1946?
- Why did Mao become ruler of China in 1949?

### Overview

- In the early 20th century China suffered from a lack of unity and was politically unstable. It was dominated by foreign powers that had gained land, rights and privileges there.
- China became a republic in 1912 but its nationalist government was ineffective. A period of warlordism ensued between 1916 and 1928, when the GMD captured Beijing and established a central nationalist government, with Nanjing as the capital and Jiang Jieshi as president.
- The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was established in China in 1921, but Mao Zedong was not initially dominant. The CCP built up its membership and co-operated with Jiang Jieshi's nationalist Guomindang (GMD) in a United Front until 1927, when the GMD broke the alliance.
- The communists were forced to set up base areas, as at Jiangxi, and formed the Red Army. Surrounded by GMD forces, a large group (including Mao) broke out and undertook the Long March of 1934–35. They established a new base at Yan'an where Mao became undisputed leader and implemented his social policies, such as land reform.
- The Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–45) briefly reunited the GMD and CCP forces and the CCP grew. After Japan's defeat in 1945, the CCP fought a civil war against the GMD. This ended in complete victory for the communists and placed Mao in the position of ruler of China.

### Timeline

- 1894–95** First Sino-Japanese War
- 1898–01** Boxer Rebellion
- 1912 Jan:** Chinese Republic is established
- 1916 Jun:** period of warlordism begins
- 1921 July:** 1st National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party is held; Mao Zedong is one of the 12 delegates
- 1926 Jul:** Jiang Jieshi and GMD undertake northern campaign against the warlords
- 1927 Apr:** massacre of communists in Shanghai leads GMD to break alliance with communists
- 1928 Oct:** GMD establish a central government in China, with Nanjing as the capital and Jiang Jieshi as president
- 1931 Sep:** Japan begins invasion of Manchuria
- Nov:** Mao is established as head of the Chinese Soviet Republic at Jiangxi
- 1934 Oct:** communists undertake the Long March (ends October 1935), with new base established at Yan'an
- 1937 Jul:** Japan captures Beijing; GMD and communists form United Front
- 1941** United Front gradually breaks up when Jiang's forces attack communist troops
- 1945 Sep:** Japan is defeated in the Second World War and is forced to withdraw
- 1946 Jun:** full-scale civil war breaks out between the GMD and communists
- 1949 Jan:** communist forces capture Beijing
- Oct:** People's Republic of China is proclaimed in Beijing by Mao Zedong



## What was China like in the early 20th century?



### Fact

- China is nearly 50 times the size of Britain, larger than the whole of Europe and slightly smaller than the total land area of the United States.
- In the early 20th century, the majority of the population barely had enough to eat.
- Foreigners dominated industry and trade and had settlements (concessions) where they lived by their own laws.
- Society was very structured and valued scholarship. Trade was ranked as a lowly profession.

### Sun Yat Sen (1866–1925)

Sun Yat Sen came from a peasant background. He was a Christian and was educated in the West. He founded the first anti-imperial organisation in 1894 and campaigned for a republic. In 1905, he founded a revolutionary league and advocated nationalism, democracy and the improvement of livelihoods through socialism. In January 1912, he became president of the new Chinese republic, but resigned in March 1912 to avoid civil war.

### Question

Why was China such an unstable state in the early 20th century?

*A map showing the Chinese Empire at the end of the Qing Dynasty*

China had endured ‘100 years of humiliation’ by foreigners following its defeat in the ‘Opium Wars’ of 1839–42 and 1856–60 and by the Japanese in 1894–95. Industrialising nations, led by Britain, sought to make profits in China and divided the country into ‘spheres of influence’. Resentment of foreign domination provoked the Boxer Rebellion of 1898–1901.

In the early 20th century, peasants in China were struggling to survive and consequently resented heavy government taxes. Townspeople were under pressure from inflation and hostile to the corrupt government officials. Students were resentful of foreign influence and in despair at the failure of the dynasty to bring about effective reforms.

In 1911, a revolutionary uprising started in central China that brought together peasants, townspeople and students. The recognised leader of the young revolutionaries was **Sun Yat Sen**, who had formed a revolutionary league in 1905. Most of southern China was swept up in the movement that led to the proclamation of a Chinese republic. The Qing Dynasty, which had ruled China since 1644, collapsed.

Sun Yat Sen was declared president of a new National Assembly and the republic was formally established on 1 January 1912. The last emperor, six-year-old Puyi, abdicated in February. Sun resigned in March in favour of Yuan Shikai, a conservative army leader who had the loyalty of China's military forces. In August 1912, the nationalist **Guomindang** (GMD) party was formed, with Sun as its leader. The party brought together Sun's revolutionary league and other smaller revolutionary parties.

Yuan failed to live up to expectations and even tried to have himself crowned emperor. On his death in 1916, many of his former subordinates took the opportunity to seize control of their own provinces. They refused to acknowledge the authority of the republic and behaved as independent **warlords**.

The end of the First World War in Europe in 1918 increased Chinese humiliation. The 1919 Treaty of Versailles gave former German concessions in China to the Japanese, which provoked a patriotic march of students in Beijing on 4 May 1919. This was followed by nationwide demonstrations.

In 1925, the army officer **Jiang Jieshi** took the leadership of the GMD and in 1926 undertook a campaign against the warlords. Among those supporting his efforts were communists such as the young Mao Zedong, who worked among the peasants of Hunan, and Zhou Enlai, who helped to organise a strike among Shanghai workers, thus allowing the GMD to take the city in 1927.

Nevertheless, Jiang regarded the communists as a threat to his authority. He spoke of the Japanese as a 'disease of the skin' but of the communists as 'a disease of the heart'. Consequently, after taking Shanghai, Jiang turned his army on the striking workers and their communist leaders. Thousands were killed. Jiang also expelled the GMD's Russian advisers. Such moves were popular with China's business class, who provided the GMD with financial support. Similarly, Western powers also provided loans in an attempt to keep communism out of China.

By 1928, Jiang had overcome the warlords sufficiently to capture Beijing and establish a central government with Nanjing as the capital. Jiang's nationalist government brought China a new, more stable currency and some industrial growth, but the Japanese remained in Manchuria and set up a puppet administration, Manchukuo, headed by Puyi, the former emperor.

## How did Mao Zedong achieve leadership of the Chinese Communist Party?

Mao became a Marxist whilst studying and working as a library assistant at Beijing University in 1919. He came to believe that 'all power grows out of the barrel of a gun' and that violence was the only way to achieve change in China. He met and corresponded with other communist thinkers, helped to organise strikes and took part in the 4 May protest movement in 1919 against the granting of former German territory in China to Japan.

The Russian **Comintern**, established in 1919 in order to spread Marxist revolution beyond Russia, encouraged the formation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921. The party was led by Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao, but Mao was one of 12 delegates who attended the 1st National Congress of the party in July 1921.

**Guomindang** This was the nationalist political party founded in China in 1912; it governed China from 1928 to 1949.

**warlords** Warlords were generals who commanded bands of soldiers who terrorised peasants into giving food and paying taxes.

**Jiang Jieshi (1887–1975)**  
(Also known as Chiang Kai-Shek)  
Jiang became leader of the GMD in 1925 and from 1928 dominated the nationalist government as president and commander-in-chief of the army in China. He lost popularity by failing to enforce reforms or prevent the Japanese invasion. After the GMD's defeat by the communists, he fled to Taiwan in 1949, which he ruled until his death.



**Comintern** The Communist International or Comintern was founded in Moscow in March 1919 to fight 'by all available means, including armed force, for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie and for the creation of an international Soviet republic as a transition stage to the complete abolition of the state'. It sent advisers to other countries to encourage communist revolution.

As ordered by the Comintern, CCP members also joined the GMD in order to drive the 'imperialists' from China and bring about Chinese unity. Mao worked as a GMD political organiser in Shanghai and, in 1924, was elected to both the Central Committee of the CCP and that of the GMD.

When Jiang Jieshi broke the alliance with the CCP in 1927, Mao developed his own brand of communism in the rural areas. He believed (contrary to Comintern advice) that communism had to be established among Chinese peasants if it was to succeed.

Mao attempted a revolt of peasants in his native Hunan in 1927, but this was bloodily suppressed. He then led his followers to a more secure base in the remote mountains of Jinggangshan. Here, he formed the communist Red Army.

Mao built up a well-disciplined and reliable force by providing basic provisions and pay and insisting that all generals, including himself, shared the hardships of the ordinary men. Although the ranks had to obey orders, they were otherwise treated as equals and could not be beaten by officers. Unlike the GMD army, the force was ordered to help the peasants. By 1928, the Red Army consisted of 12,000 men.

The army was, however, poorly equipped and relied on bamboo spikes more commonly than guns. This led it to develop guerrilla tactics. Small, lightly armed bands of Red Army soldiers merged with the civilian population, disguised as peasants, or retreated into underground tunnels linking villages to attack the larger enemy forces when and where they least expected it.

**Fact**

Mao said: 'The Red Army lives among people as a fish dwells in water.' And, in reference to tactics:

- 'The enemy advances, we retreat.
- The enemy camps, we harass.
- The enemy tires, we attack.
- The enemy retreats, we pursue.'

**Fact**

The 'Six Principles of the Red Army' were:

- Put back all doors when leaving a house.
- Rice-stalk mattresses must all be bundled up and returned.
- Be polite. Help people when you can.
- Give back everything you borrow, even if it's only a needle.
- Pay for all things broken, even if only a chopstick.
- Don't help yourself or search for things when people are not in their houses.



Members of the Red Army in 1927, with newly supplied Russian equipment; the Red Army was created from willing peasant recruits



In 1929, Mao's band moved to more fertile land in the south of Jiangxi province around Ruijin, where they established a base and in 1931 set up the Jiangxi Soviet. Mao referred to the area as the 'Chinese Soviet Republic'. It contained a population of 1 million.

Mao became CCP party secretary and ordered land redistribution. Poorer peasants were encouraged to kill their richer peasant neighbours and landlords, and those who disagreed with Mao's line and those he suspected of disloyalty were purged. In 1930, Mao ordered 2000 Red Army soldiers to be shot for staging a revolt at Futian, for example.

**Fact**

Jung Chang and Jon Halliday calculated that, between 1931 and 1934, 700,000 people died at the Ruijin base. Half were murdered as 'class enemies'; the rest were worked to death or died from other causes attributable to the regime.

**The Long March**

Despite four different campaigns from 1930 onwards, Jiang Jieshi failed to defeat the Red Army. However, when the GMD surrounded the communist stronghold



The route of the Long March

**Fact**

The Long March from Jiangxi was much celebrated in later Maoist mythology. However, there is evidence that Mao was not the initial leader of the march – nor even automatically selected to take part in it (see Xinran, *Chinese Witness*). Hurdles included crossing the swollen Dadu River by a suspension bridge that had been sabotaged and had no planks in the first section.

**Question**

Why do you think that the Long March was later afforded such an important place in Maoist propaganda?

in an attempt to starve the red forces into surrender, Mao recognised the need to move elsewhere. Consequently, in October 1934, Mao and the main body of the Red Army broke through where Jiang’s forces were weakest, to the west, and began their Long March. On 20 October 1935, the marchers arrived at Shaanxi. Around 5000 of 100,000 original marchers survived the 13,000 km (8000 mile) ordeal.



**SOURCE A**

Has there ever been in history a Long March like ours? No, never. The Long March is also a manifesto. It proclaims to the world that the Red Army is an army of heroes and that the imperialists and their jackals, Jiang Jieshi and his like, are perfect nonentities. The Long March has sown many seeds in eleven provinces, which will sprout, grow leaves, blossom into flowers, bear fruit and yield a crop in future.

*From a speech by Mao in December 1935 on the importance of the Long March of 1934–35. Quoted in Schools Council. 1977. Rise of Communist China (Modern World Studies). Edinburgh, UK. Holmes McDougall. p. 29.*

**Fact**

In 1936, Mao asked a US sympathiser, the Beijing school teacher Edgar Snow, to write the story of the communist movement in China. His *Red Star Over China* romanticised Mao’s movement, and tens of thousands of young, educated Chinese went to Yan’an in a spirit of idealism. However, they found themselves suspected as ‘bourgeois intellectuals’, class-enemies or nationalist spies.

**Question**

Why had Mao Zedong emerged as the unchallenged leader of the CCP by 1945?

**The Yan’an Soviet**

The surviving marchers settled in the Yan’an Soviet. Here, peasants were won over by land redistribution and rent control (a slightly milder approach than that used at Jiangxi, with no mass killings of rich peasants or landlords). Campaigns were undertaken to improve literacy and stamp out corruption, while homes, schools, hospitals and factories were created in cliff caves and huts.

Mao and the communist leadership undertook all political decision-making, but peasants and others participated in ‘revolutionary committees’. Mass meetings were also held that helped build support and increase the number of military recruits for the anti-Japanese struggle.

Mao wrote a number of political and philosophical works here, which helped him impose his personal authority. A series of ‘rectification campaigns’ in 1942 removed any suspected disloyalty, as men and women were forced to confess to ‘crimes’ that went against Mao’s orders and beliefs, and were publicly stripped of possessions or posts. There were regular ‘self-criticism’ sessions at which everyone was encouraged to air their doubts and secrets. Not to speak at such a meeting brought even greater suspicion on an individual, but to air too many faults could lead to demotion and punishment. No outside press or radio communication was permitted to witness what was going on, and no letters could be sent to or received from the outside world.

**Why did civil war break out in China in 1946?**

A full-scale attack on China by the Japanese in 1937 led Jiang Jieshi to approach the CCP once again to form a United Front. This enabled the communists to

expand their army and develop their guerrilla tactics, tying down some Japanese forces in the north. However, the GMD nationalists were rapidly forced into retreat and they had to abandon Beijing as the Japanese advanced into southern China and along the Yangtze River. Jiang's prestige was severely weakened.

In 1941, Jiang broke his agreement and again attacked communist forces in the south – an action portrayed by the communists as unprincipled. When the USA and Britain entered the war in the Far East, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, Jiang's government was accused of dependence on foreign allies. The CCP, on the other hand, were able to advertise themselves as the only true Chinese patriots.

The outbreak of civil war between the GMD and CCP followed the ending of the Second World War. Despite the nationalists' poor showing in the war against the Japanese, the Japanese defeat in 1945 left the Allies ready to recognise the legitimacy of Jiang Jieshi's government in China (even though it only controlled a fraction of that country's territory). They gave China a seat on the Security Council of the United Nations.

The USA continued to supply aid, arms and advisers to Jiang and helped the nationalists to move back into areas of northern China and Manchuria that had been liberated by the Soviet Red Army. The communists resisted this move and reinforced their soldiers with weapons captured from the Japanese and handed over to them by the former Russian occupation forces.

Nevertheless, neither Russia nor the USA wanted to see civil war in China. In August 1945, the USA organised a meeting between **Mao Zedong** and Jiang Jieshi at which it was agreed they would work together towards the creation of a democratically elected National Assembly and a single army.

However, no sooner had the agreement been signed, than fighting broke out over the nationalists' attempt to reclaim Manchuria. A ceasefire was agreed under US auspices in January 1946. A document outlining a constitution for China was drawn up, but when the GMD subsequently tried to change this to gain greater dominance, the communists withdrew.

In July 1946, the GMD launched a major offensive against the communist forces in Manchuria, while the communists seized the industrial city of Harbin in northern Manchuria and consolidated their hold in the rural areas. From July 1946, a full-scale civil war broke out and the US negotiator, George Marshall, returned home.

## Why did Mao become ruler of China in 1949?

Although the nationalists and communists had been struggling for power since 1927, it was the civil war of 1946–49 that, against all the odds, secured Mao as ruler of China. In 1946, Mao's communist military forces were reorganised as a single army, known as the People's Liberation Army (PLA), and given a unified command. In the fierce four-year struggle, the PLA defeated Jiang Jieshi's forces, despite Jiang's US aid and the fickleness of Soviet Union leader Joseph Stalin, who, to the end, engaged in negotiations with Jiang.

The table on page 122 illustrates some of the strengths and weaknesses of each side and helps to explain the ultimate communist victory in the civil war.

### Mao Zedong (1893–1976)

Mao came from a relatively prosperous peasant background. He learnt the Confucian Classics and enjoyed reading, although he left school at 13 to work on the land. However, in 1913 he decided to train as a teacher and founded the New People's Study Society in 1917. He became a library assistant in Beijing in 1919 and studied Marxism. He attended the first Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in July 1921 and was its leader from 1935. He was chairman of the People's Republic of China from 1949 to 1959. From 1966, he was 'worshipped' in the Cultural Revolution.



### Activity

Draw a diagram to show the long- and short-term causes of the civil war that broke out in China in 1946.

### Activity

Using the information contained in the chart on page 122, explain why the communists won the civil war that took place in China between 1946 and 1949.



Strengths and weaknesses of the GMD and CCP/PLA in the civil war, 1946–49

Issue	Nationalists – GMD	Communists – CCP/PLA
Troops	Army larger and better equipped than the communists' army (2,800,000 troops at the start of the war); had an air force; experienced in conventional fighting; able to take initiative in the early stages. <b>But</b> troops were largely conscripts with low morale and poor training.	Had fewer troops than the nationalists (no more than 800,000 at the start of the war); were poorly equipped and had no aircraft. <b>But</b> by June 1948 armies were roughly equal in size; soldiers trained as pilots; experienced in guerrilla warfare; morale and discipline good.
Territory	Controlled most territory and population/most large cities/most of railway network and main waterways at outbreak of war. <b>But</b> control could depend on local warlords; behaviour of soldiers lost some support from local populations.	19 base areas with main base at Yan'an at outbreak of war. <b>But</b> from 1948 took cities; key railway junction (Jinzhou) gave control of Manchuria; controlled whole of northern China including Beijing by January 1949 and most of the south and west during 1949.
Foreign powers	Recognised by other powers (including Soviet Union) as legitimate government; the USA gave almost \$3 billion in aid, provided equipment and military assistance; Soviet Union signed treaty of alliance and tried to curb Mao. <b>But</b> the USA was critical of Jiang's style of rule and the Russian Red Army aided the PLA in the early stages.	Soviet troops in Manchuria gave PLA forces training (e.g. as pilots), and equipment at the outset. <b>But</b> Stalin ordered that cities be given to the nationalists in November 1945 (although the PLA retained Harbin). Stalin urged Mao not to send forces across the Yangtze River to the south in 1949 but Mao ignored him.
Popular support	Had 10 years' experience of running a one-party state; used police, army and harsh reprisals to keep peasants and workers in check. <b>But</b> noted for corruption, inefficiency, minimal reform, inflation and rationing; had poor reputation from struggle against the Japanese; were reliant on wealthy businessmen and landlords; did not try to build up mass support.	Supported by peasantry who feared revenge if an area was recaptured by the GMD; had a good reputation from the struggle against the Japanese; kept troops restrained, took steps to control prices; used propaganda to win support (particularly targeted at the young). <b>But</b> only controlled Harbin and a few cities at the outset; dealt harshly with those who did not conform.
Leadership	Jiang: experienced, hard-working, confident, ruthless; controlled military strategy. <b>But</b> could be stubborn, inflexible, not good at delegation, poor judge of character, relied on corrupt advisers.	Mao: personality cult, inspired confidence; allowed field commanders to fight without interference. <b>But</b> insisted on defending a pass between China and Manchuria (November 1945), which failed; not good in dealings with foreign powers.
Military factors	Early advantages – Yan'an taken, March 1947. <b>But</b> sent best troops to Manchuria before establishing control of northern and central China; lost Manchuria in early 1948; no retreats allowed; generals corrupt, incompetent; communication lines long; troops in cities had to be supplied by air; increasing surrenders without fighting (e.g. Beijing, January 1949).	Guerrilla warfare maintained pressure and, once men were trained, from 1948, began conventional warfare; in spring 1948, retook Yan'an, which was a psychological boost; <b>Lin Biao</b> organised the army, capturing transport links to isolate GMD forces in cities. <b>But</b> initially inferior in equipment and numbers.

On 1 October 1949, Mao Zedong gave a triumphant victory speech from the Gate of Heavenly Peace (formerly the entrance to the Imperial Palace) in the capital of Beijing. The crowds cheered as Mao, **Zhou Enlai** and other communist leaders watched a procession of Red Army soldiers, peasant fighters and other party workers. As they did so, the communist forces were still sweeping west and south almost unopposed. Jiang, with the remaining members of his army and government, fled to Taiwan and declared it to be the seat of the legitimate Chinese government. However, it seemed only a matter of time before he would be ousted.



Mao Zedong proclaiming the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in Beijing, 1 October 1949

### SOURCE B

We announce the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Our nation will from now on enter the large family of peace-loving and freedom-loving nations of the world. It will work bravely and industriously to create its own civilisation and happiness and will, at the same time, promote world peace and freedom. Our nation will never again be an insulted nation. We have stood up.

*An extract from Mao Zedong's victory speech, 1 October 1949. Quoted in Schools Council. 1977. Rise of Communist China (Modern World Studies). Edinburgh, UK. Holmes McDougall. p. 41.*

### Zhou Enlai (1898–1976)

Zhou Enlai attended university in Japan, but returned to China in 1919 and became involved in the 4 May movement (see page 117). He went to France and returned to join the Military Academy at Whampoa in 1924. He worked there as a deputy political director during the United Front period. In 1927, he joined the Central Committee of the CCP and, from 1949, served Mao as prime minister and third in the hierarchy (after Lin Biao). He was regarded as a moderate, particularly in foreign affairs.

### Fact

Taiwan is a group of islands off the east coast of mainland China. Jiang Jieshi ruled Taiwan as the Republic of China (ROC) and until 1971 it was recognised by many Western nations and by the UN as the only legitimate government of China, with a seat on the security council.

### Lin Biao (1908–1971)

Lin Biao attended the Whampoa Military Academy and became an able military commander for the CCP. He transformed the PLA into a modern army. In 1949, he was ranked second in the governing hierarchy and recognised as heir to Mao. He became minister of defence in 1959 and was responsible for the support that some army units gave Mao during the Cultural Revolution. However, he apparently died in a plane crash in Mongolia in September 1971, after what was declared to be a failed coup to oust Mao.

### Discussion point

With reference to your reading in this unit, consider which side you think was more responsible for the outbreak of the civil war – the nationalists or the communists?

## End of unit activities

- 1 Make a thematic chart to illustrate why the communists triumphed in 1949. You could look at:
  - political factors
  - economic factors
  - social factors
  - military factors
  - the influence of individuals.
- 2 Imagine you were a student arriving at Yan'an in the late 1930s. Write a few pages of your diary, giving your impressions, hopes, fears and other relevant details.
- 3 Find out more about Mao's own writings. Collect and share extracts from his works, explaining what these extracts can tell you about Mao and his ideas.
- 4 Write two speeches:
  - a a speech that Mao might have given on winning the civil war and taking control of the Chinese government
  - b a speech that Jiang Jieshi might have given after losing the civil war and fleeing to Taiwan.



### Theory of knowledge

#### History and the value of evidence

According to Harrison Salisbury, 'I don't think that there was much natural cruelty in Mao's make-up. He didn't exercise cruelty for the sake of cruelty. He didn't mind using it if it was necessary, but he was not a man who got his kicks that way. He was a man who saw life as being very cruel.'

Was the way Mao ruled in Jiangxi and Yan'an cruel? From what standpoint should a historian judge Mao's behaviour? Most of the material we have on Mao's early life comes from interviews that he gave while at Yan'an. What are the problems posed by such evidence?



## 2 Ideology and the nature of the state

### Key questions

- What were the origins of Maoist ideology?
- What were the key elements of 'Mao Zedong Thought'?
- In what ways and with what effect did Mao's ideology influence his rule in China between 1949 and 1976?

### Overview

- Mao Zedong's ideology was shaped by his family background and his studies under Yang Changji and Li Dazhao.
- Mao attended the 1st National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921, but at first he was not their main spokesman. His ideology, which centred on the importance of the peasants, was at variance with mainstream Marxist thinking.
- Mao's ideology became defined during his time at Jiangxi and Yan'an and established his position as leader of the CCP.
- Mao added to a belief in the main tenets of Marxist revolution an emphasis on the peasants, a two-stage revolution, mass mobilisation and voluntarism, continuous revolution, self-criticism and rectification, ruthless determination and a demand that his own ideology be regarded as a guiding force.
- Once Mao had come to power in 1949 and his ideology was put into action, it tended to become a destructive force that detracted from Mao's declared goals of strengthening China and improving the lives of the Chinese people.

One of the earliest editions of *The Little Red Book*, printed in 1963 prior to formal official publication in 1964



### Timeline

- 1917** Mao's first article, 'On the value of physical education', is published
- 1919** Mao studies Marxism in Beijing
- 1921** Mao attends 1st National Congress of Chinese Communist Party
- 1940** Mao's article 'On new democracy' is published
- 1942** Mao's first rectification campaign is launched
- 1949** Mao becomes ruler of China and 'Mao Zedong Thought' becomes the main source of authority
- 1951** the 'anti' movements (see Unit 3) show mass mobilisation in action
- 1958** the Great Leap Forward (see Unit 4) shows weaknesses of ideology
- 1962** Socialist Education Movement is announced
- 1964** Mao's *The Little Red Book* is published
- 1966** Mao reappears in public and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is launched

### Question

Identify what you think will be the key influences on the development of Mao Zedong's thinking from his early years.

**Confucianism** This was a complex system of moral, philosophical and political thinking developed by the philosopher Confucius (551–478 BC), whereby individuals were encouraged to devote their lives to the achievement of moral perfection.

### Fact

It was the anti-imperialist aspect of Marxism that appealed in China. After the chaos of warlordism and the collapse of the administration, the Marxist idea that dramatic change could be achieved by the action of 'ordinary people' and that history was on the side of its followers appeared attractive. A ferment of Marxist discussion and writing was encouraged in Beijing by returning overseas students, who left the USA and other Western countries because of the war, or came back from Japan when it renewed its hostile stance towards China after 1915. See [Chapter 1](#), pages 9–10, to recap on Marxist theory.

**voluntaryism** This term refers to individual willingness to accept and share the same beliefs as those of the community in which they live. This might involve freely renouncing past evil, re-education and remaking in the communist image.

**mass mobilisation** This term refers to everyone working together to decide on and carry out policies.

## What were the origins of Maoist ideology?

Maoist ideology, or 'Mao Zedong Thought', was the product of Mao's background and upbringing. Born into a middle-ranking peasant family in 1893, he knew of hardship, the humiliation brought by foreign influence and the prevailing sense of disillusionment with the government. As a teenager, he experienced life as a volunteer soldier in the 1911 revolution and was bitterly disappointed when the warlords took over. Mao was an intelligent boy with a love of reading. His decision to train as a teacher in 1913 brought him into contact with Yang Changji, who had spent six years in Japan and four years in Britain and rejected **Confucianism**, in which Mao was steeped as a boy. Yang Changji was a contributor to the periodical *Hsin Ch'ing-nien* (*New Youth*), which spread 'Western' ideas. He introduced Mao to the work of Yan Fu, a scholar who had stressed the need for strong leadership to bring change in China, and of Wang Fuzhi, who believed that 'there is not a single part of human nature already shaped that cannot be modified'.

Mao became deeply concerned about the future of his country and read many Western works, including those of Montesquieu, Adam Smith, Charles Darwin, J. S. Mill and Herbert Spencer. He was convinced that the solution to the future of China would need to be a military one. However, before 1918, he lacked a mature political philosophy. He later said, 'My mind was a curious mixture of ideas of liberalism, democratic reformism and Utopian socialism.'

In 1919, Mao moved to Beijing University where he worked under the librarian, Li Dazhao. Beijing University had become a focus for Marxist studies. Just before Mao's arrival, Li Dazhao had published an article on 'The Victory of Bolshevism' in *New Youth* and he encouraged Marxist discussion in his room, known as the 'Red Chamber'. Here, Mao developed his belief in the masses as a source of energy that could transform China.

Mao pursued his Marxist studies in Beijing in late 1919, and subsequently in Shanghai. In Shanghai, he worked as a laundryman, read *The Communist Manifesto* and took part in discussions with the prominent communist Chen Duxiu. He formed a communist group in Changsha in 1920, attended the first CCP Congress in July 1921 and joined the Central Committee in 1923. However, Mao remained detached from the mainstream communist group who attributed little importance to the Chinese peasantry. In 1923, Chen Duxiu wrote, 'The peasants are widely scattered, therefore it is not easy to organise them into an effective force.' While the party concentrated on the cities, Mao saw the numerically strong peasants as the leaders of revolution, and from 1924 he worked in the newly created GMD Peasant Movement Training Institute.

Mao increasingly formulated his own ideology, believing a vigorous organisation of the peasantry under communist leadership and a radical land policy were needed. He thought that 'revolutionary impetuosity' had to be avoided, and developed tactical ideas about the need for a base area, organised military forces and guerrilla tactics – 'encircling the city with the country'. He also practised the 'ruthlessness and determination' that was to characterise his career. Torture and execution were justified if they were in the interests of the masses.

By the time of the Long March (1934–35) Mao's ideology was clear. His adaptation of Marxism–Leninism (see [Chapter 1](#)) for a peasant mass base won support, as it was seen to work. In Yan'an, he also encouraged **voluntaryism**, **mass mobilisation** and self-criticism.



## What were the key elements of 'Mao Zedong Thought'?

The key elements of 'Mao Zedong Thought' are illustrated in the chart below.

Orthodox Marxist beliefs	
Marxist revolution	Progress would come through class struggle in which the landowners and bourgeoisie had to be overthrown. This would lead to the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' (or masses). There should be collective ownership of the means of production. Socialist states should promote worldwide communist revolution.
Specific Chinese elements	
The importance of the peasants	The peasant masses could overthrow capitalism and create a socialist society.
A two-stage revolution, as explained in Mao's 'On new democracy' (1940)	The first revolution could incorporate elements of the bourgeoisie. During this stage private ownership could continue. A second revolution would bring about the collectivisation and nationalisation of property and economic resources and remove remaining elements of the bourgeoisie.
Mass mobilisation and voluntarism	The party should 'learn from the people'. Campaigns should be people's campaigns and not be imposed from above. Properly guided, the people would support campaigns voluntarily and work in the best interests of all.
Continuous revolution	Revolution should not cease once a party achieved power but should be a constant process of renewal, to avoid complacency and corruption.
Self-criticism and rectification	Officials should undergo regular criticism to prevent them becoming self-satisfied and élitist and regular purges of the party would keep it pure. Only through self-criticism would individuals see the wisdom of mass campaigns and 'rectify' false thoughts.
Ruthless determination	Will-power and determination would be sufficient to bring about change provided everyone showed total commitment. Violence was a necessary element of revolution.
The primacy of 'Mao Zedong Thought'	Mao Zedong was always right and people could find the solution to any problem if they studied his thought sufficiently.

### Fact

Mao's most influential writing was 'On new democracy' (1940), which suggested that China had to adopt a 'third form' of democracy, involving a two-stage revolution that was different from both the democracy of the capitalist West and the communist system as practised in Soviet Russia.

### Questions

- 1 Why did Mao focus on the peasants rather than the industrial proletariat?
- 2 Which elements of 'Mao Zedong Thought' do you think would be most effective in attracting support to get into power, and which in maintaining that power?
- 3 What do you think would be the main strength of Mao's political platform?

### Activity

Make a spider diagram to show the various elements that created 'Mao Zedong Thought'.



## In what ways and with what effect did Mao's ideology influence his rule in China between 1949 and 1976?

**Liu Shaoqi (1898–1969)** Liu Shaoqi joined the CCP in 1921 and had trained in the Soviet Union as a communist organiser and theorist in the 1920s. He was a close ally of Mao during the Yan'an years and was recognised as Mao's chosen successor in 1943. He succeeded Mao as chairman of the republic in 1959, but was denounced during the Cultural Revolution for 'taking the capitalist road', opposing the communes (see page 138). He was expelled from the CCP in October 1968 and died in prison.

**Deng Xiaoping (1904–97)** The son of a peasant, Deng joined the Communist Party while on a work-study programme in France in the 1920s. He studied in Moscow from 1926 to 1927 and was one of the members of the Long March. He was a military leader during the civil war and after 1949 became an important figure in the economic restructuring. He became general secretary of the party's Central Committee in 1956, but was denounced at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. He was purged twice, but was paramount leader of the People's Republic of China from 1978 to 1992.

Mao's ideology – the 'Yan'an spirit' – proved a recipe for success in establishing his leadership and enabling him to assume power in China in 1949. However, how ideology served Mao thereafter is more controversial.

Mao clashed with other leaders, particularly **Liu Shaoqi**, over planning the communist state. This was partly because Mao adopted the same revolutionary approach to its construction as that which had worked in winning him power. He was convinced that China had to be transformed by the mobilisation of the masses and in his opening address to the Consultative Conference on 21 September 1949 stressed the importance of 'determination' and 'the will to achieve' as the most important elements in bringing about change.

Mao's belief that 'sheer commitment' was sufficient to drive the country forward and make up for China's lack of capital and technology showed an acute lack of real understanding. The Great Leap Forward of 1958–61 (see Unit 4) emphasised the prodigious efforts that the Chinese workers were prepared to make for their country, but Mao's ideological belief that willpower alone could bring economic regeneration proved false. Mao's policies hindered proper industrial management, deprived China of the trained experts it needed to direct its social and economic programme, wasted natural and human resources and brought horrendous famine (see page 151). It was left to **Deng Xiaoping** and Liu Shaoqi, who had always advocated planning and an emphasis on the development of specialist skills, to restore food supplies by restricting Maoist collectivisation and addressing the real economic problems.

Mao's belief in himself and his own leadership was perhaps the most damaging aspect of his ideology. He could never accept that manpower and ambition were insufficient and blamed 'bourgeois elements', 'capitalist roaders' and 'backsliders' for the failure of his economic policies. Furthermore, he ignored the evidence of the famine produced by government advisers, demonstrating the same disregard for human life that had been seen in his years in Jiangxi and Yan'an. While Mao's ideology rested on criticism, he seemed unable to apply this to himself.

Mao stepped down as chairman of the People's Republic of China in 1959, but he retained his commitment to 'continuing revolution'. In 1962, he launched the Socialist Education Movement in an attempt to infuse new revolutionary fervour into the party and government bureaucracies. Also known as the Four Cleanups Campaign, the education movement was designed to 'cleanse politics, economy, organisation and ideology', and its launch was in accordance with Mao's belief that 'governance is a process of socialist education'. The school system was to be based around a work-study programme, with universal participation in manual labour. 'Intellectuals' were also to undertake manual labour in order to remove 'bourgeois influences'. It would thus intensify the class struggle and re-educate the masses for mass mobilisation. However, its effect was largely dissipated by Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi, who believed that China needed a period of stability to allow for economic growth.

By 1966 Mao was so convinced that China was relapsing into corruption, bureaucratisation and élitism that he felt impelled to return to the forefront



### Theory of knowledge

#### History and the masses

Is it realistic to be able to run a state through mass mobilisation?

of politics. Mao argued that a gulf was appearing between the cadres (party officials) and the masses, and that revisionist, right-wing tendencies had increased. In accordance with his belief that every generation should have a new commitment, he therefore turned to the youthful 'Red Guards' to challenge 'routinisation'. The youth, he believed, would regenerate the nation and create a new socialist order.

In July 1966, after several months during which he was little seen in public, Mao suddenly reappeared in Wuhan to take a vigorous and well-reported swim in the Yangtze River. It was a publicity stunt and a signal that Mao was in good health and ready to launch a counter-attack on his critics among the 'counter-revolutionary' party leadership. Although in his early seventies, the party propagandists claimed that he had swum nearly 15 km (9 miles) in 65 minutes, which was an astonishing speed, if it was true. If the ageing chairman could conquer the mighty Yangtze, then the nation's youth should feel inspired to face the political storm and help overthrow Mao's opponents.

The reassertion of Mao's leadership and ideology – following his Yangtze River swim – heralded a period of intense 'rectification' which, according to Lloyd Eastman, was 'Mao Zedong's supreme effort to prevent the traditional political culture from suffocating the revolution that he had nursed to maturity'. Mao believed he could 'remould the souls of the people' and accepted the need for ruthlessness and violence as an integral part of the cleansing process with 'great disorder across the land leading to great order'.



A picture released by the Chinese official news agency shows Mao Zedong (centre, bottom) surrounded by his bodyguards, swimming in the Yangtze River near Wuhan, 16 July 1966

### Discussion point

Was Maoist ideology constructive or destructive?

### Questions

- 1 To what extent did Mao attempt to instigate the main principles of communism during his rule in China? (You may wish to return to this question after studying units 3 and 4.)
- 2 How successful was Mao in fulfilling his ideological aims in the years 1949–76?



### Theory of knowledge

#### History and ideology

Does knowledge of Maoist ideology help the historian to justify and excuse Mao's actions?

However, the Cultural Revolution (see page 138) highlighted an essential paradox. It proved impossible to reconcile voluntaryism – whereby men and women were re-educated to participate willingly in the ‘mass struggle’ – with Mao’s determination to stamp out ‘bourgeois thinking’. To achieve this, Mao was forced to resort to extensive repression, brain-washing and an unparalleled level of violence. Early revolutionaries became the regime’s victims and, in an attempt to prove their socialist credentials, the persecutors became ever more extreme (see page 140).

Mao’s ideological beliefs thus brought turmoil and destruction to his people. It would probably be fair to say that the social and economic improvements that occurred between 1949 and 1976 took place largely despite, rather than because of, Mao’s strong ideological principles. His view that unless the Communist Party was regularly purified it would cease to be a revolutionary force, and China would cease to be truly socialist, threatened to defeat his own objective of making China strong and prosperous.

### End of unit activities

- 1 Draw up a summary chart with the main characteristics of Mao’s ideology on the left-hand side and a brief explanation of each on the right.
- 2 Draw a diagram to show the differences between the communisms of Mao, Stalin and Marx.
- 3 Design a poster that conveys an aspect of Maoist ideology and tries to persuade its audience of its value.



# 3 Establishment and consolidation of Mao's rule

## Key questions

- By what means did Mao establish communist control in China in the years 1949–54?
- What part did mass mobilisation campaigns and purges play in ensuring Mao's authority in the years 1949–54?
- How did Mao maintain political control between 1954 and 1976?
- What parts were played by propaganda and repression in Mao's consolidation of power, and was Mao's China a totalitarian state?

## Overview

- The CCP set up a new structure of government that paid lip service to 'democratic principles' but in which the party was dominant and shared many of the personnel of the state government.
- Mass movements, local committees and rectification campaigns ensured surveillance and control over the population.
- The army was used to secure dominance over outlying areas, such as Tibet.
- Attempts were made to improve living standards in towns and the countryside.
- In the period of consolidation and recovery between 1949 and 1952, the CCP made compromises allowing the continuance of some private ownership. However, the land reform programme of 1950 saw the destruction of the power and wealth of the landlords, even if ownership of the land still remained private.
- The four mass campaigns of 1950–52 and the purge of Rao Shushi and Gao Gang in 1954 showed the ruthlessness of Mao and the party in removing their perceived enemies.
- Between 1954 and 1976, pressure on 'rightists' was maintained in the anti-rightist campaign of 1957, the Socialist Education Movement of 1962 and the Cultural Revolution from 1966.
- Even Mao's former colleagues and loyal supporters could be purged, as was the case with Peng Dehuai in 1959. Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi were ousted in 1966 and Lin Biao died in mysterious circumstances in 1971. Deng was rehabilitated in 1973, but purged a second time in 1976.
- Constant propaganda, fear and the use of rectification campaigns ensured the communist hold over the Chinese people. The police, courts and legal system were entirely in the party's hands and the prison camps removed opponents and kept others in check.
- Mao's system of rule, which even included trying to change the way people thought, contained all the key elements of a totalitarian state.

## Timeline

- 1949 Oct:** The People's Republic of China (PRC) is established with Mao as chairman
- 1950 Mar:** suppression of counter-revolutionaries campaign is launched
- Jun:** land reform programme is launched – up to 2 million landlords are killed
- Oct:** the PLA invades Tibet
- Nov:** resist America and aid Korea campaign is launched
- 1951 Dec:** the three antis campaign is launched
- 1952 Jan:** the five antis campaign is launched; all political parties except CCP are banned
- 1954 Feb:** purge of Gao Gang and Rao Shushi
- Sep:** formal constitution is introduced
- 1956 May:** the 100 flowers campaign is launched
- 1957 Jul:** the anti-rightist campaign is launched
- 1958 Jul:** Great Leap Forward is launched
- 1959 Apr:** Mao steps down as chairman of the People's Republic of China
- Sep:** Peng Dehuai is purged
- 1962 Sep:** Socialist Education Movement is announced
- 1966 May:** Cultural Revolution begins
- 1966 Jul:** Liu Shaoqi is dismissed from the post of party deputy chairman
- Dec:** Deng Xiaoping is forced to withdraw from public life
- 1971 Sep:** Lin Biao dies in mysterious circumstances
- 1973 Apr:** Deng Xiaoping is rehabilitated
- 1976 Jan:** Zhou Enlai dies
- Jul:** Deng Xiaoping is removed again
- Sep:** Mao Zedong dies





Chinese athletes carrying a huge portrait of Mao Zedong at a parade in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, 1 October 1955

## By what means did Mao establish communist control in China in the years 1949–54 ?

After 1949, Mao had to act with speed and efficiency to maintain his hard-won position. He needed to establish stable and effective government, restore unified control over the former Chinese Empire and fulfil promises of social reform and economic recovery after the war with Japan and the civil war. Such policies were essential if he was to maintain political control.

### Government

The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference met in September 1949, bringing together non-communist parties and other groups that had opposed the GMD under communist leadership. This produced a temporary constitution that allowed the participation of other parties in a multi-party 'people's democratic dictatorship'. However, the dominance of the communists was without question.

Some elements of the population, mainly country landlords, big businessmen and prominent ex-GMD supporters, were not given the right to vote. These 'black' categories were described as:

- reactionary elements
- feudal elements
- lackeys of imperialism
- bureaucratic capitalists
- enemies of the people.

#### Fact

The constitution of 1949 was not democratic, in the Western sense of the word. Although non-reactionaries were granted a vote to an elected National People's Congress, there was seldom a choice of candidates, although voters were able to discuss beforehand, at public meetings, who should appear on the ballot paper.

However, the 'national bourgeoisie' and 'petty bourgeoisie' were given civil rights, alongside the peasants and workers, in an attempt to harness their expertise. The country was divided into six regions, each under the control of a bureau dominated by the military. Most of the 2 million officials who had served the GMD government were retained, as at first there were only 750,000 party cadres available to take on essential administrative responsibilities. As CCP membership and administrative competence increased, the non-communists were gradually removed. (The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 encouraged this process, as fears about the reliability of non-communists were heightened.)

In 1954, a formal constitution established China as a single-party state. The chairman of the National People's Congress, Mao, became the head of government. Beneath him were two vice chairmen and a council of ministers headed by the prime minister. Zhou Enlai was prime minister from 1949 until his death in 1976. The provincial administration, which had local powers, supported the Congress.



*A retouched picture released in 1953 by the Chinese official news agency showing Zhou Enlai (right) and Mao Zedong (left); notice the favoured 'communist' style of dress*

The main business of government centred on the Communist Party, which made policy decisions. The party administration, under Mao, paralleled the administrative structure of the state. Ministers and provincial officials were usually members of the CCP. When they were not, they were assisted by a communist adviser. Gao Gang, for example, was a Politburo member and party chairman of the Manchuria branch of the CCP. He was also the state provincial governor and the commander of the Manchurian army. Most army officials (assisted by political commissars), heads of factories and heads of villages were communist, as were many heads of schools and universities.



### Theory of knowledge

#### The meaning of democracy

What is the difference between 'democracy' in China and democracy in Western states? Is one better than the other? Why?

#### Fact

In the Korean War (1950–53) the North Koreans tried to extend their communist regime to South Korea. The southerners, aided by the USA, drove them back and invaded their territory. Mao chose to help North Korea, possibly to provide further reasons to demand solidarity and loyalty from his people.



An important feature of the new state was the organisation of the population into groups. Everyone in a village, street, office, factory or school was required to meet regularly to hear about and comment on policies. The local party cadres were expected to 'educate' their groups and to pass views to branch secretaries and up through an ascending pyramid to the central committee – the Politburo – in Beijing. Consequently, in accordance with Maoist ideology, peasants in the villages and soldiers and workers on the factory floor could influence official decisions.

### Unified control

In 1949, the GMD still controlled much of south-west China. Fighting continued in 1950, by which time only British Hong Kong, Portuguese Macao, Outer Mongolia, Taiwan and a few small GMD-controlled islands lay outside communist control. Mao's plan to invade Taiwan at the end of 1950 had to be called off when the Korean War broke out, although success in that war enhanced Mao's reputation further.

To establish internal control, in 1950 Mao's government called on ethnic minorities to identify themselves and promised them a degree of autonomy. Four hundred ethnic groups did so. From these, officials created 50 groups, which were subsequently placed under military supervision and forced to accept communist rule.

Strong resistance in Tibet (see page 157) took six months to crush. The nation was renamed Xizang and its peoples subjected to severe repression in an attempt to eradicate all traces of the Tibetan language and culture. Tibetans were also moved to other parts of China and **Han Chinese** were brought in.

### Living standards

The years after the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) saw impressive improvements in standards of living in China. Inflation was curbed and crime and corruption were checked as drug dealers, prostitutes and criminal gangs were outlawed. Citizens themselves were involved in building the 'new society', although under the direction of the local party cadres.

Most Chinese people gained job security and a stable income. Each employed citizen in an urban area was required to belong to a Danwei (work unit); those who were not employed came under the supervision of a residents' committee. These units controlled food supplies, the allocation of housing and permits for travel, marriage, jobs, military service and university. Their work was complemented by the establishment of a variety of mass organisations such as the National Women's Association, the New Democratic Youth League and the Children's Pioneer Corps.

Residents' committees dealt with public health, policing and the resolution of disputes. Water supplies and sanitation were improved in cities and the countryside and mass 'patriotic health campaigns' were used to focus attention on improving hygiene and reducing cholera, typhoid and scarlet fever. Teams went into rural areas to educate people about healthy living, and death rates fell steadily (see page 154).

More doctors and nurses were trained, although there was some conflict with Maoist ideology, which regarded doctors as 'bourgeois intellectuals' in the 1960s

**Han Chinese** The Han were the dominant Chinese race (and the largest ethnic group in the world) comprising 92% of the population of mainland China.

#### Fact

Party cadres were important at all levels of government and administration, in the legal system, in education and in the PLA. They organised the mass organisations and local committees and meetings, providing a means of surveillance and control. In return they received a privileged lifestyle with an 'iron rice bowl' – guaranteed employment and income for life in return for their absolute loyalty.

and expected them to subordinate medical duties to factory work. However, they were replaced by the 'barefoot doctors', who underwent short practical training sessions of six months and worked among the peasants, giving inoculations and basic treatments.

## What part did mass mobilisation campaigns and purges play in ensuring Mao's authority in the years 1949–54?

Mao feared the challenge posed by the 'counter-revolutionary elements'. He allowed a degree of co-operation in the early years, retaining the 'national' and 'petty bourgeoisie'. Their businesses and skills were needed, but taxes were used to limit private profit.

In addition, propaganda, self-criticism and rectification campaigns were used to stamp out 'bourgeois individualism'. Citizens were encouraged to inform on others and, in the autumn of 1951, 6500 intellectuals and university professors were obliged to undertake courses in communist thinking, while artists and writers who refused to support the CCP were imprisoned.

In the countryside, following the introduction of the land reform programme in 1950 (see page 146), party cadres roused peasants to denounce local landlords and remove them after **struggle sessions**. As part of the effort to arouse class consciousness and attach the masses to the regime, around 2 million landlords lost their lives, often beaten to death by peasants.

Between 1950 and 1952 there were four mass mobilisation campaigns:

- **The resist America and aid Korea campaign, 1950**  
Rallies were held to increase Chinese suspicion of foreigners, particularly those from the West. People from the USA were singled out because of their involvement in Korea. Many foreigners, including missionaries, were arrested. Christian churches were closed and priests and nuns expelled. By the end of 1950, the country was closed to all foreigners, except Russians, and institutions with links to the West were watched or closed down.
- **The suppression of counter-revolutionaries campaign, 1950–51**  
This focused on those with links to the GMD, criminal gangs and religious sects. There were numbers of denunciations and public executions.
- **The three antis campaign, 1951**  
This was a campaign against corruption, waste and obstruction, and was directed against communists and non-communists. Managers, state officials, police and cadres were obliged to take part in struggle sessions. Humiliation and group pressure were employed to bring them into line.
- **The five antis campaign, 1952**  
This was a campaign against bribery, tax-evasion, theft of state property, cheating in government contracts and economic espionage. Workers' organisations were invited to investigate employers' business affairs, forcing employers to provide self-criticisms and undergo 'thought reform'. The accused faced fines, property confiscations and periods in labour camps. If they confessed and paid their dues, they were (unlike the landlords) usually allowed to return to their work. Few were executed although around 2–3 million committed suicide because of the shame and humiliation.

**struggle session** This term refers to a session in which 'accused' individuals were taken before a panel, usually in public, to listen to a catalogue of their alleged crimes and moral failings. They were deliberately humiliated and required to look down. Sometimes guards held the victims in the 'jet-plane' position, with the head down and arms thrust back. They had placards placed around their necks or wore a necklace of ping-pong balls to symbolise their bourgeois love of jewellery, and were beaten with bamboo sticks. They were expected to make full confessions and agree with their accusers.

### Fact

The fines imposed on businessmen during the mass campaigns were often used to push them into going 'state-private'. Private owners sold part of their business to the state and a state manager was appointed to work alongside the private businessman.

**Gao Gang (1905–54)** Gao Gang joined the Chinese Communist Party in 1926. In the mid 1930s, he controlled an independent communist area in Shaanxi, where the Long March ended in 1935. Gao turned Shaanxi into a war-time power base and joined the Politburo in 1943. He became state governor and party chairman in Manchuria and commander of the Manchurian army. In 1952, he was put in charge of the Central Planning Commission. However, his ambition led to his purge and suicide.

**Rao Shushi (1903–75)** Rao joined the CCP in 1925 and studied in the Soviet Union and the West. He was a political commissar during the civil war and, in 1949, was made chairman of the Military and Political Committee of East China, general secretary of the East China Bureau of the CCP and governor of East China. In 1953, he became minister in charge of party organisation. However, his association with Gao Gang led to his downfall and he spent the last 21 years of his life under arrest – in prison and on a working farm.



A poster depicting Mao as the peasants' hero, 1951

## The purges of Gao Gang and Rao Shushi, 1954

In early 1954, Mao began his first major purge of leading members of the CCP, following debate around the launch of his five-year plan for industry (see Unit 4). **Gao Gang**, who already held several senior government and party posts, had backed Mao against Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi. Subsequently, with the support of **Rao Shushi**, Gao Gang put himself forward to replace Zhou as vice chairman of the CCP. In December 1953, both were accused of 'underground activities'. Gao Gang committed suicide rather than face disgrace in 1954, while Rao Shushi was arrested and imprisoned until his death in 1974.

## How did Mao maintain political control between 1954 and 1976?

By 1953, industrial and agricultural production were showing signs of strong growth and the budget was balanced. The CCP had built up its membership to 6.1 million and there was no longer a shortage of ideologically trustworthy officials. In 1954, the one-party state was established in the new constitution and Mao felt the time was ripe to push the revolution into its second stage with the full implementation of communism in both the economic and social spheres (see Unit 4).

However, the changes did not take place without some criticism and Mao never allowed himself to feel that his position was secure. He was continuously concerned that officials were backsliding or plotting against him. Consequently, Mao continued to look for ways to consolidate his power further and ensure the 'revolution' was never forgotten.



## The 100 flowers campaign, 1956–57

In 1956, Mao lifted censorship restrictions and encouraged open criticism of the way the party had been working. In February 1957, he announced: 'Letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend is the policy for promoting progress in the arts and the sciences and a flourishing socialist culture in our land.'

Participation was slow at first and, in February 1957, Mao told the people that they could vent their criticisms as long as they were 'constructive' ('among the people') rather than 'hateful and destructive' ('between the enemy and ourselves').

In May and June 1957, the central government received a deluge of letters. Magazine articles and posters appeared and there were rallies in the streets. Students at Beijing University created a 'Democratic Wall' and complained of political corruption, Russian influence, low living standards, censorship of foreign literature, economic corruption and the privileged lifestyle of party cadres and the leadership of the CCP itself.

Mao claimed such activity went beyond 'healthy criticism'. In early July 1957, he called the campaign off and reimposed censorship and orthodoxy. He had either achieved his aim of entrapment or severely misjudged the scale of criticism that the campaign would unleash.

## The anti-rightist campaign, July 1957

The crackdown that followed the 100 flowers campaign ended any criticism by the intellectuals, who never again trusted Mao. Around half a million were branded as 'rightists' and subjected to persecution, ranging from imprisonment, time in labour camps and spells in the countryside for 're-education', to public shootings as a warning to others. Many committed suicide.

## Mao's disappearance from public life

In 1959, once it was clear the Great Leap Forward had failed (see Unit 4), Mao gave up his position as PRC chairman and the mass mobilisation campaigns ceased for a while. Mao claimed this time away from public life gave him the opportunity to think and plan, rather than worry about daily administration. However, Philip Short has suggested that he still remained a powerful influence, and the purge of **Peng Dehuai** in 1959 would seem to support this.

In July 1959, Peng had told Mao at the Lushan Conference (see page 151) that the Great Leap Forward was a grave mistake (see Unit 4) and had hinted that he did not approve of Mao's decision to break with the Soviet Union (see page 151). He may also have been blamed for an unsuccessful confrontation over Taiwan in 1958. His removal from the Politburo and his position as minister of defence set an example to others of the dangers of independent thought.

From 1962, Mao again became obsessed by a fear that the party was turning to the 'capitalist road' – a euphemism for the more moderate policies being pursued by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. He tried to mobilise the masses in the Socialist Education Movement of 1962 (see page 128). However, it was not until 1966 that he had the power base from which to launch the Cultural Revolution.

### Historical debate

With the 100 flowers campaign, Mao may have wanted to experiment by allowing some 'democratic check' on the party, spurring it to still greater endeavours (the view of Philip Short) or he may have simply felt it necessary to provide an outlet for critics to 'let off steam'. Jung Chang, however, believes that he intentionally set a trap to flush out intellectuals and opponents.

### Peng Dehuai (1898–1974)

Peng joined the CCP in 1927 and participated in the Long March. He served in the civil war and was a member of the Politburo, China's defence minister from 1954 to 1959, and marshall of the PLA from 1955. He was removed from all posts in 1959 and placed under house arrest. He was brutally treated during the Cultural Revolution – beaten in public spectacles 130 times.

### Fact

Mao commanded the loyalty of Lin Biao, who had replaced Peng Dehuai as minister of defence in 1959 and led the PLA. He also had powerful support from his wife, Jiang Qing, and a group of radicals in Shanghai who were determined to rid China of bourgeois and Western influences and create a proletarian society.

**Group of Five** This term refers to the committee established in January 1965 to initiate a revolution in China's culture. It was led by Peng Zhen (the fifth most senior member of the Politburo and mayor of Beijing). However, only one of its five members (Kang Sheng) was a firm supporter of Mao. Their failure to act vigorously enough led to the dismissal of Peng as mayor and the dissolution of the committee in May 1966.

**Fact**

Red Guards broke into Liu Shaoqi's house, physically attacked him and forced him to write his own confession. Liu was removed from all his positions and expelled from the party in October 1968. He died in prison in November 1969 after being refused proper medical treatment for diabetes and pneumonia.

**Fact**

After Liu's death in 1969, power was concentrated in the hands of the CCP chairman (Mao himself) and he assumed the ceremonial duties associated with the head of state. Not until after Mao's death was a new head of state appointed when Soong Ching-ling, the widow of Sun Yat Sen and former vice-chairwoman of the PRC, was made honorary president as confirmed by the constitution of 1982.

**Gang of Four** This term refers to a powerful political group, created in 1974. It consisted of four CCP officials who oversaw the suppression of a wide variety of traditional cultural activities during the Cultural Revolution. Its members were Jiang Qing (Mao's wife), Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen.

**Political control during the Cultural Revolution, 1966–76**

The launch of the 'great proletarian Cultural Revolution' brought a dramatic purge of Mao's rivals. Mao mobilised the Red Guards, who were bands of radical students, and ordered them to attack the 'four olds' (thought, culture, practices and customs) and remove 'bad elements' among the party, teachers, intellectuals and former bourgeoisie. Terrifying assaults were permitted and the police were instructed not to intervene. Public denunciations, struggle sessions at which victims were expected to 'confess' to their crimes, and mass mobilisation were practised in their most extreme form. Tens of thousands died in prison (for more information on the Cultural Revolution, see Unit 4).

During this period, Mao removed many of his opponents from the party and retook absolute control of the party hierarchy. His 'cult' rose to new extremes and Mao Zedong Thought was even written into the Chinese constitution in 1969. In May 1966, Mao purged the 'Group of Five'. Originally set up to carry through the Cultural Revolution, the group's members supported Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi. Mao replaced the group with the Central Cultural Revolution Group, which he packed with his own supporters, including his wife Jiang Qing. In July, Liu Shaoqi was dismissed from his post of party deputy chairman and in December Deng Xiaoping was forced to withdraw from public life.

In December 1968, when the Cultural Revolution threatened to get out of hand, Mao ordered the Red Guards to leave the cities and go to the countryside. The struggle continued, but Mao's grip on developments may not have been as firm as he would have liked. Furthermore, Mao was still concerned about rivals in the party. He confirmed Lin Biao as his successor in 1969, but in September 1971 Lin died in an air crash over Mongolia. The story was put about that he had been planning a coup to overthrow Mao. Whether true or not, it showed Mao's fear of challenge. Lin had opposed Mao's decision to seek co-operation with the USA, a move which led to both nations pledging to work towards full diplomatic relations. Deng Xiaoping, on the other hand, had spoken in favour of this new beginning in Chinese-US relations. Consequently, Deng was allowed back as vice-premier in 1973.

However, after Deng's close colleague, Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, was diagnosed with cancer and looked close to death, the radicals turned on Deng again. In 1975, he was asked to draw up a series of self-criticisms and, following Zhou's death in January 1976, the **Gang of Four** launched the 'criticise Deng and oppose the rehabilitation of right-leaning elements' campaign. Mao therefore selected the relatively obscure Hua Guofeng, in preference to Deng, as the new prime minister. When mass mourning for Zhou sparked disturbances in Tiananmen Square, Deng was held responsible and demoted from all leadership positions. Deng was saved further disgrace by Mao's death the same year and was to return as the dominant figure in Chinese politics from 1978.

**What parts were played by propaganda and repression in Mao's consolidation of power and was Mao's China a totalitarian state?**

**Propaganda in Mao's China**

The propaganda system was central to communist rule in China. Propaganda was controlled by the CCP's Central Propaganda Department, which commanded a network of local branches that were used for mass indoctrination. The aim

was to bring about 'thought reform' so that the population would support mass campaigns such as the Great Leap Forward of 1958 (see Unit 4) and the 1966–76 Cultural Revolution. The PLA, which remained the largest army in the world, also helped indoctrinate and reinforce political messages. Although thought-reform was practised in other totalitarian states, according to William Bradbury (1968), the CCP 'set about it more purposefully, more massively, and more intensively than have other ruling groups'.

Propaganda was used to spread ideology, encourage activism and hold out examples of selfless model workers and soldiers. An example is Lei Feng, a possibly fictitious soldier of the civil war years, whose overwhelming sense of duty embodied the desired image of self-sacrifice. Highlights of the communist past, such as the Long March or the struggles of Mao at Jiangxi and Yan'an, were spread as inspiration. Revolutionaries in the developing world and allies such as Albania and North Korea were praised, while the 'imperialists' of the USA and the 'revisionists' of the Soviet Union, who had betrayed communism, were attacked.

Propaganda was spread through posters, the media, the education system, literature, films, theatre, music, radio and television (although TV ownership was not common). It was also spread through the work of local groups, committees and propaganda teams. There was a particular emphasis on political study groups, led by party cadres, where everyone would be persuaded of the value of particular policies through the study of political articles.

A nationwide system of loudspeakers reached into every village, and reading newspapers was regarded as a 'political obligation'. China Central Television (set up in 1958) offered a diet of televised propaganda, while the *People's Daily* (established in 1948) conveyed propaganda in print. Political campaigns were launched through leading articles in the *People's Daily*, and reports criticised political adversaries, while controversial news stories were censored.

Chairman Mao was made a figure of reverence. His portrait appeared on public hoardings and in the newspapers. Peasants, industrial workers and soldiers were expected to learn Mao's quotations by heart and, during the Cultural Revolution, to study *The Little Red Book* of Mao's speeches and writings. Mao was portrayed as the saviour of the nation, the voice of truth, the source of all wisdom and the benefactor of the people. The Chinese were persuaded that a careful study of 'Mao Zedong Thought' could solve their problems and enable them to carry out their tasks more effectively. Carefully stage-managed rallies and meetings showed Mao addressing the adoring crowds. Events, such as Mao's swim down the Yangtze River in July 1966 (see page 129), symbolising his strength and purpose, occupied the media for weeks.

*'Hail the defeat of revisionism in our China', a propaganda poster from 1967*

**Fact**

The PLA comprised 5 million soldiers in 1950 and, despite a partial demobilisation to release more men into productive work, still comprised 3.5 million soldiers in 1953. 800,000 conscripts were added each year, with each serving three years. This gave young Chinese men training in warfare and indoctrination in communist ideology. The force itself served a propagandist role – its achievements were celebrated and its heroes held up as role models.







## Theory of knowledge

### History and national characteristics

It has been suggested that 'self-policing' was only possible in China, where the education system had always relied on rote learning rather than critical reasoning skills. Do you think styles of education system affect people's behaviour? Is it possible to generalise about 'national characteristics'?

### Activity

Find out more about a struggle session and present your findings to the class. *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (1991) by Jung Chang has plenty of material on this.

## Repression

Complementing the propaganda drive was a deliberately cultivated atmosphere of vigilance, 'fear' and uncertainty. There was a central investigation department within the CCP from 1949 and a military intelligence wing of the PLA. During the Cultural Revolution, the 'Central Case Examination Group', headed by Kang Sheng, was also set up. From 1951, official residence permits were needed for those over 15 years old and a special government department was created to draw up a *dangan* (dossier) on every suspect Chinese person.

However, the PRC never had a highly centralised security apparatus like the KGB in the Soviet Union. This was partly because of Mao's reliance on mass campaigns, orchestrated through the media, and his expectation that individuals would expose those whose background or behaviour appeared at variance with the expectations of the regime. Mao believed that, given 'correct' guidance, the people could police each other, thus avoiding the need to create an alternative power base within the state.

The term 'rightist' was used to refer to those with bourgeois, intellectual or foreign connections, and these became the victims of the mass campaigns. The notion of 'continuous revolution' meant that some of those who had served the party loyally in its early years eventually became its victims. As Lin Biao's son put it, 'today he [Mao] uses sweet words and honeyed talk to those whom he entices; tomorrow he puts them to death for fabricated crimes'.

The repressive methods used followed those that had been practised at Yan'an. Group criticism sessions, or struggle sessions, where individuals were required to practise self-criticism and invite the criticism of others, were organised daily or weekly by work units, neighbourhood and street committees. There were also larger mass meetings (of which there were no fewer than 3000 in Shanghai in February 1952). Individuals admitted crimes or publicly denounced colleagues and neighbours.

Admissions of guilt led to 'rectification', ranging from ritual humiliation, fines, loss of job, property and housing, a period in the countryside undertaking physically strenuous and menial tasks to reform habits, or a prison sentence in a *laogai* (labour camp). Although executions were not a normal outcome of such activity, many committed suicide rather than face further humiliation.

Chang and Halliday have observed that these public sessions differentiated Mao's China from Stalin's Soviet Union and Hitler's Germany. While other dictators carried out purges through an élite secret police force, which removed victims silently to prison, camps or death, Mao enforced ritualised public humiliation. Meetings proved a potent force of control, leaving people with little free time for 'private thoughts'. He increased the number of persecutors by having his victims tormented by their own associates and used party members to terrorise their own party.

## The legal system

The state constitution of 1954 provided a framework for the development of a legal system in China, modelled on that of the Soviet Union. A committee of the National People's Congress was given the power to appoint and dismiss judges

and enact legal codes. Each citizen was granted the right to a public trial and defence by a 'people's lawyer' and there was, in theory, equality before the law. However, none of this was practised until after Mao's death.

During the Maoist era, party committees replaced courts and, despite some effort to make the legal system work between 1954 and 1957, the belief that different standards should be applied to class enemies destroyed any real sense of justice. When Mao launched the 100 flowers campaign in 1956, legal specialists were among his most vociferous critics – and consequently found themselves among the first victims of the anti-rightist campaign of 1957. The party leadership declared itself to have absolute power in legal matters and gave an increasing amount of control and judicial authority to the masses. Many judicial functions were passed to local cadres and by the 1960s the court system existed only for public 'show trials' during the Cultural Revolution.

### Labour camps

A network of labour camps, known as *laogai* or 're-education through labour', was created soon after Mao came to power. Initially the CCP used Soviet advisers in establishing the camps and, as in the Gulags (see page 37), prisoners were used as slave labour for back-breaking projects. On average, there were 10 million prisoners per year held in the camps under Mao and, by 1976, there were more than 10,000 labour camps spread across China.

Many of the worst camps were deliberately built in the most inhospitable regions, unbearably cold in winter and correspondingly hot in summer. Food rations were dependent on confessions. Refusal could lead to solitary confinement, beatings and sleep deprivation, when prisoners were interrogated at night. Threats to their families or signed 'confessions' from colleagues or families increased the pressure. Many prisoners died from hunger, ill-treatment or suicide.

The camps helped terrify others into obedience. If a prisoner was executed, the family could be sent the bullet and a bill for the cost. Even released prisoners faced a constant threat of re-arrest and families of those imprisoned were deemed guilty by association and shunned by their neighbours. Ex-prisoners would have difficulty finding housing and jobs, as well as shops that would sell to them and schools to which they could take their children.

### What kind of ruler was Mao?

Some early authors, particularly those on the left, suggested that Mao was a visionary reformer whose mistakes were outweighed by his positive achievements. Jean-Paul Sartre referred to Mao as 'profoundly moral', Simone de Beauvoir claimed he was 'no more dictatorial than, for example, Roosevelt was', whilst Edgar Snow portrayed Mao as a hero who liberated the Chinese peasants from feudalism and Japanese invasion. The US historian Stuart Schram also praised Mao's 'unique vision' and 'strong continuous nationalism' and suggested that many of his apparently unreasonable decisions were logical responses in the circumstances of the time.

These authors were writing before the Cultural Revolution and, since then, authors have been more critical. However, until recently, most felt Mao should not be regarded as harshly as Hitler or Stalin.

#### Question

How did the Communist Party ensure continuing loyalty from the Chinese people?

**Fact**

According to Chang and Halliday's figures, 38 million died in the famine of 1958–61 (see page 151); 27 million died in labour camps between 1950 and 1976, about 3 million were killed by execution, mob violence and suicide between 1950 and 1951 and a further 3 million during the Cultural Revolution. These figures may be exaggerated, but several Chinese estimates, and even that of the official investigator in 1979, have put the figure at more than 40 million. (Chinese authorities to this day are reluctant to release 'classified material'; problems also stem from the size of the country and lack of well-kept records.)

**Discussion point**

Do you agree with Chang that Mao should be regarded as a greater mass murderer than either Hitler or Stalin?



**Theory of knowledge**

**History and autobiography**

How should a historian use autobiographies such as that of Chang? Can an autobiography (or even a biography) ever be truly impartial?

Philip Short, author of *Mao: A Life* (1999), for example, excused some of Mao's excesses because 'one has to understand the context, which is of an autocratic tradition'. Short wrote of Mao as a 'visionary, statesman, political and military strategist of genius who combined a subtle, dogged mind, awe-inspiring charisma and fiendish cleverness' to produce remarkable achievements for China. Jonathan Spence, in *Mao* (1999), claimed that 'despite the agony he caused, Mao was both a visionary and a realist'. Lee Feigon, in *Mao: A Reinterpretation* (2002), claimed that Mao grew 'increasingly original and creative in the late 1950s and the 1960s, when he set China on the road to fundamental change'.

However, Chang, who wrote *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* (1991) and, with her husband Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (2005), as well as Jasper Becker, author of *Hungry Ghosts: China's Secret Famine* (1995), have countered these views. Becker accused Mao of starving 30–40 million people to death during the Great Leap Forward of 1958–61, whilst Chang has called him the greatest mass murderer in human history, responsible for the deaths of over 70 million people – more than Hitler and Stalin combined. Given the huge size of the Chinese population (around 600 million in 1960), Mao clearly had more potential victims than either Hitler or Stalin but, according to Chang, Mao persecuted individuals simply because of their thoughts, thus making him more tyrannical.

The recent reinterpretations of Mao's rule, including that of Chang (although coloured by her family's own sufferings during Maoist China), would suggest that, with the benefit of hindsight, Mao's rule contained much to condemn. Mao implemented a doctrine that aimed not only to transform China, but also to create the 'new socialist man'. Mao achieved authoritarian power in order to impose this 'vision' on the people, but it came at the cost of millions of lives. Mao's attempt to stir the masses by ideological commitment actually made his aim of a prosperous, stable and successful China more difficult to achieve.

**SOURCE A**

Backed by the immense cult of his personality, Mao, who thought himself capable of changing human nature through his mass campaigns, could demand complete loyalty to the cause of revolution as he chose to define it. Nobody and nothing could be excused from utter dedication and readiness to contribute whatever was demanded. Private life meant nothing. People were a blank sheet of paper, mere numbers to be used as the leader saw fit. Marxist autocracy reached heights of totalitarianism unparalleled by Hitler or Stalin.

Fenby, J. 2008. *The Penguin History of Modern China 1850–2008*. London, UK. Allen Lane/Penguin Books. p. 526.



## End of unit activities

- 1 Make a two-column chart to show the ways in which the 'new democracy' of the PRC differed from democracy in Western-style republics.
- 2 Draw a chart illustrating the main challenges faced by Mao in the 1950s and how he dealt with these. A third section could offer some comment on his success/failure.
- 3 Undertake some research into the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Create a poster showing how the PLA was used as a role model for civilians in communist China.
- 4 Make a chart of the mass campaigns through which Mao attempted to consolidate his rule – record their aims, developments and outcomes.
- 5 Research the life of any one of Mao's victims and write an obituary for that person.
- 6 Recreate a struggle session. Think carefully about who the victim might be and the accusations that might be made.



### Theory of knowledge

#### Politics and behaviour

Is it realistic to think that human behaviour can be modified?

#### Discussion point

To what extent was China under Mao a totalitarian regime?

# 4 Domestic policies and their impact

## Timeline

**1950 May:** Marriage Law is introduced; campaign against religion begins

**Jun:** programme of land reform is launched

**1951** party cadres encourage peasants to farm land co-operatively

**1953** first Five-Year Plan begins (continues to 1957)

**1955** first higher level Agricultural Producers' Co-operatives are established

**1956 May:** 100 flowers campaign

**1958 Jan:** the Great Leap Forward is launched

**Feb:** Pinyin is approved by the National People's Congress

**1958–61** the Great Famine

**1959 Mar:** national uprising takes place in Tibet

**Apr:** Mao steps down as chairman of the People's Republic of China

**1960** Soviet experts are withdrawn from China; the Great Leap Forward is gradually abandoned

**1962 Sep:** Socialist Education Movement is launched

**1964 Oct:** China explodes its first atomic bomb

**1965 Nov:** performance of the play *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* is attacked in a Shanghai newspaper

**1966 May:** Cultural Revolution is launched

**Aug:** Red Guards are ordered to destroy the 'four olds'; Buddha statue is destroyed in Beijing

**1968 Jul:** Mao brings in the PLA to break up the Red Guard units

**1973** a million barefoot doctors are trained

**Apr:** Deng Xiaoping is rehabilitated

**1975 Jan:** Deng proposes the 'four modernisations' campaign

## Key questions

- What were the main influences on economic policy in Mao's China?
- How did Mao apply communism to agriculture?
- How did Mao apply communism to industry?
- Did Mao succeed in making China a great economic power?
- What was the position of women in Mao's China?
- What was the attitude of the CCP government towards education and youth?
- What was the relationship between the communists and the Churches within China?
- How did Maoism affect the arts and cultural life?

## Overview

- Mao believed he could turn China into a great world power by putting his specifically Chinese version of Marxism into practice.
- He was initially constrained by the need to rebuild following destruction caused by the civil war and, under National Capitalism, private landownership and some private industry continued.
- Collectivisation was introduced in gradual stages. It began with co-operative farms before moving to higher level collectives and finally communes, during the Great Leap Forward from 1958.
- The first Five-Year Plan began the process of central planning, but this model was abandoned in the Great Leap Forward.
- The Great Leap Forward proved a disastrous mistake, with some peasant resentment of the communes and deterioration in industrial production.
- The economy was gradually revived under the direction of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping but suffered again in the dislocation brought by the Cultural Revolution from 1966.
- Mao's China granted 'equality' to women but in practice their lives sometimes became more onerous than before.
- There was a successful drive to raise literacy but the growth of education was limited by the party's dislike of intellectualism and the disruption caused by the mass campaigns.
- Youths were indoctrinated through youth organisations and played a major part in the Cultural Revolution, although this proved detrimental to their broader education.
- The communists tried to weaken the power of organised religion within China and only 'patriotic Churches' were allowed to operate. However, the party's success was limited overall.
- Culture suffered as it became a branch of Maoist propaganda and the Cultural Revolution not only destroyed some of China's heritage but also led to the persecution of intellectuals and creative minds.





A photograph published in 1967 by the Chinese official news agency; the original caption read ‘Every day, prior to starting work in the field, young people and young girls read and meditate together some of “Mao Zedong Thought”’. Chinese workers were constantly taught that they were working not for themselves, but for their country and for their great Chairman Mao. Consequently, a typical working day would begin with a period of reflection on the tasks ahead, and meditation on Mao’s thoughts and inspiring words. In this picture, we can see the group leader directing an early morning session. Mao’s picture has been brought to the field to inspire the workforce. Do you think such activities would be effective?

## What were the main influences on economic policy in Mao’s China?

Mao’s economic policy was governed by:

- his basic belief in the ‘collective ownership of the means of production’ (i.e. the nationalisation of industry, and collective farming)
- the desire to make China a great world power, to equal and surpass the Soviet Union’s economic achievement and avoid dependency on an outside power
- the immediate need for recovery after the damage caused by war.



Mao knew that, to achieve these ends, China would need to increase its capital for industrial investment. He planned to do this by reducing foreign imports and boosting the export market in Chinese agricultural goods. He never trusted scientific experts and believed that manpower alone could make his plans a success. Through sheer hard work, he believed that China could become self-sufficient. This was the focus of the Great Leap Forward from 1958.

## How did Mao apply communism to agriculture?

### Land reform, June 1950

In June 1950, a programme of land reform was launched but, in accordance with his ideological principles, Mao wanted the peasants to lead the change themselves. Party cadres stirred up hostility in 'speak bitterness' campaigns, with the slogan, 'Dig the bitter roots, vomit the bitter waters'. These campaigns encouraged peasants to turn on their landlords – executing them on the spot or subjecting them to a 'trial', following which they lost their civil rights, land, animals and household goods, which were distributed among the poor peasants of the area. Ownership of land remained private, but landlords held only as much as the poorest peasant.

Up to 2 million were killed, including victimised members of landlords' families. Mao claimed it was only 800,000. According to Denis Twitchett, there was a policy to select 'at least one landlord, and usually several, in virtually every village for public execution'.

Following redistribution, the average farm remained too small for efficient farming, so, from 1951, the cadres encouraged the peasants to farm land co-operatively. Profits were distributed according to what land, tools and animals the peasant contributed and how much work they did. Although not compulsory, most peasants favoured co-operation since they stood to gain. By 1952, grain production was 10% higher than in 1936. By 1953, almost 40% of peasant households belonged to 'mutual aid teams' (see table, opposite) and increasingly the traditional farming of individual plots ceased.

Official policy was not entirely consistent. At first, Mao condemned what he referred to as 'rash advance', but when the increase in the number of co-operatives threatened to fall as wealthier peasants began buying up land to consolidate individual farms, he railed against the 'rash retreat' and ordered the cadres to quicken the pace towards co-operation.

From 1954, the cadres tried to encourage peasants to create higher level Agricultural Producers' Co-operatives (APCs). However, this scheme proved impossible to implement because of the turmoil and food riots, which followed a poor harvest that year. The APC plan was suspended for 18 months but in the summer of 1955, a new drive began and the first higher level APCs were established that year. In these, land was pooled and no longer privately owned. Rich peasants were excluded and profits were distributed only according to levels of work. The new drive was supported by Mao. Liu Shaoqi favoured a more cautious approach. There was limited opposition, partly because there was already less difference in wealth among the peasants than there had been in Stalinist Russia, and partly because propaganda successfully persuaded peasants of the advantages of higher level co-operation. Furthermore, individual peasant proprietors soon found themselves unable to obtain bank loans, buy seed and fertiliser or get neighbours' help at harvest time.

#### Fact

The situation in the countryside provoked debate in the Central Committee in 1955. In Jiangsu (a fertile province), for example, the farmers were angered that they were left with only 35% of their output after government procurements. They reacted by under-reporting their harvest yields, trying to bribe officials and even attacking officials. As a result, procurement was cut by a third.

Percentage of families in China in different types of co-operative farms

Year	Mutual aid (5–10 households): equipment and animals pooled but private ownership retained	Lower level co-operatives (30–50 households): pooling of land but share of profits partly based on how much land/equipment contributed	Higher level co-operatives (collectives/APCs) (200–300 households): land collectively owned/small allotments permitted
1953	39.3	0.2	–
1954	58.3	1.9	–
1955	32.7	63.3	4.0
1956	3.7	8.5	87.8
1957	–	–	93.5

By the end of 1956, most villages had formed collectives and, by 1957, over 90% of peasant families were incorporated into APCs. The state had become the sole purchaser of grain from 1953 and peasants were obliged to sell fixed quotas to the state. This gave the CCP greater control over the countryside than any previous regime. John King Fairbank referred to this as a ‘modern serfdom under party control’.

Collectivisation and the Great Leap Forward, 1958

Agricultural output grew 5% in 1957, but Mao felt this was not enough. From January to April 1958, Mao toured China, visiting the more enterprising APCs, and concluded that efficiency could be best achieved by amalgamating co-operatives into much larger **communes**.

This scheme was launched in 1958 as the Great Leap Forward. It involved the setting up of 70,000 communes, each divided into about 750,000 brigades, with each brigade representing around 200 families. Private farming was to cease and all aspects of production were to be centrally directed by the party.

Co-operative projects for irrigation and flood control, electricity schemes and road building were encouraged and each commune was to contain a number of small factories, providing work for women and children, and for the men during slack times of the farming year.

There followed a spate of Mao-endorsed campaigns, such as ‘the four pests campaign’, which ‘outlawed’ flies, mosquitoes, rats and sparrows, and ‘Lysenkoism’, by which it was claimed that yields up to 16 times larger could be obtained than by traditional methods.

However, communal farming failed to work. By tradition, most peasants in China were subsistence farmers and neither they, nor the officials trying to lead them, had the knowledge to farm on a large communal scale. Some peasants became too involved in the industrial enterprises (see page 149) and they neglected agriculture. Others, influenced by the propaganda, left the fields fallow because they thought grain was plentiful, or neglected pig breeding, poultry raising or vegetable growing because an emphasis was placed on the production of grain.

**commune** A commune was more than an agricultural unit. Each was equipped with nurseries, old people’s homes (Happiness Homes), health clinics, schools and open-air cinemas. Peasants abandoned private possessions, slept in unisex dormitories and ate in communal canteens. (‘Marriage rooms’ had to be booked by married couples.) Communal teams dealt with house cleaning, mending and the preparation of food.

Fact

Trofim Lysenko was a Soviet agronomist who claimed to have developed methods for increasing the crop yields. His methods included increased fertilisation of the land and pest control. His advocacy of sparrowcide almost wiped out the sparrow population and allowed an explosion of caterpillars and other vermin, which devastated crops.

Question

By what methods did the CCP attempt to reform agriculture and bring about collectivisation in the years 1950–58?

**Fact**

Members of the 'national bourgeoisie' were restricted in their right to dismiss workers (even if there was no job for them) and were ordered to improve working conditions and provide paid holidays, canteens, restrooms and other facilities. Some suffered under the 'three antis' and 'five antis' campaigns, launched in 1951–52 (see page 135), but after confessing, most returned to their businesses.

**Fact**

The Anshan steel complex, with 35,000 workers, was a new showpiece. In 1954, the British reporter James Cameron travelled the north-east and wrote: 'The train-ride to Anshan was fantastic; a lunar landscape of new bricks and drifting smoke, heavily guarded bridges, great gangs and communities of people laying immense girders over riverbeds.'

## How did Mao apply communism to industry?

The GMD had already taken control of a considerable amount of industry before 1949, so the moderate period of National Capitalism between 1949 and 1953 involved minimal disruption. During this period, the state took over the ownership of heavy industry and the banking system only. Wages and prices were regulated, but members of the 'national bourgeoisie' were still able to make profits. In 1953, 20% of heavy industry and 60% of light industry was still privately owned.

During this period, China turned to the Soviet Union for support. The Sino-Soviet friendship treaty of February 1950 provided \$300 million in Russian loans (repayable at low interest – largely by food exports). During the 1950s, 11,000 Soviet experts arrived in China, while 28,000 Chinese received training in the Soviet Union.

Between 1949 and 1952, the value of industrial output more than doubled and 300 modern industrial plants were planned, including factories for iron, steel, motor vehicles and aircraft.

### The first Five-Year Plan, 1953–57

The period of National Capitalism ended with the launch of the first Five-Year Plan in 1953, which was intended to speed up China's industrial growth. Over the next two years, all private industries and businesses were nationalised, although many former owners were still kept on as managers and given an annual share of the profits.

Sectors such as iron and steel, energy, transport, communications, machinery and chemicals were prioritised with targets, at the expense of consumer industries. In addition to Soviet loans, which represented 3% of total investment, capital was raised by setting low prices to be paid to peasants for grain, so as to produce a large surplus for investment.

Vast new industrial schemes were planned for areas in the north-east (former Manchuria) and north-west, far from the old centres of development in the port cities such as Shanghai. Iron and steel mills were set up in former small market towns, such as Lanzhou and Baotou. Roads and railways were built, including a spectacular new rail link from Lanzhou across the Gobi Desert to Urumqi, capital of Xinjiang, where oil, coal, iron ore and other minerals were found.

In the north-east, the factories and mines formerly operated by the Japanese were developed, creating more industrial expansion. According to official statistics, heavy industrial output nearly trebled and light industry rose 70% during this period. Overall targets were exceeded by 20%. These figures cannot necessarily be trusted, but for the first time China came to produce its own cars, tractors, aeroplanes, cargo ships, machine tools and penicillin. The urban population grew from 57 million (1949) to 100 million (1957).

### Industrialisation and the Great Leap Forward, 1958

In May 1956, Mao delivered a speech, 'On the Ten Great Relationships', indicating his desire to abandon the centralised, industry-based Soviet model in favour of a mass campaign combining agricultural and industrial growth. In 1957,



he described his idea as a ‘great leap’ and predicted that China would become a new world superpower that would challenge the USA and overtake Britain in 15 years.

Mao had a number of reasons for favouring a Great Leap Forward.

- He wanted to reassert China’s independence from the Soviet Union.
- He wanted the Chinese people to take responsibility for their own future; he believed success resulted from determination, not money and expert advice.
- He was 64 and ‘in a hurry’; he believed the pace of change had been too slow and he wanted to prove himself after the failure of the 100 flowers campaign.
- He wanted China to ‘walk on two legs’ and develop both industry and agriculture.
- The slow rise in agricultural productivity had meant a shortage of capital.
- Pay differentials between skilled and unskilled workers had reappeared in 1956 to provide incentivisation, which clashed with Mao’s ideology.
- He was worried that the CCP was becoming bureaucratic and wanted to reduce the influence of central planning ministries and revive the ‘Yan’an spirit’.

**Fact**

Gao Gang’s demise (see page 136) in December 1953 was partly because of his strong support for Soviet-style industrialisation.

The ‘leap’ involved improvements to infrastructure and further industrial growth. In urban areas, the cadres were expected to increase output beyond the levels previously considered feasible. Party branches took over the direction of factories in order to ‘put politics in command’. Even children contributed to the drive. In Shanghai, as part of their school day, children were set to make bricks from earth and water or smash earth and stones to make concrete.

State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), under complete state control, with state subsidies, fixed rates of pay, conditions and output targets, also increased in number. Managers no longer received a share of the profits and any surplus went to the state. These enterprises were organised rather like the countryside communes, with accommodation, schools, hospitals and other facilities for workers.

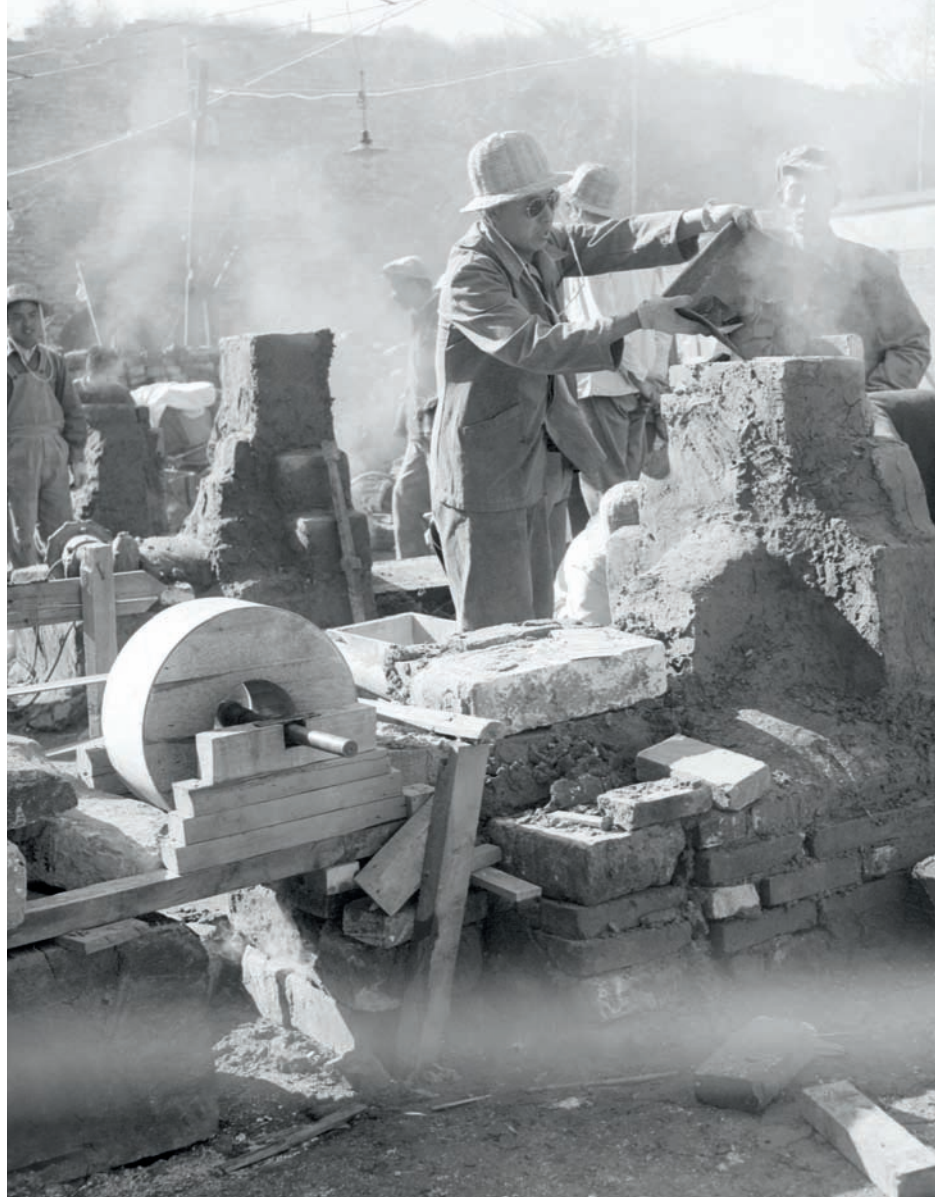
The development of the rural communes (see page 147) was part of the same drive. There was a particular emphasis on the production of steel, with a target of 10.7 million tonnes a year by 1959 and 60 million tonnes by 1960. Peasants were told they would get rich quick if they concentrated on iron and steel production and were inspired by the slogan ‘twenty years in a day’ and the song:

‘Produce more faster, better.  
Three years of bitter struggle!  
Ten thousand years of joy!’

In 1958, the ‘drive to produce metals locally’ led to around 90 million peasants becoming involved in steel production. Small-scale, ‘backyard’ industrial projects began on farm units and peasants abandoned other work to build brick furnaces in their yards. Whole communities contributed to the smelting of crude steel. Children collected peasants’ donations of metals, including pans, tools and even bicycles to add to the ore. Adults stoked and tended the cauldrons or helped push barrows or drive buffalo carts to bring in the raw materials and carry away the finished product. Around 600,000 furnaces reddened the rural skies as brigades competed with one another to produce the most.

**Fact**

Officials knew that much of the steel being produced in the backyard furnaces was unusable. Some was simply dumped in deep pits. However, no one dared to undermine the endeavour, even though it diverted manpower from agriculture and led to deforestation in some parts of China, as trees were cut down to keep the furnaces going day and night.



*Backyard furnace construction in Beijing during the Great Leap Forward, October 1958*

## **Did Mao succeed in making China a great economic power?**

There was undoubtedly an unprecedented period of economic growth in China after 1949 and, during the Great Leap Forward, rural industrialisation spread and China's infrastructure was developed.

However, in most respects, the Great Leap Forward and its aftermath was little less than disastrous. Steel production increased, but barely 1% of what was produced was usable – the remaining 99% being of such poor quality that it had to be abandoned as 'slag'.

**Fact**

China began developing nuclear weapons in the late 1950s and the first Chinese nuclear test was carried out in 1964.

**Production of manufactured goods 1959–62**

Using a base of 1959=100	1959	1960	1961	1962
Light industry	100	91.2	78.4	70.0
Heavy industry	100	90.0	66.4	44.2

**Question**

Look at the charts on this page showing production figures. Can you explain the figures?

**Production figures (in millions of tonnes, unless otherwise stated)**

	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962
Grain	195.1	200.0	170.0	143.5	147.5	160.0
Steel	5.4	8.0	10.0	13.0	8.0	8.0
Oil (millions of barrels)	1.5	2.3	3.7	4.5	4.5	5.3
Chemical fertilisers	0.8	1.4	2.0	2.5	1.4	2.1
Cotton (billions of metres)	5.0	5.7	7.5	6.0	3.0	3.0
Coal	131.0	230.0	290.0	270.0	180.0	180.0

In the towns, political interference made it difficult to operate a national plan. The disappearance of private managers weakened the drive for profits and guaranteed wages lowered the incentive to work hard and produce better quality goods.

Nikita Khrushchev, leader of the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1964, warned that the Great Leap Forward was a ‘dangerous experiment’. However, Mao refused to back down and, in 1960, the Soviet experts working in China left and Russian loans ceased. Factories were left half built or closed, as capital disappeared and spare parts ceased to arrive from the Soviet Union.

In the countryside, the results were even worse. In 1959, the government took 28% of peasants’ grain, as opposed to 17% in 1957, and the price paid was kept low in both 1959 and 1960. Some over-enthusiastic peasants almost abandoned farming altogether, in order to meet the drive to work the furnaces. Some even consigned their own tools to the flames.

Government policies and the worst drought for a century in northern and central China in 1960, plus flooding in the south, produced a catastrophic famine. The years between 1959 and 1961 became known as the ‘three bitter years’ when between 20 and 50 million died. However, Mao’s government refused to acknowledge what was happening, still less admit responsibility. The Lushan Conference in July 1959 provided an opportunity for delegates to address the famine, but only Peng Dehuai spoke out. Mao reacted badly to Peng’s criticism and dismissed him as defence minister (see page 137). Mao himself resigned as head of state in 1959, allowing Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping to deal with the crisis.

**Fact**

Chang and Halliday have accused Mao of confiscating Chinese harvests during the Great Leap Forward in order to export food in exchange for armaments, irrespective of the sufferings of the Chinese. They write of cases of cannibalism in Anhui and Gansu provinces, and a daily intake of 1200 calories in Chinese cities in 1960 (compared with 1300–1700 calories a day fed to prisoners in Auschwitz). Not all historians accept this, but conditions were clearly very bad.

**Fact**

A quarter to a fifth of all Tibetans (1 million) (see page 157) and a quarter of people in Anhui (8 million), Henan (7.8 million) and Sichuan (9 million) perished in the famine.





### Theory of knowledge

#### Luck in history

It is sometimes said that Mao suffered from 'bad luck' insofar as his Great Leap Forward policy coincided with a terrible drought in the central and northern China and flooding in the south. Is it appropriate to talk of 'bad luck' when apportioning blame for historical events?

The PLA was called upon to stand by to suppress rebellion. However, the situation eased before this became necessary, as grain was imported from Australia and Canada to feed the starving. Highly centralised economic planning and wage differentials for skilled and unskilled workers were brought back and 25 million unemployed urban workers were forced to return to the countryside.

In 1961, the communes were reorganised, reduced in size and made less regimented (for example, by ending communal dormitories). Pay rates were changed to take work and output into account. Backyard steel furnaces were quietly abandoned, and irrigation and dams were left incomplete. Peasants' time was no longer wasted on unnecessary industrial work or military marches around the fields.

Small private plots reappeared and, in some areas, families reclaimed farmland to cultivate independently under a 'household responsibility scheme'. By January 1962, 20% of arable land was being farmed individually. Deng justified the new approach as serving the same ends, saying, in 1962, 'It doesn't matter if the cat is black or white; so long as it catches the mouse it is a good cat.'

It took at least five years just to recover from the damage to agriculture. The revival of industry was faster, aided by discovery of huge oil and gas fields in Daqing, doubling output by 1965. However, factories continued to be run inefficiently. Technical and managerial skills were lacking, outdated equipment continued to be used and a rigid adherence to socialist concepts, including lack of contact with the West, hindered development, so that overall production declined in the 1960s.

Although Mao's Cultural Revolution from 1966 did not officially change economic policies, the chaos it produced affected economic growth. The requisitioning of trains and trucks to carry Red Guards around the country created shortages of raw materials, slowing factory production. Even the Anshan blast furnace (see page 148) had to be stopped. Furthermore, almost all engineers, managers, scientists, technicians and other professional personnel were 'criticised', demoted, sent to the countryside or jailed. This meant their skills and knowledge were lost. Imports of foreign equipment ceased and the closure of the universities created more problems for the future. The immediate result was a 14% decline in industrial production in 1967.

The economically progressive Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping were attacked in the press as 'poisonous weeds' by supporters of the Gang of Four. Output for 1976, the year Mao died, showed continuing stagnation. Only after the fall of the Gang of Four in October 1976, a month after Mao's death, did China really begin to develop its potential as an economic powerhouse.

## What was the position of women in Mao's China?

The CCP had always advocated female equality, with Mao famously proclaiming that 'Women hold up half the sky'. Traditionally, women had been expected to stay at home and to obey their menfolk while the practices of concubinage, foot binding and arranged marriages had given women a second-class status.

### Question

How successful were Mao's economic policies in the years 1949 to 1976?

### Fact

Although a well-off man would only have one 'official' wife, concubines or 'other women' were recognised and sometimes seen as the way to produce a male heir. The practice of foot binding, to preserve dainty female feet (regarded as sexually attractive), had spread from elite women to families of lesser means from the later 19th century.



A young woman operating a precision machine at a factory in Beijing, October 1955

From 1950, the traditional practice of killing unwanted baby girls was officially abolished (although not always enforced), foot binding was outlawed and girls were expected to go to school and women to work. The 1950 Marriage Law forbade arranged marriages and child betrothals, the payment of dowries and concubinage. Official registration of marriage was introduced and new laws made divorce permissible by mutual consent or on the complaint of either husband or wife. Those who had been subject to an arranged marriage were allowed to petition for divorce.

The 1953 Election Law gave women the right to vote and some joined the government and PLA. Women were actively encouraged to train for jobs formerly held only by men. There was a drive to curb prostitution. In the 1950s, laws gave women the same property rights as men. Some were even granted land in their own name in the redistributions that followed the campaign against landlords (see page 146). In the communes, communal eating and shared cleaning released women from traditional household chores and here, and in the larger factories in the towns, communal nurseries and kindergartens allowed them to escape child minding and return to work.

**Fact**

Modern feminist writers such as Xiufen Lu, in *Chinese Women and Feminist Theory* (2005), have suggested that the communists overplayed the picture of former feminine subordination in order to glorify their own achievements.



**Theory of knowledge**

**A historian's standpoint**

Should governments intervene to outlaw practices such as foot binding? If we applaud Mao's attempts to 'liberate' women, do we do so through Western eyes?

However, communist policy towards women did not always bring positive results.

- There was a huge increase in the numbers of divorces – 1.3 million divorce petitions were filed in 1953, many from ill-treated wives, and a drive against hasty action had to be launched.
- Although the number of women in work increased from 8% to 32%, jobs could be physically demanding and many women had to act as both workers and mothers.
- In rural and Muslim areas, government interference was resented and arranged marriages continued.
- Women provided only 13% of the party membership and 14–23% of the deputies in the National People’s Congress between 1954 and 1975.
- Communes and schools, where children were taught that love for Mao was more important than love for their family, undermined the family unit. Young people were encouraged to speak against their parents in the ‘four olds’ campaign (see page 138) and many youngsters were sent far from home to experience rural work. The outlawing of ancestor worship also hit at the family unit.

### Discussion point

Was the campaign to limit population growth an unnecessary attempt by the state to limit freedom of choice or a sensible policy to keep the population size to a manageable level?

### Fact

Written Mandarin is expressed in ideograms (pictures of the ideas described) and every word has to be learned separately. There is also considerable difference in the way Mandarin is spoken in different parts of China, so it is hard for people from different areas to communicate.

### Fact

Pinyin is a written form of Mandarin in which sounds are given symbols and written expression is standardised and simplified, making it much easier to learn than Mandarin.

Initially, the communists favoured the large families that swelled the population in the early 1950s. However, with the coming of the famine, women were told that two children was the ideal. Late marriage – at 25–27 years for men and 23 years for women – was encouraged and couples who had large families, or did not allow sufficient time between pregnancies, were criticised in their group meetings. Partly because of this campaign, the Chinese population grew more slowly than had been expected, although between 1953 and 1964 it increased 112 million, as death rates fell and birth rates remained high.

## What was the attitude of the CCP government towards education and youth?

### Education

In 1949, only about 1 in 10 Chinese could read and many could not write because there was no standardised form of written Mandarin. Only 20% of children went to primary school and around 1% to secondary, and the number of female students beyond primary level was negligible. The CCP was determined to increase literacy rates and expand educational provision for both practical and ideological reasons, although there was some conflict between their drive for education and disdain for intellectualism.

Schools were set up for all children, except those in the ‘black’ categories (see page 132). Study groups and night schools were set up, and the ‘little teacher’ scheme was established, whereby school children visited adult peasants and workers and shared their learning.

Chinese characters were simplified for quick learning. Pinyin was approved by the National People’s Congress and, in 1964, the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language released an official list of 2238 simplified Chinese characters.



Secondary schooling expanded, helped initially by teachers and textbooks from the Soviet Union, and scholarships to Soviet universities. However, this Soviet help ceased after the Sino–Soviet split, which began in the late 1950s (see page 151). After this, new Chinese textbooks were carefully vetted and foreign languages studied only in Maoist translations of literature. There was an emphasis on practical ‘work experience’. Students were required to spend part of their days in the fields and factories.

‘Key schools’ were given priority in the assignment of teachers, equipment and funds and provided for the children of the party cadres. They monopolised places at top universities, although in theory peasant and workers’ children were given preferential admission.

In the later 1960s, various experiments were undertaken in which peasants and industrial workers were made ‘teachers’ and pupils were encouraged to criticise their teachers for unacceptable political statements, failing to help the more backward or even failing to mark work properly.

The results appeared impressive:

- Literacy rates increased, reaching 50% of the population in 1960, 66% in 1964 and 70% by 1976.
- By 1957, most village children had some primary education and the number in secondary education had almost tripled.
- By 1976, 96% of children aged 7–16 were in schools.

However, a number of factors limited the degree of educational advance:

- Education was neither compulsory nor free and was never a budget priority.
- The quality of education varied and provision in the villages was often rudimentary.
- The emphasis on practical education, the anti-intellectualism of the regime, and the politically oriented criteria for admission to better schools and universities held back some of the able individuals China needed.
- Despite the lip service to equality, the children of the party cadres were advantaged.
- Schools became centres for indoctrination, encouraging the cult of the leader.
- During the Cultural Revolution most schools and universities were closed down.

### **The communist youth associations**

The communists had a Youth League for young people aged 14–28, run by Lu Hao, and a subsection, the Youth Pioneers, for children aged 6–14. Schools and villages ran units and children wore red scarves to symbolise the blood that had been shed by revolutionary martyrs. However, despite these attempts at indoctrination, students were among the forefront of those who criticised the regime during the 100 flowers campaign in 1956–57. Consequently, the Cultural Revolution aimed to reinvigorate the youth with revolutionary fervour, and the Red Guards (for the older age group) and ‘little Red Guards’ were formed.

#### **Fact**

Mao instructed his own daughter to tell peasants, ‘Papa says that after studying for a few years we become more and more stupid. Please be my teachers. I want to learn from you.’

#### **Fact**

The youth organisations helped to politicise the young. Pioneers recited the motto: ‘Be prepared, to struggle for the cause of communism!’ To which others replied ‘Always be prepared!’ They pledged: ‘I am a member of the Young Pioneers of China. Under the Pioneers’ Flag I promise that I love the Communist Party of China, I love the motherland, I love the people. I will study well and keep myself fit to prepare for contributing my effort to the cause of communism.’

After being encouraged by Mao to go and destroy the 'four olds' in 1966 (see page 138), youths took over the streets – banging gongs and shouting slogans. Enjoying special priority on public transport, Red Guards travelled across China spreading the revolution and destroying old culture. They invaded people's houses, smashed 'antique' possessions and forced those wearing Western clothing or hairstyles into the ubiquitous grey Maoist baggy pants and tunics. They even forced teachers to wear tall dunces' caps and paraded them through the streets to be spat at and insulted.

*Red Guards marching to spread the revolution and destroy the old culture during the Cultural Revolution, 1967*



When matters got totally out of hand, Mao used the PLA to break up the Red Guard units in July 1968. Thereafter, schools began to function again and students were ordered to the countryside for re-education. Universities reopened in the early 1970s, but here and in the higher schools, the decline in educational quality was marked. Exams were abolished and Deng Xiaoping wrote in 1975 that university graduates were ‘not even capable of reading a book’.

## What was the relationship between the communists and the Churches within China?

The official communist view was that religion was a capitalist invention, used to keep the lower classes in their place with promises of a better afterlife. Mao was particularly hostile to organised religion, referring to it as ‘poison’.

Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity alike were condemned as superstitions and Maoist China saw the closure of churches, temples, shrines and monasteries. Foreign priests and missionaries were expelled and Chinese ones forbidden to wear distinctive dress.

Religious toleration was officially guaranteed by the Chinese constitution, but the government had its own definition of ‘religion’ and a campaign against ‘superstition’ began in 1950. Ancestor worship was condemned and traditional religious rituals banned. However, religious establishments could become ‘patriotic Churches’ operating under government control, provided they did not endanger the security of the state and broke all links with overseas Churches. Clergy had to profess support for the communist regime and allow the government to vet appointments. Some Buddhist temples, Muslim mosques and, less often, Christian churches were even given state money.

During the Cultural Revolution, religion was denounced as belonging to the ‘four olds’. The first monument to be wrecked in August 1966 was a Buddha in the Summer Palace in Beijing. No public worship or ceremony was allowed and the remaining clergy were rounded up and imprisoned. Temples, churches, religious images and shrines were destroyed. Confucianism was accused of representing the worst of China’s past and ‘Confucius and Co.’ became a standard term of abuse, referring to everything and everybody that belonged to past culture.

Tibet was captured and renamed Xizang in 1950. The outlawing of the Lama Faith (a form of Buddhism) and Tibetan culture provoked a national uprising in 1959, which was brutally crushed. Even speaking of the Dalai Lama (the leader of the Buddhist Faith who fled to northern India to win international support) in public, was an arrestable offence. The communists imposed extreme policies. Tibetans were forced to grow wheat and maize (even though these proved indigestible) and herders were made to farm high ground and not allow their yaks to roam. This severely cut supplies of milk, cheese, meat, and yak hair, which was used for clothes and tents. The ensuing famine caused the deaths of a quarter of the Tibetan population. The Panchen Lama (second to the Dalai Lama) sent Mao a letter detailing the suffering and accusing Mao of genocide. Mao rejected this as a lie.

There was, however, a limit as to how much Mao could reshape private belief. In the more remote areas it remained strong and in Tibet the Lama Faith inspired continued resistance to Chinese occupation.

### Questions

- 1 How effective were the communist attempts to spread literacy and education after 1949?
- 2 In what respects was Maoist educational policy contradictory?
- 3 Can you explain why tens of thousands of young people were prepared to join the Red Guards?

### Fact

The Christian Protestant Church created the ‘Three-Self Patriotic Movement’ (TSPM), which was the only legal Protestant denomination in China. However, Chinese Roman Catholics were subject to repeated persecution. In 1955, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Shanghai and his followers were accused of plotting against the state and arrested.

### Fact

In 1973, in the anti-Confucius campaign, Lin Biao was accused of being ‘one of the Confuciuses of contemporary China’.

### Question

For what reasons and with what success did Mao attempt to eradicate religious influences from public life?



**Jiang Qing (1912–91)** Jiang Qing married Mao in 1938 and was his third wife. She had been an actress and was appointed deputy director of the Central Cultural Revolution Group in 1966. She became part of the Gang of Four (see page 138). She was arrested after Mao's death in 1976 but refused to admit guilt. She was imprisoned for life but committed suicide in 1991.

### Fact

The attack on the play *Hai Rui Dismissed From Office* was not just an artistic criticism. It was a thinly veiled attack on officials at the top of the party leadership – Peng Zhen, the mayor of Beijing, Politburo member and minister responsible for culture, as well as his allies Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi.

### Fact

Model plays that were permitted during the Cultural Revolution included:

- *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy*, a play about communist soldiers infiltrating a bandit camp during the Chinese Civil War
- *The Legend of the Red Lantern*, a play based on the activities of the communist resistance against Japan in Hulin during the Second Sino–Japanese War
- *Red Detachment of Women*, a pre-Cultural Revolution-era play that was extolled during the Cultural Revolution, about the women of Hainan Island who rose up in resistance on behalf of the CCP
- *The White-Haired Girl*, a play exploring the miseries of peasants in 1930s China.

## How did Maoism affect the arts and cultural life?

Mao associated China's rich traditional culture with feudal and imperial society and believed it needed to be swept away and replaced by a communist culture, which exulted the common man. Writers and artists were expected to educate the masses – not create artistic works for their own sake.

In the 1950s, traditional Chinese art was allowed to continue alongside more modern Soviet-inspired art that imparted propagandist messages, such as happy peasants celebrating the abundant harvest in a village co-operative. Old-style poetry also continued, although younger poets were encouraged to write about new agricultural and industrial achievements in a more modern style. Plays and films were overtly propagandist, while all literary works were carefully censored and the news media centralised, with Xinhua as the PRC's news agency. The state controlled which newspapers and journals could be published, and what could appear in print.

Although the 100 flowers campaign brought a burst of freedom (see page 137), repression followed in the anti-rightist campaign and persecution was at its most intense during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) when **Jiang Qing** was made the 'cultural purifier of the nation'.

In November 1965, the play *Hai Rui Dismissed From Office* was performed in Shanghai. The play was written by Wu Han, deputy mayor of Beijing and an intellectual. The parallels between this play, set in imperial times, and Mao's dismissal of Peng Dehuai (see page 137) were obvious, and one of the Shanghai critics, Yao Wenyuan, wrote a fierce attack on the play, with Mao's approval.

Yao Wenyuan was one of the 'Shanghai radicals' with whom Jiang Qing, Mao's wife, associated. He and his circle asserted that the struggle over culture was part of the wider struggle between classes. Consequently, they seized the opportunity to demand a campaign against the 'four olds', including old culture. Lin Biao, an ally of Mao, declared, 'If the proletariat does not occupy the positions in literature and art, the bourgeoisie certainly will. This struggle is inevitable.'

Rigid censorship forbade all but works with relevant contemporary Chinese themes. The sale or possession of foreign literature became punishable and libraries and museums were closed. For two years almost nothing new was printed except Mao's *The Little Red Book*. Western music, both classical and popular, was banned and traditional Chinese opera, with its satirical style, was replaced by a repertoire of specially commissioned contemporary opera-ballets, which depicted the triumph of the proletariat over its class enemies.

Artists of all sorts were terrorised into silence and made to submit to 'struggle sessions'. By the early 1970s, China was an artistic wasteland. Old culture had been destroyed but nothing of value had arisen to take its place.

## End of unit activities

- 1 Make a diagram to show the various stages in the re-organisation of agriculture in communist China.
- 2 Design a communist-style propaganda poster illustrating the industrial changes brought in by the communist government.
- 3 Undertake some further research into the great Chinese famine. Try to obtain some statistics, sources and historiographical extracts to build up a full picture of what happened and how its causes have been the subject of debate.
- 4 Make an illustrated poster to compare the lives of Chinese women in imperial times with conditions after the arrival of the communists. Indicate the positives and negatives for both eras.
- 5 Choose a section from Nien Cheng's *Life and Death in Shanghai* or Jung Chang's *Wild Swans* to illustrate the Cultural Revolution. Justify your choice to the class and explain what it has taught you about the period.
- 6 Make a chart to show the advantages and disadvantages of being a young person growing up in Mao's China through the 1950s and 1960s.
- 7 Choose one religious faith or ethnic minority and research how it was treated and affected by communist policies during the Maoist period.
- 8 Complete a summary diagram to show the result of Maoist attempts to control culture:

Aims	Targets	Methods	Victims	Results

- 9 Write articles for a Soviet newspaper:
  - a praising Mao's achievements on his gaining power in 1949
  - b condemning Mao after the Sino-Soviet split.

### Activity

Find out more about those who suffered during the Cultural Revolution by reading *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China* by Jung Chang and *Life and Death in Shanghai* by Nien Cheng.

### Question

Who benefited and who suffered the most from Mao's rule in China?



### Theory of knowledge

#### History and personal prejudice

To what extent is our perception of Mao coloured by our own political and national prejudices? Is it important to try to empathise with Mao in order to understand his policies and actions?

# End of chapter activities

## Paper 1 exam practice

### Question

With reference to their origin and purpose, assess the value and limitations of Source A below and Source B opposite for historians studying the impact of the Great Leap Forward of 1958.

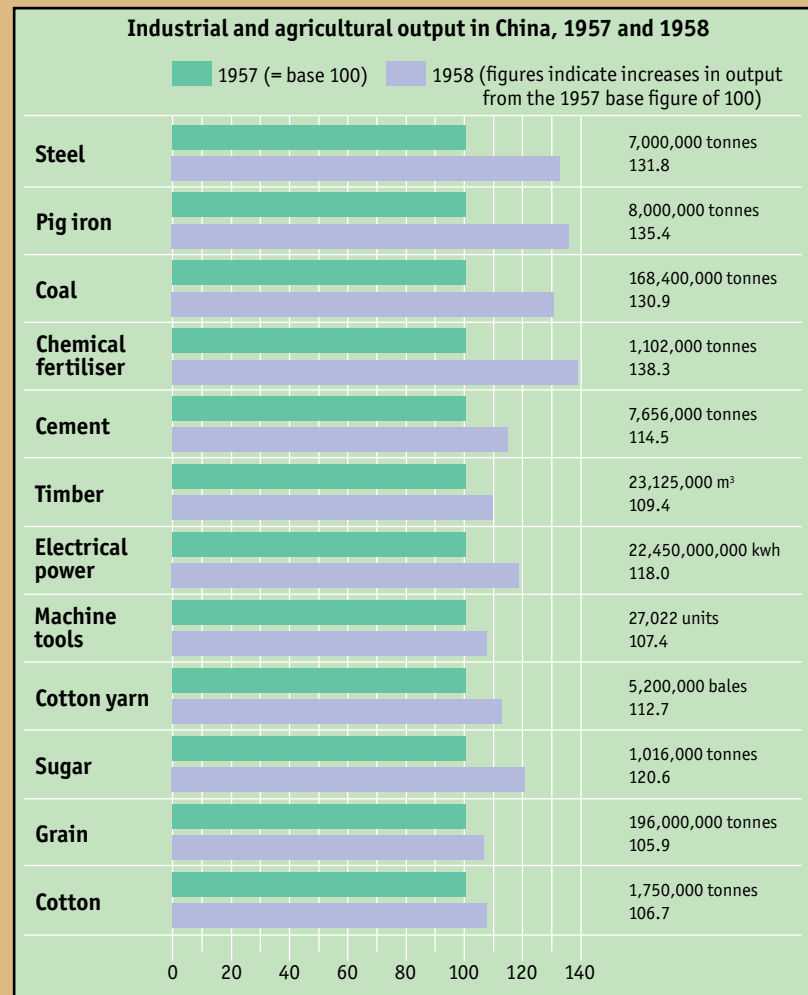
[6 marks]

### Skill

Value/limitations of sources

#### SOURCE A

Diagram showing the official statistics of output for industry and agriculture in 1957 and 1958 (the year of the Great Leap Forward)





## SOURCE B

'But where are those 500 million peasants?', my Soviet colleague wondered. 'Why are they not in the fields? It's the spring planting season, isn't it?' The answer to that query could be found in the thousands of smoking chimneys we saw each day, and in the fires that were visible every night over the horizon. The peasants were carrying out the orders of the party, working day and night at the mines and home blast furnaces to fulfil the 'Drive to produce metals locally'. And we know the results: they did not obtain any more iron than before, and there was much less bread and rice to go round.

*From a report by Mikhail Klochko, a Soviet scientist visiting the Chinese countryside in 1958. Quoted in Williams, S. 1985. China Since 1949. London, UK. Macmillan. p. 18.*

### Examiner's tips

Value/limitations questions require you to assess **two** sources and comment on their value (or usefulness) to a historian studying a particular topic. The question is explicit as to what you must consider:

- origin and purpose
- value and limitations.

Before you write your answer, jot down at least one comment on both the value and limitations of **each** source's origin (author and maybe place/time of origin) and on the value and limitations of **each** source's purpose (reason for writing or speaking and intended audience/scope).

### Common mistakes

Don't fall into the trap of writing out what the sources say. Ensure that your comments are specific. Do not simply say that one source is limited because it leaves a lot out. Finally, take care to address both sides of origin and purpose. If you only concentrate on value, with just a passing reference to limitations, you will be unable to gain more than 4 marks.

### Simplified markscheme

Band		Marks
1	<b>Both</b> sources assessed, with <b>explicit consideration</b> of <b>both</b> origins <b>and</b> purpose and value <b>and</b> limitations	6
2	<b>Both</b> sources assessed, but without consideration of <b>both</b> origins and purpose and value and limitations or explicit consideration of <b>both</b> origins and purpose <b>and</b> value and limitations <b>but</b> only for one source	3–4
3	<b>Limited</b> consideration/comments on origins and purpose <b>or</b> value and limitations and possibly only one/the wrong source(s) addressed	0–2

### Student answer



Source A provides some official statistics for the year 1958 which seem to suggest that the Great Leap Forward was a success. They tell us, for example, that from a base of 100 in 1957, pig iron output rose to 135.4 and steel to 131.8. This is impressive but is contradicted by Source B, which comments that the peasants produced no more iron and less bread and rice. Source B is more valuable than Source A because it has been written by a Soviet observer and is therefore more objective. It sees through the official statistics of A and is aware that the peasants worked unproductively, neglecting their crops. Source B is limited because it doesn't explain why the output of iron failed to increase, especially when it talks of peasants working night and day at the furnaces. However, Source A is even more limited because the official statistics cannot be relied upon. The Chinese authorities liked to pretend that all policies went well. Statistics were a type of propaganda and they were used to boost confidence and win the support of the masses. This source is therefore very limited and cannot be trusted.

### Examiner's comments

The candidate begins quite descriptively, rather than approaching the question directly. There is a comment on the value of Source B and its origins, but the student fails to point out the likely attitude of a Soviet observer in 1958, assuming he would view matters entirely objectively. This means that the limitations of the source's origins or purpose are not explored. Similarly, whilst quite a lot is said about the limitations of the origins and purpose of Source A, there is nothing explicit about the value of either origins or purpose. Consequently, this answer cannot rise above Band 2, receiving 4 marks.

## Activity

Can you improve upon the student answer above? Start afresh with a plan that addresses each aspect of the question. You may incorporate some of the points made by this student, but you will need to add others of your own and omit the irrelevant.

## Summary activity

Make a chart to explain why the Great Leap Forward failed:

Economic	Political	Social	International	Bad luck

Use your chart to assess who or what was primarily responsible for the failure of the Great Leap Forward.

## Paper 2 practice questions

- 1 Account for Mao's rise to power by 1949.
- 2 How successful was Mao in establishing his authority in the years 1949–53?
- 3 'In the years 1953 to 1967, Mao's economic planning was a total disaster.' To what extent do you agree with this view?
- 4 What was the impact of Mao's domestic policies on women and youth in China?
- 5 What was the role of ideology in shaping Mao's domestic policies?
- 6 Why was Mao able to remain as ruler of China from 1949 until his death in 1976?

## Further reading

Try reading the relevant chapters/sections of the following books:

- Chang, J. 1991. *Wild Swans*. London, UK. Simon and Schuster.
- Chang, J. and Halliday, J. 2005. *Mao: The Unknown Story*. London, UK. Jonathan Cape.
- Cheng, N. 1986. *Life and Death in Shanghai*. London, UK. Grafton.
- Feigon, L. 2002. *Mao: A Reinterpretation*. Chicago, USA. Ivan R. Dee.
- Fenby, J. 2008. *The Penguin History of Modern China 1850–2008*. London, UK. Allen Lane/Penguin Books.
- Short, P. 1999. *Mao: A Life*. London, UK. John Murray.
- Spence, J. 1999 (2nd edn). *The Search for Modern China*. New York, USA. W. W. Norton and Company.
- Spence, J. 1999. *Mao*. London, UK. Weidenfeld & Nicholson.
- Xinran. 2008. *Chinese Witness*. London, UK. Chatto & Windus.



# 5 Castro and Cuba

## 1 Origins and rise, 1933–59

### Timeline

**1868 Oct:** First War of Independence (Ten Years War) begins

**1895 Feb:** Jose Martí begins a Second War of Independence

**1898 Jul:** USA defeats Spain in Spanish–American War; Cuba is ceded to the USA

**1901 Mar:** the US Platt Amendment

**1902 May:** Cuba becomes independent, under US ‘protection’

**1927 May:** Machado’s dictatorship begins

**1933 Aug:** Machado flees – de Céspedes becomes president

**Sep:** Sergeants’ coup takes place, led by Batista; Grau becomes president

**1934 Jan:** Batista increases power; Grau steps down; opposition is repressed

**1940 Aug:** new constitution is passed

**Oct:** Batista is elected president

**1944 Jun:** Batista is succeeded by Grau

**1952 Mar:** Batista heads another coup

**1953 Jul:** Castro launches an attack on the Moncada army barracks

**1955 Jul:** Castro goes to Mexico; 26 July Movement is formed

**1956 Dec:** Castro’s band of revolutionaries lands in Cuba; guerrilla war begins in the Sierra Maestra mountains

**1958 May:** Batista’s unsuccessful offensive

**Dec:** Batista resigns

**1959 Jan:** Castro enters Havana



Fidel Castro (centre) entering Havana on 8 January 1959, following the 26 July Movement’s victory over Batista’s forces



## Key questions

- How did the historical context of Cuba before 1953 contribute to Castro's rise to power?
- What were the key stages in Castro's struggle against Batista's dictatorship in the period 1953–59?
- Why was Castro successful in his bid to overthrow Batista?

## Overview

- Before 1902, Cuba was a Spanish colony. Nationalist Cubans fought two Wars of Independence against Spain – from 1868 to 1878 and from 1895 to 1898. Following four years of US control, Cuba became independent in 1902.
- However, the US Platt Amendment of 1901, which the 1902 Cuban constitution had to include, gave the USA powers of supervision and intervention.
- Cuban politics was corrupt and, in the 1920s, students and others launched radical protest movements.
- From 1927, Cuba was ruled by the dictator Gerardo Machado, but protests and a general strike in 1933 forced him to flee.
- The hopes of the 1933 radicals ended in 1934, when power increasingly passed to Fulgencio Batista. From 1934 to 1959, Batista ruled directly or through a series of puppet presidents.
- In 1953, Fidel Castro launched an unsuccessful attack on the army barracks at Moncada. In Mexico, his 26 July Movement planned Batista's overthrow.
- In 1956, Castro landed in Cuba with a small group of revolutionaries. The group included Che Guevara. By 1959, their guerrilla war had forced Batista to flee Cuba.

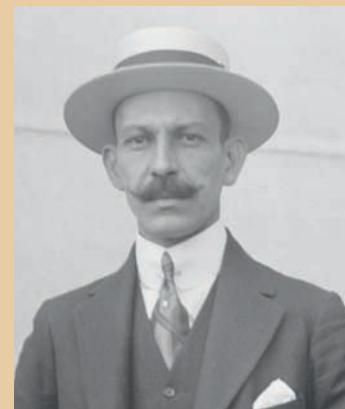
## How did the historical context of Cuba before 1953 contribute to Castro's rise to power?

Castro's rise to power was unexpected – the start of his political revolt was marked by lack of resources, early mistakes and mishaps. Nevertheless, within the space of three years, his movement was able successfully to overcome the armed forces of a brutal US-backed military dictatorship. The origins of a single-party state in Cuba lie in the political and economic problems of Cuba before 1956 – especially in the period after 1933 – and in Castro's guerrilla war of 1956–59.

### The situation before 1933

During the 19th century, a strong independence movement had grown in Cuba. An unsuccessful revolt against Spanish rule, the First War of Independence (or Ten Years' War), took place between 1868 and 1878. This was followed by a Second War of Independence from 1895 to 1898. At first, this was led by **José Martí**, a revolutionary poet, political thinker and lawyer known as the 'Apostle'. By then, Cuba was Spain's last colony in the region. In 1898, when it looked as if the rebels were winning, the USA declared war on Spain. This short Spanish–American War ended in defeat for Spain, which was forced to give up Cuba in December 1898.

**José Martí (1853–95)** After the First War of Independence, Martí spent 15 years in exile in New York, raising money to re-launch the struggle for Cuban independence and racial equality. He felt the US party system was corrupt, saw US imperialism as a threat to Cuban independence, was anti-capitalist and pro-labour movement, but was critical of Marx. In 1892, he set up the Cuban Revolutionary Party (PRC).





A map of Cuba showing the regions of Cuba and the sites of Castro's 1956 Granma landing and the failed US-backed Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961

### Question

Why was the Platt Amendment of 1901 a disappointment for those Cubans wanting complete independence for their country?

In many respects, Cubans had merely replaced one colonial power with another: in 1901, by the terms of the Platt Amendment, the USA claimed the right to intervene in Cuba's affairs. The USA did not grant the new republic of Cuba formal independence until 1902, and insisted that the new Cuban constitution include the Platt Amendment. From 1902 to 1921, the USA intervened militarily four times to ensure that Cuban governments followed policies that were good for US investments, which increased greatly after 1902.

### Fact

By 1926, US investments in Cuba were valued at \$1360 million – mainly in sugar, railways, mining, banking, electricity, telephones, commerce and land. They reached their peak in 1958. Organised crime, controlled by the US mafia, also had considerable influence on Cuban political and economic life, especially as regards corruption.

From the beginning, Cuba's politicians were corrupt, and elections were often rigged. Opposition to this and a desire to end Cuba's economic subservience to the USA inspired two radical student movements (1923 and 1927–1933), based on Martí's radical anti-imperialism and egalitarianism. Despite repression, opposition continued.

### The revolution of 1933–34

On 12 August 1933, increasing unrest forced Machado (who, elected in 1925, had ruled as a dictator since 1927) to resign and flee to the USA. The USA then helped put together a conservative-dominated and pro-US provisional government, headed by Carlos Manuel de Céspedes.

However, protests and strikes continued and, on 4 September, army NCOs (non-commissioned officers, known as 'sub-officers' in some countries) staged a coup. With students and other civilian leaders, they proclaimed a new Provisional



Revolutionary Government, led by Ramón Grau San Martín, a university professor. Grau's government, sworn in on 10 September, issued a manifesto promising national sovereignty, a new constitution, democracy and reforms for a 'new Cuba'. The Platt Amendment was abolished, women were given the vote, prices were cut and wages increased. These developments worried business people, and the US ambassador began to suggest US military intervention.

### Batista's counter-revolution, 1934

The leader of the NCO army group in this 'sergeants' revolt' of September 1933 was **Fulgencio Batista**. The USA refused to recognise Grau's government because of its proposed reforms, and a split developed between moderates and a more radical left, led by Antonio Guiteras, who was minister of the interior, war and the navy. Another leader of the radical left was Eduardo 'Eddy' Chibás. However, unrest continued. Batista – concerned with military matters – then had meetings with the US ambassador, who persuaded Batista to take power by using his control of the army to impose a president and government that would 'protect' US economic and political interests in Cuba. On 16 January 1934, Batista transferred his support to Colonel Carlos Mendieta, a conservative politician who was immediately recognised by the USA. This ended the reforms of the short-lived 1933–34 revolution.

### Puppet presidents, 1934–40

For the rest of the 1930s, Batista and the army were the real power behind seven civilian puppet presidents, who could only enact measures approved by Batista and the USA. During the years 1934–35, students resumed protests and over 100 strikes took place. Batista soon turned on the left, and used the army to crush and kill opponents. Guiteras formed the *Joven Cuba* (Young Cuba), which became an urban guerrilla movement, and called general strikes in 1934 and 1935. The general strike of March 1935 collapsed after a few days, and the severity of the military repression soon ended political protest. Mendieta and Batista imposed martial law: strike leaders were arrested and unions banned. Guiteras was later shot dead by soldiers as he tried to flee to Mexico in order to carry on the struggle, while many demonstrators were executed by firing squad.

Grau formed a new middle-class movement, based on Martí's old party: the *Partido Revolucionaria Cubano Auténtico* – known as the Auténticos. The communists – founded in 1925 – were renamed the *Partido Socialista Popular* (PSP). They agreed to co-operate with Batista and replaced revolutionary with reformist politics.

### New constitution, new coup, 1940–52

In November 1939, Batista organised elections for a constituent assembly to draw up a new constitution – Grau's Auténticos won 41 of the 76 seats. The assembly met in February 1940, and the new constitution was passed in August 1940. Batista was elected as president in October 1940. However, as a result of economic problems, Grau and his Auténticos party won a sweeping victory over Batista's preferred candidate for the role of president in the 1944 elections, and Batista – in charge of the army and with US support – went back to ruling from behind the scenes until 1952.

Grau's government of 1944–48, aware of Batista's power, soon abandoned the reforms expected by their supporters, and corruption continued. This disappointed those Auténticos wanting social reforms, so in 1947 Chibás formed the more radical PRC *Ortodoxo*, known as the Ortodoxos.

### Fulgencio Batista (1901–73)

Batista was born on a sugar plantation. He joined the army at the age of 19, became a stenographer and rose to the rank of sergeant, participating in military tribunals. He dominated Cuban politics from 1934 to 1959 and, though remembered as a corrupt and brutal dictator, he enjoyed genuine popularity when he was the elected president from 1940 to 1944.



### Question

Why are the Cuban presidents from 1934 to 1940 often called 'puppet presidents'?

**Fidel Castro (b. 1926)** Castro was the son of a successful Spanish immigrant. He followed the classic path of the son of a *peninsular* (the most recent immigrants from Spain and the Canary Islands, and from mainland Latin America) – educated by Jesuits; in 1945, he went to university to study law. He became involved in radical student politics, but stayed clear of the communists. After graduation, he travelled around Latin America, meeting other radical nationalists; he was caught up in the short-lived popular rising in Bogota in 1948.



The 1948 elections were won by the Auténticos. This government of 1948–52, according to Julia Sweig, became one of the most corrupt and undemocratic in Cuba's history to date. Prior to the 1952 elections, Batista led another coup on 10 March 1952, cancelled the elections and ruled directly until 1959.

## **What were the key stages in Castro's struggle against Batista's dictatorship in the period 1953–59?**

Batista's coup in 1952 met with little resistance from either the Ortodoxo or Auténtico parties, or the general public – especially as Batista promised an election in 1954. However, one person who was determined to oppose the coup was **Fidel Castro**.

### **Castro and the Moncada attack**

On 26 July 1953, Fidel Castro and his brother, Raúl, led 165 youths in an attack on the Moncada army barracks in Santiago de Cuba in order to obtain weapons – but it was a failure. Half of the attackers were killed, wounded or arrested. Batista's police then began to slaughter any suspects, so the Castro brothers gave themselves up. They, along with about 100 others, were put on trial. Castro took on their defence.

*Batista's troops looking at the corpses of some of the rebels killed during Castro's failed attack on the Moncada barracks in Santiago de Cuba on 26 July 1953*



## SOURCE A

It looked as if his [Marti's] memory would be extinguished forever. But he lives. He has not died. His people are rebellious, his people are worthy, his people are faithful to his memory. Cubans have fallen defending his doctrines. Young men, in a magnificent gesture of reparation, have come to give their blood and to die in the hearts of his countrymen. Oh Cuba! What would have become of you if you had let the memory of your apostle die! ... Condemn me, it does not matter – history will absolve me.

*The concluding part of the speech Castro made at the trial following the attack on the Moncada barracks. No record was made of the two-hour speech at the time – he recreated it from memory later. Quoted in Gott, R. 2004. Cuba: A New History. New Haven, USA. Yale University Press. p. 151.*

Castro's 'History will absolve me' speech (see Source A) later became the manifesto of his movement, and contained the '**five revolutionary laws**' that would have been published if his attack had been successful. Only 26 of the group were found guilty, and most were treated leniently. Fidel Castro was sentenced to 15 years in prison and Raúl to 13 years.

Batista won the 1954 election unopposed – in effect, Batista's control meant moderate political opposition had no way to present an alternative. His return to repression opened the way for armed opposition. During 1955 and 1956, armed groups such as *Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil* (DRE) and the *Organización Auténtica* (OA) were set up to resist Batista's brutal repression. However, it was to be Castro who, in the end, organised the movement that was to end Batista's dictatorship.

## The 26 July Movement

On 15 May 1955, Fidel and Raúl Castro were among many prisoners released by Batista in an attempt to improve his public image. Immediately, they began to form what became known as the 26 July Movement. At first, Fidel Castro identified his new movement with the *Chibasismo* (the Chibás wing of the Ortodoxos) but, in July, he and his supporters decided to go to Mexico, to plan Batista's overthrow.

## Preparing the revolution, Mexico 1955–56

Castro and his 26 July group stayed in Mexico for almost a year, plotting against Batista and raising money to print two manifestos. On 19 March 1956, he published a letter publicly separating his 26 July Movement from the *Chibasismo* and the Ortodoxos.

While in Mexico, one of Castro's early recruits was Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, who soon became a loyal collaborator, and later became an important international symbol of rebellion.

### The five revolutionary laws

- 1 Return power to the people by reinstating the constitution of 1940.
- 2 Land rights for all those holding (or squatting on) less than 67 hectares (165 acres).
- 3 Workers in large industries and mines to have 30% share of profits.
- 4 Sugar planters to have 55% share of the profits from their production.
- 5 Action to stop corruption – property confiscated from those found guilty of fraud would be spent on workers' pensions, hospitals, asylums and charities.

Castro also promised reorganisation of public education, nationalisation of public utilities and telephones, and rent controls.

### Question

Why was Castro's movement known as the 26 July Movement?



By February 1956, Castro had begun to train his 'army'. However, the Mexican authorities discovered their plans and Castro, Che Guevara and some others were arrested. Once released, planning was renewed in greater secrecy. Following more raids by the Mexican police, Castro decided it was time to take his band of revolutionaries to Cuba – on the *Granma*, an old motor yacht. They left Mexico on 25 November 1956.

### **From Mexico to the Sierra Maestra**

Castro had arranged for an armed rebellion to take place on 30 November in Santiago, under Frank País, the movement's leader in Cuba. This was intended to coincide with Castro's expected arrival in Cuba, but the revolt had been crushed before his group landed. On 2 December 1956, Castro and his small group of 81 revolutionaries landed on Cuban soil – in the wrong place and two days late. Batista's forces – alerted by the failed 30 November revolt – were there to meet him. In two days of fighting, several of the *Granma* party were killed, and 22 captured and later put on trial. Only 16 of Castro's group remained free and alive, and many of their weapons, ammunition and supplies had been lost.

*This photograph, taken in the Sierra Maestra, shows Fidel Castro (wearing glasses), with leading guerrillas in the 26 July Movement, Celia Sánchez (behind him) and Camilo Cienfuegos (right); Celia Sánchez was Castro's closest friend and his lover, and had been a political adviser to him since 1953*

#### **Questions**

What can you learn about the nature of Castro's movement from this photograph? What is the significance of the armband Castro is wearing?



The surviving **Fidelistas** retreated to the south-eastern mountain range known as the Sierra Maestra. It was from here that Castro began to organise a campaign of **guerrilla warfare**.

Batista responded to the guerilla campaign by forcibly clearing peasants from the lower slopes of the mountains – those remaining in the area could be killed as revolutionaries. Batista also used bombers and paramilitary death squads, known as *Los Tigres*.

Attacks by the 26 July Movement were increasingly successful, and soon the movement began to attract recruits from the local population, allowing Castro to organise bigger offensives. However, until February 1957, most people thought Castro had been killed, as this was what Batista and the Cuban press reported.

What changed things were the reports of **Herbert Matthews**, foreign correspondent of the *New York Times*, who was taken to meet Castro by Frank País. Matthews reported Castro's successes, which encouraged Batista's opponents and brought extra recruits. Throughout 1957 and early 1958, the size of Castro's rebel army increased and the area of military operations expanded. The sympathy and respect they showed for the poor peasants gave them valuable support amongst the local population.

## The urban resistance

Castro also organised a 'civic resistance movement' on a national scale, to get support from workers and liberal middle-class professionals. This movement was established first in Havana, and saw 26 July Movement supporters collaborating with middle-class Ortodoxos. In overall control was **Frank País**.

In July 1957, just before he was gunned down by Batista's police, País had persuaded leading Ortodoxo politicians and business people to issue a joint 'Pact of the Sierra', which called for a 'civic revolutionary front' to force Batista from power and hold new elections.

In early 1958, the communist PSP finally gave its support to Castro. Castro's movement then began to discuss plans for a revolutionary general strike in the cities. Faustino Pérez, the new leader of the movement and the 'civic resistance' in Havana, thought the time was ripe – Castro was less sure.

However, Castro let the planned strike go ahead. He and Pérez signed a manifesto, *Total War Against Tyranny*, calling for a strike and declaring that the struggle against Batista had entered 'its final stage'. The manifesto also outlined political plans for the post-Batista period. The date of the general strike was set for 9 April 1958.

But the police and the army were ready, and the uprising was soon defeated. However, although this failure led Castro to decide to concentrate on the guerrilla war, the working class remained an important part of the movement's campaign against Batista, and was to be significant for developments after Castro's victory.

## The final stage

By this point, Cuba was on the verge of revolution. In February 1958, Castro's 26 July Movement had announced a war on property and production, in order to further isolate Batista by hitting the economic élites – both national and foreign – that had up to then supported him.

**Fidelistas** Originally, this referred to the close group of early supporters of Fidel Castro and the 26 July Movement – in Mexico, the Sierra and in the first governments. They were a cross-section of Cuban society – workers, peasant, black people and middle-class liberals – who responded to Castro's charismatic appeal.

**guerrilla warfare** This is the name given to war fought by small forces of irregular soldiers against regular armies, involving unorthodox methods; guerrillas tend to be most effective when they have the support of local people.

### Herbert Matthews (1900–77)

Matthews, a reporter during the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), was a strong supporter of the republican cause against Franco in Spain. Castro's supporters contacted him and smuggled him up to Castro's armed group. His articles praised the bravery and commitment of the rebels, and exploded Batista's claims that Castro was dead. They also made Castro into an international figure.

### Frank País (1930–57)

País trained as a schoolteacher but, after Batista's coup in 1952, he became a full-time activist for the 26 July Movement. He first met Castro in Mexico in August 1956 and was instrumental in ensuring that weapons and supplies reached the guerrillas in the Sierra. He also persuaded journalists such as Matthews to report on Castro's war. He was assassinated in Santiago in July 1957 and his funeral was followed by a general strike that lasted five days.

**SOURCE B**

[Commerce, industry and capital], which have whole-heartedly supported President Batista since he took over the government in 1952, are growing impatient with the continued violence in the island.

*Comments in a telegram sent by the resident New York Times correspondent in Havana, 15 September 1957. Quoted in Bethell, L. (ed.). 1993. Cuba: A Short History. Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press. p. 90.*

By mid 1958, four other guerrilla fronts had been opened up, while mergers with other rebel bands succeeded in gaining more local recruits for the 26 July Movement. In May 1958, Batista launched a massive 'liquidation campaign' to crush Castro's forces, involving over 12,000 troops. By then, Castro's forces were about 5000 strong.

**Question**

What was the significance of the Pact of Caracas of July 1958?

In July 1958, while the offensive was still taking place, representatives of the leading opposition groups met in Caracas, Venezuela, to organise a united front against Batista. The resulting 'Pact of Caracas' saw Castro recognised as the principal leader of the anti-Batista movement, with his rebel army as the main arm of the revolution.

**Castro's counter-offensive**

By August 1958, the government offensive had collapsed. This proved to be an important turning point and, in the late summer, Castro's forces launched a counter-offensive. Within weeks, the government's forces in the east were overrun and cut off from reinforcements. More and more provincial towns went over to the rebels. After these successes, several leaders of the communist PSP, which had allied itself with Castro's forces in early 1958, took up positions within Castro's movement.

Castro now turned his attention to the west and Havana. Batista's increased use of terror (including torture and executions) at last provoked spontaneous uprisings across the island, and more and more people joined the urban resistance or the guerrilla groups.

By the end of 1958, Castro's guerrilla army numbered about 50,000 and was clearly in control of the countryside. This provoked several military plots against Batista so, on New Year's Eve 1958, he resigned and fled with his family. Batista's army units then ceased to offer any resistance to Castro's forces.

On 1 January 1959, after an unsuccessful US-backed coup, command of the army passed to Colonel Ramon Barguin, who on 2 January 1959 ordered an immediate ceasefire. On the same day, in Santiago de Cuba, Castro made a speech in which he said that 'The Revolution begins now', making it clear that this time, unlike in 1898, the USA would not be allowed to dominate Cuba's history.

A week later, on 8 January 1959, after a slow progress through cheering crowds, Fidel Castro entered Havana to a hero's welcome.

**Fact**

The communist PSP had considerable support amongst workers and black people, but was not trusted by groups on the left – especially as it had given limited support to Batista after 1937. In 1942, two communists even entered Batista's cabinet. However, after the start of the Cold War and his 1952 coup, Batista banned the PSP. By 1957, they were openly in opposition to Batista.



## Why was Castro successful in his bid to overthrow Batista?

### Military and political factors

One reason for the success of Castro's guerrilla movement was the quality of his commanders, including **Che Guevara**, Raúl Castro and Camilo Cienfuegos. Another reason was that, despite the disastrous start, the area in which his small group of survivors began operations was an unimportant part of the island, with only a few Rural Guard (a paramilitary police force) outposts. Moreover, the local population had been terrorised by commanders from the Rural Guard for decades, and resented the central government in Havana. The growing success of the guerrilla group's military offensives meant Batista was forced to divert troops to the rural areas from the cities, allowing opposition there to mobilise.

#### SOURCE C

The Cuban revolutionary struggle was a national one, encompassing all sectors of Cuban society. However, critical to its success was the working class, which 'provided a backdrop to the revolutionary struggle'. The labour movement was a dominant force in the political development and direction of the revolution. Workers were prominent actors throughout the urban wing of the revolutionary struggle, which complemented the rural armed struggle.

Saney, I. 2004. *Cuba: A Revolution in Motion*. London, UK. Zed Books. p. 11.

Batista's brutality and repression increased opposition to him and brought additional support for Castro's guerrillas. Furthermore, there were other problems facing Batista – as the rebel movement grew, so did dissent within the army ranks. This resulted in a series of army conspiracies that undermined Batista's confidence. By the late 1950s, Batista was thus facing mounting popular opposition and armed resistance, but with an increasingly unreliable army.

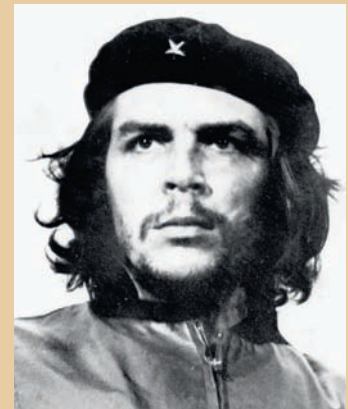
### Economic developments

Another reason for Castro's success lies with the economic situation of Cuba in the 1950s. Between 1952 and 1954, the price of sugar declined, triggering the first of a series of recessions in the Cuban economy. In addition, the effects of the 1934 trade treaty with the USA, which removed tariffs, greatly contributed to the inability of Cuban industry to develop. Consequently, there was growing unemployment: by 1957, 17% of the labour force were unemployed, while a further 13% were underemployed.

### Role of the USA

Another reason for Castro's eventual success was the attitude of the US government. In late 1957, the US government decided that, in order to protect US investments in Cuba and prevent Castro coming to power, it was necessary for Batista to give way to a caretaker government acceptable to US interests.

**Ernesto 'Che' Guevara (1928–67)** Guevara came from an upper-class Argentine family, suffered from chronic asthma, and was a medical doctor. He was in Guatemala in 1954, where he witnessed the US-backed coup that overthrew the radical Arbenz government. From Guatemala, he went to Mexico, where he met Castro. He was more socially radical than Castro, and introduced him to a wider range of political ideas.



### Historical debate

Historians are divided over the importance of the urban resistance to Batista in the final victory of Castro's 26 July Movement. Read Source C on page 173 again. Do you think this is a fair statement concerning the significance of the urban resistance?

### Discussion point

Working in pairs, develop arguments for a class presentation on the main reasons why Castro was eventually successful. Concentrate on three aspects:

- 1 factors that relate to Castro's actions
- 2 the role of other oppositionists
- 3 mistakes made by Batista.



### Theory of knowledge

#### History and ethics

Is armed struggle or resistance against a government ever justified? What if there are elections, but they are manipulated or rigged? Is such a question related to moral relativism and the particular political and social contexts of different societies, or is it an example that falls under the heading of universal values?

On 9 December 1957, a financier sent by the US State Department tried but failed to persuade Batista to retire. In March 1958, the US government began to reduce its support for Batista's dictatorship. Its first step was to place an arms embargo on both sides – this both weakened Batista's hold over his military and civilian supporters, and made resistance to Castro's forces more difficult.

### SOURCE D

According to US ambassador Earl E. T. Smith, intimations that Washington no longer backed Batista had 'a devastating psychological effect' on the army and was 'the most effective step taken by the Department of State in bringing about the downfall of Batista'.

Bethell, L. (ed.). 1993. *Cuba: A Short History*. Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press. p. 91.

## End of unit activities

- 1 Carry out some further research on the attitudes of the PRC Auténtico, the PRC Ortodoxo and the communist PSP in the 1940s and 1950s towards Castro and others who advocated armed struggle as the way to end Batista's dictatorship.
- 2 Re-read pages 168–72 and, using any extra information you can obtain from other sources, produce a chart summarising the main steps in Castro's rise to power from 1953 to 1959.
- 3 Find out more about Raúl Castro and Che Guevara. Then write a couple of paragraphs to explain the significance of the roles they each played in the victory of the 26 July Movement.
- 4 Try to find a transcript of Castro's 'History will absolve me' speech. Do you think history has, in fact, absolved Castro in relation to the legitimacy of his decision to resort to armed rebellion?



## 2 Ideology and the nature of the state

### Key questions

- What role did ideology play in Castro's rise to power before 1959?
- Did Castro become a communist after 1959?
- What is the nature of Cuba's Castroist state?

### Overview

- Before 1959, Castro's ideology was a radical mix, influenced by Cuban radical nationalists such as Martí and the leaders of resistance in the 1920s and 1930s. The main aims of his ideology were for fairness, social welfare, modernisation and independence from US interference.
- Also important was the idea of *cubiana* (see page 177) – but there was little traditional socialism in the various manifestos published by his 26 July Movement between 1953 and 1959. This, along with his recourse to armed struggle, meant that the Cuban communists did not support him until after the Caracas Pact of July 1958.
- From as early as April 1959, when Castro announced the suspension of elections, relations with the USA became more and more strained. By January 1960, the USA had drawn up a plan to overthrow Castro.
- In 1960, Cuba made several trade agreements with the Soviet Union, East European states, and China. As a result of increasing US economic restrictions, Castro nationalised US companies operating in Cuba.
- In April 1961, Castro made the first announcement of Cuba's move to socialism. This was reinforced by the Bay of Pigs incident. Over the next few years, Cuba moved closer to the Soviet Union – and to a Soviet-style economy and state.
- In 1976, a new constitution was brought in to achieve *Poder Popular*, or People's Power. This constitution was amended in 1992, establishing direct elections to all three legislative tiers.

### Timeline

- 1953 Jul:** *Manifesto of the Revolutionaries of Moncada to the Nation* is published
- Oct:** Castro makes his 'History will absolve me' speech
- 1956 Mar:** Castro writes a letter publicly announcing the 26 July Movement
- 1958 Jul:** Caracas Pact; communist PSP begins co-operation with the 26 July Movement
- 1959 Jan:** Castro's movement takes power
- Apr:** Castro announces suspension of elections
- Jun:** Agrarian Reform Act
- 1960 Feb:** trade deal is signed with Soviet Union
- May:** US oil companies in Cuba refuse to refine Soviet crude oil
- Jun:** Castro nationalises US refineries
- Jul:** US reduces quota for Cuban sugar; Soviet Union agrees to buy the surplus
- Aug:** main US businesses in Cuba are nationalised
- Sep:** Castro makes his 'First declaration of Havana' speech; all remaining US companies are nationalised
- Nov:** first US trade embargo on exports to Cuba
- 1961 Apr:** Castro proclaims Cuba's socialist revolution; failure of Bay of Pigs invasion
- 1962 Mar:** Castro moves against the Escalante faction of the communist PSP
- Oct:** Cuban Missile Crisis
- 1976 Feb:** new constitution to establish *Poder Popular* is approved
- Dec:** first meeting of the new National Assembly
- 1993 Feb:** first direct elections to the National Assembly



**communist ideology** Before 1958, the communist PSP was opposed to Castro's insurrection, and had publicly condemned the 1953 Moncada attack for being 'guided by mistaken bourgeois conceptions' and inspired by 'putschist methods, peculiar to bourgeois political factions'. It was not until the mid 1960s that, for several reasons, Castro decided to carry his revolution into the communist camp.

**Antonio Guiteras (1906–35)**

Inspired by Martí, Guiteras had views that were a mixture of nationalism and anti-capitalism. In 1933, after the overthrow of Machado, Guiteras served in Grau's government. When Batista overthrew Grau, Guiteras formed *Joven Cuba* and began urban guerrilla warfare to spark off an insurrection. In May 1935, Guiteras was shot dead by soldiers (see page 167).

**Fact**

The 1940 Constitution – even though it was contradictory and impractical – was a symbol of democracy and freedom for most Cuban oppositionists and revolutionaries. It had a strong social democratic content (8-hour day, paid holidays, pensions, social insurance). It gave the vote to all over the age of 20, including women, and political rights such as multi-party elections. Following his 1953 *Mainifesto*, Castro repeated his promise to restore the 1940 Constitution several times over the next six years.

**Question**

Does Castro's determination to remove poverty and inequality prove that he was a communist?

**What role did ideology play in Castro's rise to power before 1959?**

Castro adopted aspects of **communist ideology** after 1960, but Richard Gott states that nationalism was more important in his ideology than socialism, with Martí being more influential than Marxist ideology, with its emphasis on class conflict.

While the main factor in Castro's rise to power was his movement's guerrilla war against Batista, the stated aims of the movement were also important in gaining public support. These aims were publicised in various manifestos issued before 1959.

**Manifestos**

Castro saw manifestos as essential – 'Propaganda must not be abandoned for a minute, for it is the soul of every struggle.' According to Herbert Matthews, Castro's attack on the Moncada barracks in 1953 was inspired by patriotism, with aims similar to those of Martí and **Guiteras**. In the 1920s and 1930s, Guiteras had advocated a programme of radical reforms with vague socialist undertones. Castro was part of this radical Cuban nationalist tradition, as is shown by his first manifesto, *Manifesto of the Revolutionaries of Moncada to the Nation*, dated 23 July 1953. Prepared before the attack, it indicates the kind of revolution he had in mind: independence from foreign control, social justice based on economic and industrial modernisation, and restoration of the 1940 Constitution.

Castro's second 'manifesto', his 'History will absolve me' speech of 16 October 1953, developed these ideas. It included promises of agrarian reform, rent reductions, industrial development and modernisation, expansion of education and healthcare, and taking control of public utilities, which were mostly in the hands of US companies.

*Poor peasant housing in Oriente Province, Cuba, before 1959*



Two formal ‘manifestos of the 26 July Movement’, issued by Castro while he was in Mexico, showed no signs of communism or ‘Marxism–Leninism’ and lacked any systematic ideas or ideology. In fact, while Castro wanted a radical social revolution for all Cubans, he angrily rejected claims that he was inspired by communism.

During 1957–58, when Castro was in the Sierra, there was a continuous stream of manifestos – and, after the spring of 1958, talks on *Radio Rebelde* (the illegal radio station of Castro and the rebels). These only offered broad outlines of policies and reforms rather than a coherent programme. A manifesto issued on 12 March 1958, to help prepare for the unsuccessful 9 April general strike, mainly repeated elements of his ‘History will absolve me’ speech. In July 1958, the Caracas Pact, which was signed by all the groups opposed to Batista – except the communist PSP – resulted in the issue of another manifesto. This manifesto mentioned agrarian reform but otherwise contained no radical socialist policies.

In fact, it was not until 1958 that serious contacts between Castro and the Cuban communists began. By July, Carlos Rodriguez, one of the leaders of the PSP, had joined the rebels in the Sierra and there was growing co-operation between the movement and the PSP. However, while Castro was prepared to accept support from all quarters, he made it clear that he was in charge.

## Nationalism and *cubiana*

The main source of inspiration for Castro’s ideology was the more radical version of Cuban nationalism, stretching back to 1868 and the First War of Independence, the student rebellions of the 1920s and 1930s, and the idea of *cubiana*. Castro believed the 26 July Movement, as the custodian of *cubiana* and as the vanguard (the leading group that maintained and promoted revolutionary aims), needed to achieve Cuban independence and modernisation. Castro’s political ideas before 1959 appear to have been more nationalistic and less radical than those of his two closest allies: his brother **Raúl Castro** and Che Guevara. According to Sebastian Balfour, even they (though more familiar with Marxism than Fidel) were ‘unorthodox communists’. While it is possible that a Cuban version of ‘socialism in one country’ (see [Chapter 2](#), page 25) may have begun to emerge from the political discussions Fidel had with Raúl and Che in the Sierra, this was not reflected in the movement’s manifestos.

### SOURCE A

Because of my ideological background, I belong to those who believe that the solution of the world’s problems lies behind the so-called iron curtain, and I see this movement [26 July] as one of the many inspired by the bourgeoisie’s desire to free themselves from the economic chains of imperialism. I always thought of Fidel as an authentic leader of the leftist bourgeoisie, although his image is enhanced by personal qualities of extraordinary brilliance that set him above his class.

*An extract from a letter written by Che Guevara to René Ramos Latour, national co-ordinator of the 26 July Movement in December 1957. Quoted in Franqui, C. 1980. Diary of the Cuban Revolution. New York, USA. Viking Press. p. 269.*

***cubiana*** A term first used by the 19th-century rebels struggling for Cuban independence, *cubiana* refers to the collective national interests of Cuba. *Cubiana* meant modernisation – the socio-economic and cultural development of Cuba – on Cuban terms, not on the terms set by liberal capitalism and foreign imperialism. Its aims were economic growth, a high level of social welfare, and socio-economic fairness.

### Question

What was *cubiana*, and how did it relate to Castro’s ideology?

**Raúl Castro (b. 1931)** Raúl was the youngest of the five Castro siblings. Unlike Fidel, he was always known as a radical. At university, he became involved in the youth movement of the Communist Party. In 1953, he attended the World Youth Congress in Sofia, and visited Bucharest and Prague. He fought alongside Fidel from 1953, and was the first to welcome Carlos Rodriguez, the political leader of the PSP, to the Sierra in July 1958. His strong pro-communist views worried anti-communists in the 26 July Movement. He is now president of the Cuban Council of State and the president (as premier) of the Council of Ministers of Cuba.

**Fact**

Both Castro and Guevara had at first been inspired by Juan Perón's movement in Argentina. Castro was much inspired by the popular Colombian politician Jorge Gaitán, had attended the anti-imperialist student congress in Colombia in 1947, and had joined in the riots sparked off by Gaitán's assassination in that year. Guevara had been in Guatemala in 1954, where he witnessed the fall (as a result of a US-sponsored military invasion) of the reforming government of democratically elected Jacobo Arbenz. Both of these events showed how US interests and power made reform difficult if not impossible.

**Fact**

Before January 1960, the CIA had proposed 'harassment' by CIA-funded Cuban exiles, using small planes to carry out sabotage attacks on Cuban sugar mills. Eisenhower asked for a more ambitious scheme to topple Castro. The result was the Bay of Pigs incident in April 1961 (see page 180).

As well as the 19th-century nationalist struggles, Castro was inspired by the various Latin and Central American anti-imperialist movements of the 1930s and 1940s. Castro's movement was similar to these national liberation movements, which mobilised the masses against powerful traditional élites and attempted to escape from the controlling influence of US economic interests.

## **Did Castro become a communist after 1959?**

According to Balfour, before 1959 Castro had a radical programme of reforms but no clear view of the future direction of his revolution – suggesting he was not a communist before 1959. It was only after 1959 that Castro saw socialism as providing a structure within which to achieve the radical nationalist aims set out in his manifestos.

## **Did the USA make Castro a communist?**

After Batista's fall, Manuel Urrutia, president of Cuba from January to July 1959, nominated a cabinet drawn from moderate members of the 26 July Movement, who were acceptable to most sections of public opinion in Cuba and even the USA. However, the US government's attitude altered after the June 1959 Agrarian Reform Act (see page 198). The USA issued a Note of Protest and began to plan Castro's overthrow. The threat from the USA, and frequent CIA-organised sabotage attacks by Batista's supporters and Cuban exiles, led Castro to establish trade links with other countries, including the Soviet Union, in order to reduce Cuba's dependence on the USA.

In June 1959, Guevara visited various developing countries to find new markets for Cuban sugar. In July, the Soviet Union placed an order for 500,000 tonnes, as they had done in 1955 while Batista was still in control. The Soviet Union was at first uncertain about Castro's intended direction but, in February 1960, Anastas Mikoyan, the Soviet Union's deputy premier, arrived in Cuba to open a Soviet trade exhibition.

The Soviet Union then agreed to purchase a million tonnes of sugar each year for five years, and to provide \$100 million credit for the purchase of plant and equipment. Cuba then signed similar agreements with several other Eastern bloc countries.

As early as January 1960, a draft plan to overthrow Castro had been presented to the US president, Dwight D. Eisenhower – he had pushed for more than the 'harassment' initially suggested by Allen Dulles, director of the CIA. These decisions were made well before May 1960, when the Soviet Union restored diplomatic relations with Cuba (these had been broken off following Batista's coup in 1952).

In early 1960, sabotage attacks were stepped up. On 4 March, a French ship carrying Belgian small arms was blown up in Havana harbour, killing 100 people and injuring over 300. At the mass rally that followed to condemn this outrage, Castro warned of the possibility of a US-backed invasion and, for the first time, used the now-famous slogan '*Patria o muerte, venceremos*' ('Fatherland or death, we shall overcome').

The previous month, the first delivery of crude oil – cheaper than that sold by US companies – had arrived from the Soviet Union. The US government, wanting to break the Cuban economy, pressured US companies in Cuba into refusing to refine the oil – so Castro nationalised the oil companies in June 1960.





Fidel Castro (left) with Che Guevara (centre) and USSR deputy premier Anastas Mikoyan (right), during the latter's visit to Havana in February 1960

In July, the USA retaliated by reducing the import quota for Cuban sugar, leaving Cuba with 700,000 tonnes of unsold sugar. The Soviet Union agreed to purchase this and soon China signed a five-year agreement to purchase 500,000 tonnes a year. On 6 August 1960, Castro nationalised all the main US-owned properties, including the sugar mills.

In September 1960, Castro made his 'First declaration of Havana' speech, in which he strongly condemned US imperialism. Following this, all US-owned businesses and public utilities, including US banks, were nationalised.

In November, the USA imposed an embargo on all exports to Cuba, apart from food and medical supplies. The Soviet bloc then agreed to buy 4 million tonnes of Cuban sugar in 1961 – a million tonnes more than the USA usually purchased. The Soviet Union also agreed to make good Cuba's import gap.

Castro first mentioned the 'socialist' nature of the revolution in a speech made on 16 April 1961, following air-raids on 15 April (which preceded the Bay of Pigs incident on 17 April). His speech on 1 May, following the defeat of the US-planned invasion, spoke of 'our socialist revolution'.

### Question

Is this photograph evidence to prove that Castro was a communist?

### Fact

Since the early 20th century, US governments had attempted to ensure that Cuban governments followed policies that benefited US investments in Cuba. US companies owned large proportions of the main banks and public utility companies in Cuba (see page 166) as well as considerable amounts of the best agricultural land. In particular, the USA pushed for Cuba to concentrate on sugar production. Cuba also produced some tobacco, coffee and rice, but the production of sugar was the main source of income for Cuba. US governments agreed to purchase a large proportion – or quota – of Cuba's sugar crop at prices that were usually slightly higher than average world prices. However, in return, Cuba had to agree to give preferential access for US products (such as reducing or even abolishing import duties). This meant it was very difficult for the Cuban economy to develop and industrialise and the Cuban economy was heavily dependent on the US economy. Any reduction in US sugar quotas or in the price Washington was prepared to pay for sugar would seriously affect the economy. Consequently, many Cubans yearned for greater economic and political independence.

### **The Bay of Pigs incident, April 1961**

Two events – both related to US policy decisions against Castro's Cuba – contributed to the radicalisation of Castro's revolution. These were the Bay of Pigs incident in April 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. Both of these developments pushed Castro closer to the Cuban communists and the Soviet Union.

In March 1960, President Eisenhower had approved plans for US-backed Cuban exiles to invade Cuba. These invasion plans (Operation *Zapata*) were put into operation by John F. Kennedy, the newly elected (and strongly anti-communist) US president. On 15 April, CIA pilots helped exiles to bomb Cuban air bases. On 17 April, about 1500 exiles – trained and armed by the CIA – left Nicaragua with a US naval escort and a CIA command ship. The exiles landed on two beaches – the majority on Playa Girón in the Bay of Pigs. However, the expected anti-Castro uprising never took place.

Castro immediately rushed from Havana to take charge of the defences, and the exiles were defeated after two days despite heavy air strikes, authorised by Kennedy, against the Cuban militia. Over 100 were killed, and 1179 captured. Most of the Cuban exile commanders had been officers under Batista – five were executed and nine sent to prison for 30 years. The rest were eventually returned to the USA in December 1962, in exchange for \$53 million worth of baby food, medicines and medical equipment.

Despite this humiliation – and the obvious popularity of Castro as a nationalist resisting a 'Yankee' (US) invasion – Kennedy ordered the CIA to continue with sabotage and its attempts to overthrow or assassinate Castro.

### **The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962**

After the Bay of Pigs incident, Castro feared that the USA would attempt another invasion and, in November 1961, Kennedy did in fact authorise one. For protection, Castro asked the Soviet Union for more weapons; from May 1962, the Soviet Union delivered tanks and military aircraft, and increased its troops on Cuba to 42,000.

Given the USA's big lead in nuclear weapons, Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet premier, thought that placing nuclear missiles in Cuba would balance the threat from the US missiles in Turkey – this move did not originate from Castro. In September 1962, Soviet technicians began to assemble nuclear missile sites in Cuba. The USA was aware of this and, on 14 October, a US U-2 spy plane took photographs showing sites almost ready for intermediate and short-range nuclear missiles, with warheads already on site.

For the next 13 days, the world seemed close to a nuclear war. On 22 October, Kennedy imposed – against international law – a naval blockade of Cuba. Although the Soviet Union said it would not comply, on 24 October, Khrushchev ordered Soviet ships heading for Cuba to turn back. The USA then said it would invade Cuba if the missiles were not removed. Khrushchev – without consulting Castro – sent letters to Kennedy on 26 and 27 October, promising to remove the missiles if the USA promised not to invade Cuba and remove US missiles from Turkey. Kennedy agreed, but insisted that the US side of the deal should be kept secret: the threat of a nuclear Third World War ended.

#### **Question**

What were the Bay of Pigs incident of April 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962?

## Castro's revolution and communism

During the period December 1961 to March 1962, Castro proclaimed his 'Marxism-Leninism' several times, claiming he had always been a Marxist 'in embryo', or a potential or 'utopian Marxist'.

### SOURCE B

At the time of Moncada I was a pure revolutionary but not a Marxist revolutionary. In my defence at the trial ['History will absolve me'] I outlined a very radical revolution, but I thought then that it could be done under the constitution of 1940 and within a democratic system. That was the time I was a utopian Marxist ... It was a gradual process, a dynamic process in which the pressure of events forced me to accept Marxism as the answer to what I was seeking.

Extract from a conversation between Castro and the US journalist Herbert Matthews, 29 October 1963. Quoted in Matthews, H. L. 1970. *Castro: A Political Biography*. London, UK. Penguin Books. pp. 182–83.

However, the Cuban Revolution had not been led by the Communist Party, and was not directly the result of class struggle. Instead, Castro's revolution had more to do with economic growth and social reform in the conditions resulting from Cuban history, and the USA's military threats and economic embargo.

For Castro, socialism was mainly a strategy for a nationalist project of modernisation, based on state control of the economy, prioritising production over consumption – and hostility to US imperialism. Castro came to believe his revolutionary programme of reforms required central political and economic control – not private enterprise or even a mixed economy. The latter options could lead to political pluralism which, given the power and influence of the USA and its economic blockade, would be difficult to control. Socialism also provided the moral and ethical codes expected of Cuban citizens, and a vision of a world free from poverty, exploitation and injustice.

Soon after the 1959 revolution, Castro had talks with communist leaders, and several who were sympathetic to Castro's policies were given positions in the new government. Yet some of the PSP remained doubtful about Castro and tried to get more 'orthodox' communists into positions of power.

However, in March 1962, Castro asserted his authority and launched an attack on the PSP's leading member, Anibal Escalante, who was accused of packing the party with his own family and supporters, and of trying to undermine the government's authority.

Over the following decades, Castro's politics fluctuated between orthodoxy and heterodoxy as far as Marxism-Leninist ideology was concerned.

### Fact

Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?* had argued for a revolutionary vanguard of intellectuals to lead the workers, while his *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* – developing Marx's points – had argued that imperialism created the conditions in which revolution in backward states was possible. Although the Soviet Union often only paid lip service to Marxist ideals, these ideals matched well with Castro's nationalist aim for Cuba to become independent.



**Fact**

While acknowledging Stalin's achievements in successfully modernising a backward economy, Castro criticised Stalin's repression. In many ways, Castro was too independent to fit into the 'orthodoxy' of Soviet 'Marxism-Leninism'.

**Question**

Why did the question of 'peaceful co-existence' cause problems between Cuba and the USSR in the 1960s?

**Fact**

Castro was prepared to accept the Soviet Union's idea of a peaceful road to socialism, but insisted that some roads might be non-peaceful. In the years 1965-68, Castro's relations with the Soviet Union suffered over his attempts to establish revolutionary guerrilla groups in other Latin American and developing countries. These attempts conflicted with the Soviet Union's aim to establish good relations with the USA and the West (peaceful co-existence). In 1967, Castro seemed to be attacking the USSR for having 'capitulated' to capitalism by preferring good relations to supporting revolutionary groups.

**Fact**

Trade agreements between Cuba and the USSR were based on Cuba providing a certain amount of sugar to the USSR in return for oil and industrial goods. However, a gap had opened between exports of sugar and imports of oil and industrial goods, leaving Cuba 7.5 million tonnes in arrears by 1969. Hence Castro declared 1969 to be the 'Year of Decisive Endeavour' - in an attempt to increase sugar production to 10 million tonnes.

**The Soviet connection**

For some time after Castro's declaration of socialism in April 1961, the Soviet Union continued to support those in the PSP who were critical of 'Castroism'. However, it was not only US hostility that pushed Castro towards the Soviet Union and Soviet-style socialism. The Soviet command economy model of modernisation (see Unit 4) suited the Cuban leaders. They saw Joseph Stalin's industrialisation of the Soviet Union without any outside assistance as a way of constructing a fairer society in Cuba in the face of hostility from their powerful neighbour.

The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 temporarily disrupted good relations with the Soviet Union as Castro felt Cuba had been used. However, in April 1963, Castro and some other *Fidelista* leaders went to Moscow, following an invitation from Khrushchev. Castro stayed until June, and had several important trade discussions. In January 1964, Castro paid a second visit to Moscow, promising to follow peaceful co-existence and to finalise economic deals. Relations cooled again when, in 1967, Castro attacked communist governments - including that of the Soviet Union - for trading with countries that applied a trade embargo against Cuba. Consequently, the Soviet Union delayed the signing of trade agreements and cut back on oil supplies to Cuba.

Cuba's economy then began to experience difficulties - as well as Soviet restrictions on oil supplies, there was a massive debt to the Soviet bloc. Less able to defy Moscow, Castro gave qualified support to the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. This opened the way for Moscow to repair relations with Havana in the following decades.

Thus the decision to adopt Marxism for their new Cuban state was not just to do with the need for a strong power's protection from the USA. It was also based on the belief of Castro and his vanguard that communism offered the only possible model of economic growth and the only international movement with which they could identify - especially because of its anti-Americanism.

**What is the nature of Cuba's Castroist state?**

Since 1959, the Cuban state under Castro has been variously described as a 'communist dictatorship', an 'authoritarian democracy' and a 'guided democracy'. The siege conditions resulting from US hostility and threats have played an important role in the development of the Cuban state. In particular, Castro feared that a market/private enterprise economy and a multi-party political system would allow the USA to continue to influence the economy and politics of Cuba.

In 1959, Castro claimed a people's government had come to power - but he also repeatedly stressed that the people were not yet ready to assume government. The movement's revolutionary vanguard, guided but not controlled from below, would carry out policy on behalf of the people. He summed it up thus: 'First the revolution, then elections'.

**Cuba and democracy**

Prior to Castro's revolution in 1959, many Cubans had grown disenchanted with the corrupt multi-party political system that had operated throughout the first half of the 20th century, and with the external dependence that allowed the USA to dominate the Cuban economy and society.



### Question

How far did Castro's statements and policies reflect the views of Marx and Engels?

A photograph taken in Havana in about 1977–78 of a poster depicting Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, authors of *The Communist Manifesto*

Like Martí, Castro and the *Fidelistas* believed elections were less important than the things that governments do for the people. After 1959, at mass meetings, the people also apparently rejected elections and the old way of conducting politics. This was confirmed by Urrutia, president of Cuba from January to July 1959.

### SOURCE C

The first time I heard the promise of elections repudiated was when Castro and I attended the opening of the library at Marta University at Las Villas. At the end of the meeting, Castro mentioned elections and a large number of his listeners shouted against them. After the speech, Castro asked, 'Did you notice how they spoke against elections?'

Extract from a speech made by Manuel Urrutia. Quoted in Perez Jr. L. A. 1988. *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*. New York, USA. Oxford University Press. pp. 321–22.

**Fact**

Other political parties in Cuba include the Christian Democratic Party of Cuba, the Cuban Democratic Socialist Current, the Democratic Social-Revolutionary Party of Cuba, the Democratic Solidarity Party, the Liberal Party of Cuba and the Social Democratic Co-ordination of Cuba.

Though Castro's Cuba was a one-party communist or socialist state until 1992, it was also populist – but with limits on individual and collective freedoms in the name of security and ideological correctness.

**SOURCE D**

What we have, obviously, is not the democracy of the exploiters ... Now we are speaking of another democracy, the democracy of the people, of the workers, of the peasants, of the humble men and women, the democracy of the majority of the nation, of those who were exploited, of those who had no rights in the past. And this is the true democracy, the revolutionary democracy of the people, the democracy of the humble, by the humble and for the humble.

*Extract from a speech delivered by Castro in 1961. Quoted in Saney, I. 2004. Cuba: A Revolution in Motion. London, UK. Zed Books. p. 49.*

Since 1992, other political parties have been legalised. Nevertheless, the Communist Party of Cuba remains the official state party. However, all parties are prohibited from campaigning in elections.

**Constitutions and elections**

In April 1959, during a visit to the USA, Castro announced the suspension of elections in Cuba. From 1959 to 1976 there was thus no elected legislative body in Cuba.

**The 1976 Constitution and *Poder Popular***

In 1976, a new constitution was introduced. This set up a three-tier system of *Poder Popular* (People's Power) – municipal, provincial and national assemblies to allow for democratic decision-making. However, only municipal elections were direct – those to the other two tiers were indirect.

Citizens and the various mass organisations (see pages 190 and 193) – not the Communist Party of Cuba – directly nominated the list of candidates for the different levels of representation. According to Isaac Saney, this formal socialist democracy had four elements – political participation, economic equality, the merging of civil and political society and the *mandat imperatif*. However, Balfour argues that the 1976 reforms did not really shift power from the leadership to the people. The first meeting of the new National Assembly was in December 1976 – at which the Council of Ministers, which had exercised legislative and executive powers for 18 years, formally handed over these powers.

**The 1992 constitution**

In 1991, at the start of the 'Special Period' (see pages 205–06), it was decided to modify the 1976 constitution to allow a direct vote in elections for members of the National Assembly and the provincial assemblies. A draft was approved by the National Assembly in July 1992, with the first direct elections in February 1993. In the early 1990s, popular councils (*consejo populares*) were also established to increase the power of local government.

***mandat imperatif*** This means elected representatives must listen to voters and respond to their complaints and suggestions.

**Fact**

Mass and grassroots organisations include the trade unions, the Cuban Confederation of Women, the Committees to Defend the Revolution, the National Association of Small Farmers, the Federation of University Students, and a range of professional organisations.

**Question**

What do you understand by the term *Poder Popular*?



### ***Poder Popular* after 1992**

The 1992 reforms have arguably resulted in more effective political participation for the Cuban people. The National Assembly chooses from its members the Council of State, which is accountable to the National Assembly. The Council of State also carries out the National Assembly's functions when it is not in session, but the next National Assembly must ratify any decisions.

The influence of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) was reduced by the 1992 reforms; it is prevented by law from playing any role in the nomination of candidates. According to Castro, this avoided the politicking and corruption often associated with multi-party political systems.

At the provincial and national levels there are candidacy commissions, made up of representatives from the various mass and grassroots organisations, presided over by workers' representatives chosen by the unions. The commissions sift through thousands of people and present their recommendations to the municipal assemblies for final approval.

Thus it is Cuban citizens who both nominate and elect representatives. Turnout in elections is usually high – about 90%. There is no formal campaigning. Instead, a month before the elections take place, biographies of candidates are displayed in public places.

## **End of unit activities**

- 1 Carry out some further research on the ideas of 'Eddy' Chibás and *Chibatismo*, and those of Antonio Guiteras. Then complete a chart, with the headings: 'Chibás', 'Guiteras' and 'Castro'. Underneath these headings, write down the main aims and/or policies of each in the period before 1959, trying to place similar ideas next to each other.
- 2 Re-read pages 176–82 and 182–85 and produce a chart summarising the main steps taken by Castro between 1959 and 1976 in moving Cuba towards socialism/communism.
- 3 Carry out some additional research on the Bay of Pigs incident. How important was this event in helping Castro maintain support in Cuba for his regime in the 1960s and 1970s?



### **Theory of knowledge**

#### **History, culture and bias**

The post-1976 Cuban form of democracy known as *Poder Popular* is clearly different from the values and perceptions of democracy that hold sway in liberal democracies such as the USA and Britain. Is it possible for historians – and students of history – to evaluate in an unbiased way the values of a significantly different culture?

### **Historical debate**

Historians are divided over whether Castro was or was not moving towards communism before 1959. Try to find and briefly summarise the views of at least four different historians on this question. Which arguments do you find the most persuasive?

### **Discussion point**

Working in pairs, carry out some additional research to gather evidence for a class presentation on the actions taken by the USA against Cuba in the years 1959–63. In particular, focus on the Bay of Pigs incident, Operation *Mongoose* and Operation *Northwoods*. Then develop arguments to show how these actions can and cannot be justified.

# 3 Establishment and consolidation of Castro's rule

## Timeline

**1959 Jan:** Office of Revolutionary Plans and Co-ordination is established

**Feb:** Castro becomes prime minister

**May:** National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA) is set up

**Jul:** Urrutia resigns as president; Osvaldo Dorticós takes over

**Oct:** Huber Matos and supporters are imprisoned

**1960 Sep:** Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) are set up

**1961 Apr:** Bay of Pigs incident

**Jul:** 26 July Movement, communist PSP and Directorio Revolucionario (DR) merge to form the Integrated Revolutionary Organisations (ORI)

**1962 Mar:** Escalante is removed from positions

**1963 Jul:** ORI becomes the United Party of the Socialist Revolution (PURS)

**1965 Oct:** PURS becomes the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC)

**Nov:** Camarioca Exodus

**1968 Feb:** 'Microfaction' Affair

**1976 Dec:** Fidel Castro becomes president

**1980 Apr–Oct:** Mariel Boatlift

**1989 June–July:** Ochoa Affair

**1992 Sep:** Aldana is sacked; purge of reformists from PCC

**1994 Aug:** Malecón Exodus

**1996 Mar:** actions against the Centre for the Study of America (CEA) group

**2002 Jun:** National Assembly amends constitution to make socialist system of government permanent

**2003 Mar:** Varela Project activists are arrested

**2008 Feb:** Fidel Castro announces his resignation; Raúl takes over

## Key questions

- How did Castro establish his power in the period 1959–75?
- What measures were taken after 1975 to further consolidate Castro's power?
- What other methods did Castro use to consolidate his power?

## Overview

- After 1959, Castro began to create a politically centralised one-party state – with political, social and economic decision-making concentrated in his hands and those of his *Fidelistas* élite.
- During 1959, Castro began to establish a situation of dual power by creating alternative organisations that increasingly bypassed the government.
- Castro also began to move against liberals opposed to his more radical policies. By July, Urrutia had been forced to resign and other liberals and anti-communists either resigned or were gradually removed over the following months.
- Between 1961 and 1965 the 26 July Movement, the DR (the *Directorio Revolucionario*, the successor to the DRE) and the PSP were merged to form the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) – taking action in 1962 against Escalante for attempting to promote his own supporters.
- In 1965, the numbers of Cubans leaving Castro's Cuba increased in what became the first large 'exodus' – this Camarioca Exodus and two others (the Mariel Boatlift in 1980 and the Malecón Exodus in 1994) effectively 'exported' potential oppositionists.
- From 1968, internal opposition also emerged within the PCC and from groups of intellectuals (such as the Varela Project): first it was against the growing ties with the Soviet Union; then in the late 1980s opposition developed in response to Gorbachev's liberal reforms in the Soviet Union; and later, in the 1990s, it emerged during the Special Period.
- On 18 February 2008, illness forced Fidel Castro to resign his leadership posts and his brother Raúl took over.



## How did Castro establish his power in the period 1959–75?

In January 1959, a new government was installed. The president, as promised by Castro before 1959, was the moderate judge Manuel Urrutia. José Miró Cardona was prime minister. They presided over a cabinet in which there were only three members of Castro's rebel army (and only one of these was from the 26 July Movement). However, it soon became clear that the real power lay with Castro, who was appointed military commander-in-chief of the new Rebel Armed Forces.

As promised by Castro, there were trials (broadcast on TV) of several hundred of Batista's political supporters, especially senior police and torturers. Most were found guilty and many were executed by firing squad.

### Dual power, January–November 1959

In January 1959, Castro formed the Office of the Revolutionary Plans and Co-ordination (ORPC), an unofficial committee composed of his closest advisers, including his brother Raúl and Guevara. This soon created a situation of **dual power** between the ORPC and the cabinet, as the former began to push forward the revolution Castro wanted.

In February, Castro became prime minister, taking on extra powers, and presiding over a government comprising both radicals and moderates. In April, he announced the suspension of elections and, in May 1959, the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA) was set up, absorbing the ORPC. Castro was its president, and Núñez Jiménez – a Marxist economist – its director. Its formal role was to deal with the issues of agrarian reform and industrial development, but INRA quickly became, in practice, the effective government.

In June 1959, several moderate members of the cabinet resigned over what they saw as 'communistic' policies. As communists were increasingly appointed to administrative posts, Urrutia and others began to make public criticisms of the growing influence of communists.

Castro then decided to end the dual power situation. In July, Urrutia was forced to resign. He was replaced by a supporter of Castro, Osvaldo Dorticós. More sympathetic to the communists, Dorticós remained in post until 1976.

By the end of November 1959, most of the remaining moderates or liberals had either resigned or been forced out of office; four more went in 1960. The removal of anti-communists and non-communists resulted in a new coalition containing several communists.

### Revolutionary consolidation

From 1960, Castro and this new leadership consolidated a centralised form of rule by Fidel and a handful of friends, via a cabinet that held all legislative and executive powers. By December 1960, the press had been brought into line – often through seizure by communist-led trade unions. Castro also assumed the power to appoint new judges.

**dual power** This term refers to a situation where political power, in reality, is shared between the formal government and an unofficial body. Such situations rarely last for long, as each authority tries to impose its power.

#### Question

Why was Castro's formation of INRA important in establishing his power?





*Fidel Castro in 1964, relaxing while planning consolidation of his revolution*

### Fact

The Communist Party of Cuba (PCC), established in 1965, had never functioned as a mass party. It did not even hold its first congress until 1975. In 1972, it was given a new party structure, with a 100-strong central committee, as well as a smaller politburo and secretariat. It also produced new party statutes and a new programme. Membership rose steadily from 50,000 in 1965 to over 500,000 by 1980. By then, over 9% of all Cuban citizens aged over 25 belonged to the party. These changes turned it into more of a typical ruling party. At the same time, the proportion of military personnel in the leading bodies dropped significantly, making it a more normal civilian party.

However, from 1968 Cuba became increasingly dependent on the Soviet Union. New state structures and institutions were developed along Soviet lines. In 1972, the cabinet was enlarged, with an executive committee of eight which took over many of Castro's functions. The shift from individual to collective responsibility was designed to create a more formally democratic system and give greater political stability. At the same time, the Communist Party was also enlarged and reorganised along more 'orthodox' lines to make it more representative.

Castro thus no longer had the unlimited authority he had in the 1960s. Despite differences at the top over later economic policies, Castro's regime remained fairly stable and united.

### Opposition

There were many opponents of the regime in the early years. Many in the movement disliked the growing influence of the communists in Castro's regime. On 19 October 1959, Huber Matos, the governor of Camagüey province and one of the leading figures of the revolutionary war, resigned in protest. Matos, along with others sharing his views, was put on trial for 'rebellion'. Castro then used this crisis to further establish his own position by creating armed militias as part of the new revolutionary structure of power.

Some opponents, whose social and economic interests were threatened by the revolution, resorted to counter-revolutionary guerrilla warfare. This was often supported by the USA. Thousands of Cubans died in this civil war between 1960 and 1966. By 1966, however, these opponents had been convincingly defeated.

The US-sponsored Bay of Pigs incident (see page 180) in April 1961 had led to the immediate arrest of all suspected 'counter-revolutionaries' – about 3500 were detained in Havana alone. The resulting wave of nationalism and pride following Cuba's victory meant those opposed to Castro's regime could be seen as traitors. However, the political centralisation and state control that followed was partly a response to genuine feelings of insecurity.

### SOURCE A

According to US Senate reports, the CIA's second largest station in the world was based in Florida. At the height of the undercover American offensive [against Cuba] in the 1960s and 1970s ... the CIA controlled an airline and a flotilla of spy ships operating off the coast of Cuba, and ran up to 120,000 Cuban agents, who dealt in economic sabotage, assassination and terrorism, and economic and biological warfare ... Over 600 plans to assassinate Castro were devised. Nearly 3500 Cubans have died from terrorist acts, and more than 2000 are permanently disabled. As an ex-CIA agent has said, 'no country has suffered terrorism as long and consistently as Cuba'.

Balfour, S. 2009. *Castro*. London, UK. Longman. p. 190.

### Fact

The USA's offensive against Cuba, to undermine its government and society, was massive. Castro used these real US threats to increase his control, to bring about a one-party system and to mobilise the people to transform Cuba.

With the most serious oppositions defeated by the mid 1960s, Castro felt able to consider a more 'liberal' approach.

## The Communist Party

As the 26 July Movement was mainly a guerrilla army, Castro needed the political experience provided by the communist PSP. The PSP had had long experience of party politics and of organising mass movements such as the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC) and, unlike members of the 26 July Movement, it had prior governmental experience. Castro began negotiations with leading members of the PSP for the creation of a new Communist Party. He hoped to fuse this with the more radical wing of his movement, and so strengthen his control. In July 1961, the 26 July Movement, the DR and the PSP merged into the Integrated Revolutionary Organisations (ORI).

Initially, the old PSP came to dominate the ORI. Anibal Escalante, the ORI's Organisation Secretary, was particularly powerful – he gave preference to his old PSP comrades who were likely to be loyal to him. So, in March 1962, Castro denounced Escalante for 'sectarianism' and removed him from his post. A massive restructuring of the ORI then took place – almost half its membership was expelled, most from the PSP faction. Huge efforts were made to recruit new members. In 1963, the ORI became the United Party of the Socialist Revolution (PURS); on 3 October 1965, the PURS became the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC). Thus, by the end of 1965, revolutionary power had been consolidated and Castro had established his pre-eminence over all potential rivals.

### Fact

The organisation of party cells, selection of party members, and all promotions and dismissals had to be cleared through Escalante's office. Increasingly, party cells asserted their authority over administrators, and a preliminary system of political commissars was introduced in the armed forces. Much of this was similar to the methods used by Stalin as general secretary of the CPSU in the Soviet Union to establish a powerful position for himself during the 1920s (see [Chapter 2](#)).

### Question

What were the main stages in Castro's formation of the PCC between 1961 and 1965?

However, this did not mean that Castro was in full control of the new party. From 1965 to 1968, his criticisms of the Soviet Union over peaceful co-existence and revolution in developing countries (see page 182) were opposed by some traditionalist communists in the PCC. In February 1968, their leaders were put on trial for factionalism. The result of this ‘micro-faction’ affair was even greater control for Castro. After 1968, the party posed no serious challenge to Castro.

### **Mass organisations**

As well as the communists, there were several mass organisations through which opposition could be expressed. In particular, Castro made early interventions to influence the trade union movement and university students, in favour of unity between communist delegates and anti-communists within his movement.

#### **Federation of University Students**

On 18 October 1959, the election for president of the students’ union, the Federation of University Students (FEU), was between Rolando Cubelas (the ‘Unity’ candidate, backed by the PSP) and Pedro Boitel, the 26 July Movement’s candidate. After Castro intervened, the election was won by Cubelas, who later aligned the FEU closer to ‘Marxism–Leninism’.

#### **The trade unions**

In November 1959, the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC) held its 10th Congress to elect a new leadership. The 26 July Movement’s slate seemed certain to win a clear majority, but Castro pushed for ‘unity’ with the communists.

However, in 1970, opposition emerged from the trade unions and the workers – shown by absenteeism and poor productivity. On 26 July 1970, in a long speech to a massive crowd, Castro admitted his mistakes and argued for more democratic methods of consultation at grassroots level, and greater delegation of powers from the centre. Up until this point, Castro accepted, the government had tended to treat workers as a production army.

### **What measures were taken after 1975 to further consolidate Castro’s power?**

By the end of 1975, Cuba had a well-established and well-organised communist system. The mid 1970s saw Castro attempt to consolidate his rule by changes to the system of popular representation. This was done in 1976, via a new constitution, which introduced a system of *Poder Popular* (see page 184).

#### **Rectification campaign, 1986–87**

The changes to government and party structure in the early 1970s meant Castro no longer had unlimited authority. However, he remained as head of the Communist Party and of the armed forces; and, on 2 December 1976, he replaced Osvaldo Dorticós as president. In the mid 1980s, Castro was able to use these positions and his personal authority to impose his will on domestic economic policy.

At the Third Congress of the PCC, Castro had launched a new campaign – the ‘Rectification of errors and negative trends’. While this was mainly connected to economic issues (see Unit 4), it also became a drive against corruption and those who Castro felt were opposed to what he saw as Cuba’s economic needs.



In the mid 1970s, the System of Direction and Planning of the Economy (SDPE) had been set up to introduce decentralisation of planning and management, and to replace moral with material incentives to encourage greater productivity. In 1985, a plan was drawn up, in line with these principles, by the Central Planning Board (*Juceplan*). The board's director was Humberto Pérez, a Moscow-trained economist. However, Castro decided that this system and the new plan failed to take account of the new economic crisis in Cuba. So Pérez was removed from his post and from the politburo (the most important committee in the Communist Party). Castro then by-passed *Juceplan* by setting up a new committee to draw up a revised plan, which attempted to introduce some increased centralisation.

During 1986 and 1987, Castro widened his campaign, making a series of speeches in which he admitted 'errors', criticised the economic liberalisation of the 1970s and attacked signs of corruption. In particular, he singled out bureaucrats and technocrats, and those who had enriched themselves under the 1970s' market mechanisms that were introduced into the Cuban economy on the advice of the USSR. In large part, this campaign was a response to growing dissatisfaction amongst workers who were angry about increasing shortages and income differentials. Castro put himself at the head of this popular discontent as their self-appointed spokesperson, thus increasing his personal prestige.

### The Ochoa Affair, 1989

In June 1989, Cuba experienced its most serious internal opposition crisis since 1959. Four senior military and intelligence figures – including General **Arnaldo Ochoa** – and several others were arrested on charges of corruption and drug smuggling. They were tried by military tribunals. Four, including Ochoa, were condemned to death and executed on 13 July; others received prison sentences ranging from 20 to 30 years. There is speculation that Ochoa and the others, who favoured Gorbachev-style reforms, were planning a coup. The crisis caused serious divisions in Cuba. However, the economic crisis of the Special Period that soon followed (see pages 202–04) brought about a new sense of unity.

*Fidel Castro and Mikhail Gorbachev embrace during an official visit by the Soviet premier to Cuba in 1989*



### Arnaldo Ochoa (1930–89)

Ochoa was in charge of the Cuban troops sent to Angola to fight against South African forces in 1988. The Cuban troops won an impressive victory at Cuito Cuanavale on 14 February 1988. This helped force South Africa out of Angola and Namibia, contributing to the collapse of apartheid in South Africa. Two years later, Nelson Mandela was released from prison and, in July 1991, he visited Cuba to thank the country for its role in the struggle against apartheid. Ochoa had, as a result, become something of a hero.

### Question

What were the main reasons for the Ochoa Affair in 1989?

### Fact

Gorbachev visited Cuba in April 1989. He was associated with three reforms – *perestroika*, *glasnost* and *demokratizatsiya*. He introduced these in the Soviet Union after 1985, and encouraged their adoption by the Eastern European regimes. Castro associated these policies with the fall of these regimes in the period 1989–91.

## Aldana and the 1992 purge

However, during the 'Special Period in Time of Peace' (see pages 202–04), announced by Castro at the end of 1990, another reformist tendency emerged in the PCC and the Young Communist Party, where several members admired Gorbachev's policies. This opposition was led by Carlos Aldana, and called for some limited political pluralism.

The collapse of the regimes of Eastern Europe and then the Soviet Union in the period 1989–91 made Castro decide to move against this opposition, as well as other groups of reformists. In 1991, with the Soviet Union no longer a reliable ally against the USA, Castro created Rapid Response Brigades of volunteers to act against potential 'fifth columnists'. These brigades often harassed oppositionist groups demanding political reform and the various organisations calling for human rights. In September 1992, Aldana was sacked from his party; and Castro, using his personal authority, began a purge of other reformists from the party.

To help diffuse this opposition, amendments to the constitution were made in 1992 to make *Poder Popular* more of a reality. Despite the post-1991 economic suffering, these reforms were relatively successful, and Castro's regime did not collapse like the Soviet bloc states in Europe, as some had speculated would happen. In part, this was because most Cubans saw the revolution as *their* revolution – whatever its failings, it had also had real successes.

## US actions, 1992–96

The idea of a revolutionary Cuba under siege is part of the mythology of the revolution, and had led to mass mobilisations, revolutionary political offensives and popular militarisation. In the 1990s, moves against potential opponents were also a response – once again – to increased threats from the USA. The Torricelli Act of 1992 and the Helm-Burton Act of 1996, respectively, tightened US economic sanctions against Cuba and sought actively to 'assist' in the creation of the USA's form of democracy in Cuba. In March 1996, Castro acted against academics in the Centre for the Study of America (CEA). They did not lose their jobs, but they were moved to different posts.

## 'Re-moralisation' and the Varela Project

By 1996, most of the economic measures of the Special Period had been stopped (see page 203); then, in 2003, Castro decided on a partial return to anti-market centralisation. This also involved the 're-moralisation' of economic life. Associated with this were further moves against potential opponents, dissidents and human rights activists. The minister for economics and planning and the minister of finance, both of whom were closely connected to the liberalisation policies under the Special Period during 1993–96, were replaced by ministers favouring centralised political control of the economy and society.

After the 2000 US presidential election, the USA stepped up its attempts to interfere in Cuba's internal politics and President George W. Bush included Cuba in his new 'axis of evil'. This led to renewed fears of an imminent US invasion. Castro then became concerned about the activities of members of the Varela Project, who were campaigning for a law of democratic reform and more private enterprise. Castro's government organised a counter-petition to amend the constitution to make the socialist nature of the Cuban constitution

### Fact

Set up in 1988, the CEA was mainly composed of academics, most of whom belonged to the PCC. By 1990, they had begun to suggest reform of Cuba's internal political system. After Castro made moves against them in 1996, some went into exile to continue their opposition.

### Fact

The Varela Project was named after Felix Varela, a 19th-century advocate for Cuban independence, and was associated with the Catholic Church. Its leader was Osvaldo Payá, who had been involved in the Christian Liberation Group. Its members tried to use the clause in the Cuban constitution that said a new law could be proposed if a petition with 10,000 signatures was presented to the National Assembly. They managed to get 11,000 signatures, and presented it during a visit by ex-US president Jimmy Carter, who supported them.

'irrevocable'. This counter-petition included 8 million signatures – about 99% of the electorate. At the same time, the Cuban authorities began to harass members of the Varela Project. On 15 March 2003, 75 members were arrested and many received long prison sentences.

## Mass organisations

As well as with repression, Castro has tried to consolidate his regime by increasing the participation of citizens in a range of mass organisations. Since 1976, such organisations and methods have been used and adapted to make *Poder Popular* more of a reality, and so integrate the population of Cuba with the regime.

### Unions

The main mass organisation is the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC), which unites all 19 unions and organises national congresses for workers to discuss issues. These are preceded by months of meetings of workers' assemblies at local level. Castro and other leaders participate at times, to answer questions and to explain important issues. According to Saney, the workers' assemblies have considerable input and say in their workplaces and in major national political decisions. By law, workers meet twice a year in their workplaces to discuss their company's economic plans. They can reject management proposals, decide production norms and rates, and any new proposals are subject to ratification. Though they work closely with the PCC, they are independent of the government, which must consult the unions on all labour matters.

### PCC

The PCC attempts to integrate citizens by 'promoting the development of a socialist consciousness and society' by trying to persuade people to put society's needs above those of the individual. While Hobart Spalding and others see the influence of the PCC as suffocating, according to Peter Roman the party does not meddle in the operation of people's power. Though it does 'screen' those selected as candidates, Carollee Bengelsdorf argues that Cuban citizens exercise significant political sovereignty.

About 1.5 million Cubans (15% of the population) belong to the PCC and its youth body, the Union of Young Communists (UJC). Massive nationwide discussions – open to both party and non-party people – take place before the party congresses.

## What other methods did Castro use to consolidate his power?

Castro has also tried to maintain his revolution in other ways.

### Committees for the Defence of the Revolution

With control over the FEU and the CTC established by 1960, the leadership created a militia with tens of thousands of members to build support, intimidate internal opponents and defend Cuba against external enemies. Particularly important were the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs), established in September 1960 primarily for civil defence. CDRs were set up in every city district, in each large building, factory or workplace.

### Question

What was the Varela Project?

### Fact

In 1994, the CTC rejected plans to tax workers' wages; in 1995, they rejected proposed alterations to social security, which were sent back for amendment.

### Fact

In later years, CDRs became involved in recycling drives, cultural and educational activities, and health campaigns (e.g. vaccination and blood donation). Though they are grassroots organisations, they do not necessarily function effectively as a way for people to express their views.



In the early days of Castro's regime, they involved the people in identifying enemies of the revolution and repressing counter-revolutionary opinions and activities (e.g. sabotage and terrorism). They are the largest of all the mass organisations, with a membership of over 7 million – helping many people identify with the revolution.

### Emigration and exile

From the mid 1960s, waves of Cuban emigrants went into exile in the USA. The first wave were supporters of Batista, and especially those who had tortured or killed his opponents. Between 1959 and 1961, at least 40,000 emigrants left Cuba. The next wave of emigrants were disillusioned middle-class liberals, as well as members of the business and professional élites who opposed Castro's increasing moves towards communism after 1961. In the period 1961–62 alone, at least 150,000 left.

#### Question

How did the large numbers of Cuban emigrants help Castro to consolidate his regime?

Since then, there have been several major emigrations – the Camarioca Exodus in 1965, the Mariel Boatlift in 1980 and the Malecón Exodus in 1994. According to Leslie Bethell, while the loss of professional and technical skills had a negative impact on Cuba's development, the 'exporting' of potential leaders of opposition or counter-revolution helped Castro establish political centralisation and control.

### Castroism

Castroism, or *Fidelismo* – the idea that the Cuban Revolution is largely based on the teachings and principles of Fidel Castro – has not resulted in an obvious cult of personality, as happened for instance in the Soviet Union under Stalin or in China under Mao. In Cuba itself, there are not many posters depicting Castro – although Che's image is found almost everywhere.

Posters on a wall in a street in Havana. Che Guevara is depicted in the top-left poster

#### Question

Who do you think is depicted in the top-right poster?



Castro certainly had great charisma – even liberals who went into exile acknowledged this – and the ability to speak well to crowds, sometimes for 12 hours at a time! This was apparent when, before 1959, he broadcast on *Radio Rebelde*. Since 1959, Castro has made good use of television to explain his aims and policies.

Despite difficulties, many still had faith in him; as long as he was in charge, they did not seem to mind what he did – even when he moved towards Marxism. Castro's legitimacy was also based on his identification with the heroic myths of Cuban patriotism – and on his personal ethics: he has not used his position to amass a private fortune. His prestige was strengthened by the development of *Poder Popular* from the mid 1970s. Yet Castro appears not to have wanted any adulation. His general style was much milder and warmer than other rulers of one-party states; and his good relationship with the public meant ordinary people felt able to approach him and speak of their problems and dissatisfactions.

On 18 February 2008, after almost two years of illness, Fidel Castro announced his decision to stand down as president and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. His brother Raúl, the acting head of state, took over.

Although he is no longer directly in charge, Fidel still exerts influence; despite five decades of US economic and military actions against himself and his Cuban Revolution, he managed to turn Cuba into one of the best-educated and healthiest societies in the world.



Raúl Castro, acting president of Cuba, looks at the empty chair of Fidel Castro during a session of Cuba's National Assembly in December 2006; Fidel finally resigned in February 2008, and Raúl took over as president

## End of unit activities

- 1 In pairs, carry out further research on the different opposition groups that emerged in Cuba after 1959 – both within the 26 July Movement and the Communist Party, and amongst intellectuals and artists. Then try to establish the reasons for their lack of success. You can then present your findings in the form of two charts – one to show how the different groups were formed and what they did, and another to show how and why they were defeated.
- 2 Find out more about the different reasons why so many Cubans emigrated to the USA. Were they mainly political or economic reasons? Why do you think Castro usually tolerated this emigration?
- 3 Carry out an investigation to explain why Castro's popularity remained so high among so many Cubans, right up to – and beyond – his resignation in 2008, despite Cuba's many political and economic problems.

### Historical debate

There is considerable debate amongst historians about the support for/opposition to Castro's policies and the regime he created. Some, like Bethell, are negative, while others, such as Saney, present a much more optimistic picture. Which 'side' do you think presents the most realistic assessment?

### Activity

Using the information in the units of this book that you have already read, and any other materials you have access to, write a couple of paragraphs to explain how the USA's actions against Cuba made it easier for Castro to consolidate his power.

### Question

As you work through the next unit, try to analyse the relative importance of Fidel Castro's various economic and social policies in helping to maintain his power from 1959 to 2008. Were these more or less important than repressive measures?



### Theory of knowledge

#### History and art

Most people would agree that artists should be free to express their views and thoughts. Yet many governments – especially those in one-party states – have tried to confine art to those works that support their political and economic system. Is it possible to make a case for Castro's assertion in 1961 that creative freedom could be allowed 'within the revolution', but not 'against the revolution'; or his appeal in 1971 that art should be a 'weapon of the revolution'?



# 4 Domestic policies and their impact

## Timeline

**1959 Mar:** nationalisation of public utilities; Castro makes his 'Proclamation against discrimination'

**May:** Agrarian Reform Act

**1960 Apr:** Soviet crude oil is delivered

**Jun:** nationalisation of foreign oil refineries

**Aug:** Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) is set up

**1961 Apr:** 'Year of Education' mass literacy campaign begins

**Feb:** Guevara becomes minister of industries

**1962 Feb:** Kennedy announces full US embargo on exports to Cuba

**1969 Nov:** 'Year of Decisive Endeavour' is launched

**1970 Jul:** 10 million tonne campaign for sugar

**1972 Jul:** Cuba becomes a full member of Comecon

**1975 Mar:** Family Code

**1977** Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual (CNES) is founded

**1979** Same-sex relations are decriminalised

**1986 Apr:** 'Rectification Campaign'

**1989 Apr:** Gorbachev visits Cuba

**1990 Jan:** 'Special Period' begins

**1991 Dec:** Soviet Union collapses

**1992 Jul:** constitution is amended

**1993 Jan:** US embargo on Cuba is tightened; Castro introduces some market reforms

**1996 Feb:** US trade embargo is made permanent

**1998 Jan:** Pope John Paul II visits Cuba

**2010** state provides free gender reassignment surgery

## Key questions

- What were the main features of Castro's economic policies?
- How successful were Castro's economic policies?
- What were the main social policies in Castro's Cuba?
- What were Castro's policies towards women, ethnic and other minorities, and religion?
- What impact has the Cuban Revolution had on education, young people and the arts?

## Overview

- After 1959, Castro moved quickly to carry out earlier promises to help the poorer sections of society by redistributing wealth and resources. In May 1959, the Agrarian Reform Act gave confiscated land to landless and poor peasants.
- Castro nationalised public utilities in March 1959 and, after foreign oil companies refused to process Soviet crude oil, the refineries were nationalised in June 1960.
- Castro and his team wanted rapid industrialisation and diversification in agriculture. In February 1961, Guevara became minister of industries, and a central plan was quickly drawn up.
- During the years 1963–64, a more Soviet style of economic planning was adopted. This increased after 1968 and, in July 1972, Cuba joined the Soviet bloc's Comecon (the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance). From 1972 to 1982, Cuba experienced real growth during what became known as the 'Brezhnev Years'.
- From the late 1970s, increasing problems led to a rising trade debt. By 1986, Castro launched a 'rectification' campaign.
- The collapse of the regimes of Eastern Europe and then the Soviet Union in the years 1989–91 led to great economic problems. In January 1990, Castro announced the start of the 'Special Period'.
- In the early years, Castro moved quickly to push through many social policy reforms. Priority was given to expanding healthcare. In 1961, a successful mass literacy campaign was launched.
- At the same time, moves were begun to equalise educational access, pay and employment opportunities for women. Policies to end discrimination against, and improve resources and opportunities for, black people also began from the start of Castro's regime.
- The government was slower to tackle the discrimination and inequalities affecting gay men and lesbians. Until the 1970s, the government itself treated such people unfairly.
- As regards religion, the state at first moved to reduce the wealth and influence of the Catholic Church and, in 1976, formally declared Cuba to be atheist. However, in 1992, the constitution was amended, with 'secular' replacing the term 'atheist'.



## What were the main features of Castro's economic policies?

A large proportion of Cuba's citizens seemed to share Castro's conviction that his government had a mission to help Cuba improve and serve its people. His redistribution policies in income – as well as education and healthcare – benefited people on lower incomes and so helped solidify support for his regime. Even when Castro admitted failures, people were mindful of the successes of his redistribution policies. Thus Castro's social policy delivery and his redistribution of wealth – as well as his nationalism in the face of US power – all helped to maintain the legitimacy of his rule.

*Fidel Castro, delivering his 'First declaration of Havana' speech in September 1960, to a large crowd in the Plaza de la Revolución; during his speech, Castro cancelled the 1952 Mutual Aid Treaty, signed between Batista and the USA, and went on to tear up the August 1960 San José Declaration, which was an agreement made between Latin American countries that supported the interventionist policies of the United States*

### Question

Why would some Cubans have supported the tearing up of the San José Declaration?



**Fact**

In Japan, after 1945, the USA had imposed a land reform that limited individual ownership to only 1 hectare (2.47 acres), and had given a lower rate of interest on the compensatory bonds. In 1963, Castro's government passed a second Agrarian Reform Act to nationalise the middle-size farms. By the end of 1970, the state owned 70% of all land, with only small farms remaining in private ownership.

**Fact**

Compensation was based on the value that the landowners had placed on their land for tax purposes. These values were always deliberately lower than the land's real worth, in order to reduce their tax bills.

**Question**

What were the main steps that led to the USA imposing an embargo on all exports to Cuba in November 1960?

**Fact**

Although employment rose, productivity declined sharply. Inefficiency and under-employment became institutionalised in the new economic structures.

**Fact**

Mass mobilisation 'volunteers' (according to Bethell, many lacked the right to refuse) were used throughout the country, but were often not very effective. They were supplemented by a large number of the Cuban armed forces. Having defeated the prospect of internal counter-revolution by 1966, the armed forces were frequently used for direct productive economic activities.

**The early years, 1959–68**

The new revolutionary government moved quickly in the first six months to benefit its supporters in the poorest sections of Cuban society.

**Agriculture**

In March 1959, a minimum wage was introduced for sugar-cane cutters and, in May 1959, Castro announced details of his plans for land reform in the Agrarian Reform Act. All *latifundia* (large estates) would be broken up into smaller units: owners could keep 402 hectares (1000 acres) – the rest were liable to expropriation. In all, about 40% of Cuban farmland was expropriated and divided up into individual plots of 27 hectares (67 acres) for landless plantation workers and small farmers or peasants. Larger ranches and plantations were to be run as state farms (later to become co-operatives).

This was, in fact, quite a moderate land reform, but the landowning classes opposed the May 1959 Agrarian Reform Act. Many US companies and individuals owned large estates in Cuba, and the US government complained that compensation was inadequate.

In July 1960, the USA decided to destroy the Cuban sugar industry by cutting the sugar quota normally purchased by the USA. Castro's reaction was swift: 'They will take away our sugar quota pound by pound, and we will take away their sugar mills one by one.' In August, Castro nationalised all major US properties on the island; in November, the USA announced a ban on all exports to Cuba.

The Soviet Union agreed to purchase Cuban sugar at the favourable rate of 6 cents a pound, at least until 1970. This would enable long-term planning, but meant Cuba would have to concentrate on sugar.

Before the revolution of 1959, unemployment had been high, especially in rural areas – but the new government's policies quickly reduced this. By the mid 1960s, there was in fact a labour shortage. However, production began to fall, as the material incentives for better or more work were removed and were replaced with 'moral incentives' and calls for voluntary labour. Castro's response was to call for mass mobilisation for work in the sugar fields as well as in other sectors of the economy.

**Industry**

Immediately after 1959, the real wages of non-agricultural workers rose sharply and rents for the cheaper urban dwellings were reduced by up to 50%. In March 1959, several utility companies were taken over and prices reduced. In April 1960, following Mikoyan's visit to Cuba in February (see page 178), and the signing of trade agreements, 300,000 tonnes of Soviet crude oil were delivered to Cuba. When the foreign-owned oil refineries refused to process it, Castro nationalised them in June 1960. Then, on 13 October 1960, 382 Cuban firms, including all the sugar mills, banks and large industries, were **socialised**.

Castro saw his policies as necessary both for national security, given the growing confrontation with the USA, and as a pragmatic approach to ensure proper economic planning. A more centralised approach via a **command economy** was seen as the quickest way to ensure economic growth.



**SOURCE A**

We were carrying out our programme little by little. All these [US] aggressions accelerated the revolutionary process. Were they the cause? No, this would be an error ... In Cuba, we were going to construct socialism in the most orderly possible manner, within a reasonable period of time, with the least amount of trauma and problems, but the aggression of imperialism accelerated the revolutionary process.

*Comments made by Castro on the events of 1960–61. Quoted in Balfour, S. 2009. Castro. London, UK. Longman. p. 64.*

The main aim of Castro's early economic policy was development via a programme of rapid industrialisation. This was seen as necessary as, since 1959, the Cuban economy had declined and was thus threatening the fulfilment of social policies for health, housing and education. By the end of 1960, the economic structure of Cuba had changed dramatically: 80% of industry was under state control and state enterprises were producing 90% of Cuba's exports. In November 1959, Guevara, who was determined to end Cuba's overwhelming dependency on the sugar industry, was made director of the National Bank. In February 1961, he became minister of industries.

*Guevara, minister of industries, taking part in voluntary labour at a public housing construction project in Havana in 1961; he gave most of his spare time to such activities*



**socialise** This term refers to the bringing of private companies into public ownership and control, to form local co-operatives or collectives, local authority ventures or state/government enterprises. ('Nationalisation' refers specifically to the bringing of companies into government or state ownership and control.)

**command economy** A command economy is directly opposed to a capitalist economy, which is based on the private ownership and control of major resources and businesses. When the state is in control, once businesses and banks have been socialised (i.e. taken into public ownership and control), the government can then make plans about investments, productivity and growth.

**Question**

Why was voluntary labour seen as being important in the construction of a revolutionary Cuba?



**Fact**

The endogenous model, favoured by Guevara, involved rapid industrialisation, similar to that adopted by Stalin in the USSR after 1928 (see pages 43–45), central state planning, the elimination of the market laws of supply and demand, prioritising social need, and moral incentives. Supporters of the exogenous model argued for the need for an economic policy similar to Lenin’s New Economic Policy (NEP) (see page 22), with its elements of capitalism (including market mechanisms, decentralisation and material incentives).

**Fact**

Guevara went on a tour of African and Asian countries and, on his return, he resigned his government positions and Cuban citizenship. However, he and Castro remained close. Guevara returned to Cuba in secret in 1966 to gather and train a group of veterans for a new guerilla campaign in Bolivia, and undergo plastic surgery to change his appearance. He was later captured and shot in Bolivia in 1967.

**Discussion points**

Working in pairs, develop arguments for a class presentation on:

- 1 Why Guevara resigned his government positions
- 2 What Guevara did abroad in the period 1965–67.

However, there was considerable debate amongst the revolution’s leaders about how best to bring about diversification and industrialisation. According to Balfour, there were two main models – the ‘endogenous and exogenous models’. Guevara favoured the endogenous model, arguing that Cuba’s links to the Soviet bloc meant it could jump ‘stages’ in the transition to socialism.

To bring this about, central state ministries were established, along with a Central Planning Board (*Juceplan*). In 1961, *Juceplan* was instructed to draw up a plan for 1962, and a draft four-year plan for 1962–65. These plans were, according to Bethell, unrealistic and unrealisable. Despite this, during the first years there was a rise in consumption for the poorer sections of society who gained access to better food and housing.


During April–June 1963, Castro visited the Soviet Union and, in view of mounting problems, changes in economic policy were later announced – in particular, Guevara’s plans for diversification were abandoned and his ministry was broken up. Instead, Soviet assistance would be given to get Cuba to concentrate on sugar production once again. Guevara left his post in 1965, just 18 months after these changes, to undertake revolutionary work in Africa and Latin America. His ministry was divided into its former sub-divisions.

However, by early 1968, there were signs of an emerging economic crisis – in part, because the Soviet Union was drastically reducing its supplies of fuel and gas.

**The Soviet camp, 1968–90**

**Agriculture**

From 1960 to 1990, production of sugar grew by 40%, and the industry was employing over 375,000 people by the late 1980s. However, when unpaid overtime (‘voluntary labour’) became compulsory and material incentives were replaced by moral ones, mounting dissatisfaction led to falling yields. In 1966, a new deal with the Soviet Union saw Cuba agree to provide 5 million tonnes in 1968 and 1969, with a guaranteed price. But, despite Soviet investment funds to modernise the sugar industry, the harvests of 1968 and 1969 each only yielded 3.7 million tonnes. Hence Castro launched a spectacular plan to raise the sugar harvest for 1970 to 10 million tonnes – this ‘battle for sugar’ lasted from November 1969 to July 1970.



**SOURCE B**

The 10 million tonne harvest represents far more than tonnes of sugar, far more than an economic victory; it is a test, a moral commitment for this country. And precisely because it is a test and a moral commitment we cannot fall short by even a single gram of these 10 million tonnes ... 10 million tonnes less a single pound – we declare it before all the world – will be a defeat, not a victory.

*Extract from a speech by Castro, 18 October 1969. Quoted in Balfour, S. 2009. Castro. London, UK. Longman. p. 92.*

Though it failed to reach the unrealistic target set by Castro, a fantastic figure – the highest in Cuba’s history – of 8.5 million tonnes of sugar was reached: almost double the usual yield. The following year, production was 5.9 million tonnes. This improved production was maintained during the 1970s.

After 1970, Cuba was helped by the soaring price of sugar in the world market. As sugar accounted for about 80% of all Cuba’s exports, this enabled Castro’s government successfully to undertake new policies and directions. From 1980, once they had met state quotas, farmers were allowed to sell any surplus in markets where prices were no longer regulated.

Then, in 1986, new economic problems led to the ‘rectification’ campaign (see below). The consequent policy changes mostly affected industry but, as regards agriculture, the newly legalised private farmers’ markets were closed.

## Industry

By 1968, Cuba had become increasingly dependent on the Soviet Union, and by 1970 the Cuban economy was in massive debt to the Soviet bloc. Castro then moved closer to the Soviet Union and his government increasingly turned to Soviet economic advisers, along with some of the old Cuban communists. By November 1971, when Alexei Kosygin, premier of the USSR, visited, Cuba was already well integrated into the Soviet camp. Especially important was the supply of Soviet oil.

In July 1972, Cuba joined Comecon (the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance), the economic and trading union of communist states. In December, Castro went to Moscow, where he signed a 15-year economic agreement with Leonid Brezhnev that substantially increased the Soviet subsidy to the Cuban economy. This included increasing the price paid for sugar, deferring all debt payments for 15 years (then to be repaid over 25 years, with no interest), and new investment credits (totalling \$350 million over the next three years).

This marked the beginning of what some historians, such as Gott, and many Cubans have described as the ‘Brezhnev years’ – when, from 1972 to 1982, the Cuban economy was increasingly reorganised along Soviet lines. Soviet advisers helped the Cuban government establish a new planning system: the System of Direction and Planning of the Economy (SDPE). The adoption of its first Five-Year Plan in 1975 was designed to industrialise the island by helping state enterprises become self-financing, developing decentralisation and efficiency, and introducing profit and incentives.

However, at the Third Party Congress in 1986, Castro argued that Cuba still lacked ‘comprehensive national planning for economic development.’ So, in April 1986, Castro launched his programme of ‘rectification’. From May 1986, various anti-market measures were introduced and Castro repeated earlier calls for moral incentives as a way of motivating people to improve productivity and build a better society. Overall, there was a return to a more centralised command economy.

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became the new ruler of the Soviet Union. He was determined to cut down on Soviet support for the Cuban economy. In April 1989, he made his first visit to Havana, where he spelled out the changes to come – especially the phasing out of the price subsidies to the Cuban economy, the aim to restore a greater balance of trade between the two countries, and the requirement for Cuba to pay for Soviet goods with US dollars.

### Fact

Rectification involved moving Cuba away from market mechanisms in order to improve productivity and efficiency. It was not a return to the ‘war economy’ of 1966–70, nor a rejection of the new SDPE system of economic planning and management, but an attempt to restore a balance between the two.

### Question

Why did Castro launch the ‘rectification’ campaign in 1986?

By 1989, Cuba began to feel the impact of these changes and the effects of the collapse of the East European communist regimes. From 1989 to 1991, Cuban imports of petroleum products from the Soviet Union dropped by over 60%. All former East European states cancelled their economic assistance programmes and reduced their trade with Cuba. From 1989 to 1991, the Soviet Union reduced its economic subsidies. With the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, all subsidies were cancelled.

## The Special Period and beyond, 1990–present

### Agriculture

After 1959, while Cuba's economy was dependent on the Soviet Union, it was less affected by world prices. However, after the collapse of the East European communist states in 1989–90 and the Soviet Union in 1991, economic problems were inevitable. The ending of subsidies for sugar meant that Cuba was again dependent on the world market and its price fluctuations. In 1990, the average price of sugar to the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the West was \$602 per tonne; by 1992, the world price had dropped to \$200. At the same time, external financing from the Soviet Union dropped from \$3 billion in 1989 to nothing in 1992. This led to the 'Special Period in Time of Peace.'

#### SOURCE C

There may be other forms of aggression for which we must prepare. We have called the total blockade period a 'Special Period in Time of War'. Yet, in the face of all these problems we must prepare ... plans for a 'Special Period in Time of Peace'.

*An extract from Castro's speech in January 1990 to the Cuban Workers' Federation, first announcing the Special Period. Quoted in Gott, R. 2004. Cuba: A New History. New Haven, USA. Yale University Press. p. 289.*

#### Fact

Initiatives during the Special Period included:

- in October 1990, a 'Food Programme' was launched to encourage local production
- scarce funds were allocated for research and development in biotechnology
- a recycling campaign
- a far-reaching austerity drive
- a mass mobilisation of volunteers – with many (such as students) from outside the agricultural sector
- development of tourism in place of sugar.

In March 1990, farmers were urged to use draught animals such as oxen and horses, and food was rationed. Thousands of workers from industries that had to be closed because of their dependence on foreign imports were sent to the countryside to grow food. Before 1990, Cuba obtained 63% of its food from the Soviet Union, and much food had been imported from Eastern Europe, so alternative sources of food supplies were needed. With no dollars available to buy from the West, food production at home had to be increased and various initiatives were undertaken.

However, by 1993 it was clear that further measures were needed. One of the three main measures was the establishment, in September 1993, of agricultural co-operatives (known as *Unidades Básicas de Producción Cooperativa* – UBPC) to replace the state farms, which were reduced in size, as was the number of workers. The state agricultural sector – which had controlled 75% of the agricultural economy – dropped to 30% by 1996. The land remained nominally in the hands of the state, and the UBPCs still had to produce quotas at prices fixed by the government. Also, private farmers' markets – abolished during the 'rectification' campaign of 1986 – were allowed once more.



The Special Period ended in 1996 but the constant fallback for the Cuban economy for centuries – sugar – was gone. In 2002, the government announced that 71 of the 156 sugar mills would be closed and half the land devoted to sugar would be given over to other crops.

## Industry

After 1975, few of the planned targets for increased productivity had been fully met, and real economic growth had been modest. In addition, the Cuban economy had become increasingly reliant on the Soviet Union. Cuba imported 80% of its machinery from the Soviet Union, while the Soviet Union purchased 63% of its sugar, 95% of its citrus and 73% of its nickel. Since the 1960s, the regular deliveries of cheap Soviet oil had been Cuba's economic lifeline: in 1989, almost 13 million tonnes had been delivered – at very favourable rates. The Special Period really began in 1990, when oil supplies from the Soviet Union dropped dramatically: by 1993, supplies dropped to 5.3 million tonnes and replacement supplies had to be bought on the world market, at higher prices and with US dollars.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 removed the crucial role played by the Soviet bloc in keeping the Cuban economy afloat. Between 1989 and 1993, Cuban GDP sank by 35%, while exports fell by 79%. By 2000, they were still only 43% of the figure for the pre-1989 years. In March 1990, gas, water and electricity supplies were cut off for short periods throughout the country. In August, oil and gas deliveries were cut by 50% across the island, and electricity consumption by 10%.

However, because of *Poder Popular*, the economic crisis of the Special Period does not seem to have been resolved at the expense of the workers. Thus conflict between government and unions appears to have been limited. In 1992, the constitution was amended to allow for state property to become part of joint ventures with foreign companies. But, by 1993, it was clear that Cuba's internal economy was still experiencing great problems. So Castro brought in a team of young economists led by Carlos Lage (the youthful vice-president) and José Luis Rodríguez (as minister of finance).

The first reforms were announced in Castro's Moncada speech on 26 July 1993. Particularly significant – and painful – was the Decree-Law 140 of August 1993, which made the US dollar legal tender in Cuba. Then, in September, the Decree-Law 141 re-introduced self-employment in some occupations and by 1995 more than 200,000 Cubans (about 5% of the workforce) were registered as self-employed. Yet, throughout the Special Period, Castro maintained his opposition to capitalism.

### SOURCE D

Authorising private commerce would be a political and ideological turnaround; it would be like starting along the path towards capitalism ... I find capitalism repugnant. It is filthy, it is gross, it is alienating ... because it causes war, hypocrisy and competition.

Castro speaking in January 1994. Quoted in Balfour, S. 2009. Castro. London, UK. Longman. p. 155.

To help the Cuban economy survive, tourism was strongly promoted, and soon became Cuba's largest earner of foreign currency. The government invested heavily in it and worked with partner companies from Spain, France and Canada in particular. Yet just as things were improving, and Cuba might have been expected to benefit from the end of the Cold War, the USA turned up the pressure, passing the Torricelli Act in 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act in 1996 to tighten trade sanctions on Cuba. However, the European Union – by then the main investors in Cuba – objected strongly to US attempts to stop them trading with Cuba. Eventually, the USA was forced to exempt EU countries. The 1996 act failed to stop Cuba expanding its world trade – though it remained as a potential threat.

In 2003, a new programme of anti-market re-centralisation was introduced: the dollar was no longer legal tender and the ministry for foreign trade was recreated to re-establish control over exports and imports.

## **How successful were Castro's economic policies?**

### **The early years, 1959–68**

#### **Agriculture**

Sugar production, already in trouble under Batista before 1959, was disrupted by managers fleeing to the USA during 1959–61. Early attempts at agricultural diversification away from sugar created further problems. As a result, the 1963 sugar harvest (down by over 30% compared to 1961) was the worst since the Second World War, while agriculture in general suffered similar problems.

However, in 1964, the Soviet Union signed the first of a series of long-term agreements that guaranteed better and stable prices for sugar; sugar production then increased from the 1963 level of 3.8 million tonnes.

#### **Industry**

There were also problems in industry and, in 1962, the Cuban economy collapsed. Castro's government froze prices and had to bring in rationing for most consumer products. However, this meant resources were fairly distributed. The fair distribution of food was a first for Cuba and contrasted strongly with other states in the region, which were marked by inequalities and mass poverty.

In 1963, the Cuban economy declined even further, as imports of machinery for rapid industrialisation, on top of the decline in income from sugar, resulted in a balance-of-payments crisis. At the same time, the replacement of money incentives for workers with moral incentives proved ineffective, as workers were paid the same, regardless of effort or quality. Part of the failure of Guevara's plans was down to the US embargo – the US had previously supplied the raw materials and machine parts needed for factories producing consumer goods and, at first, there was no alternative source. In 1963, industrial production fell by 1.5%, having grown by 0.4% the previous year.

### **The Soviet camp, 1968–90**

#### **Agriculture**

Problems in agriculture continued after the policy changes of the mid 1960s. Production in cattle-raising and forestry declined; even fishing – the best

#### **Fact**

Material incentives included higher pay for certain types of workers, bonuses for increased productivity and payment for overtime. Those who saw money as a capitalist corruption wanted to stress moral incentives, such as taking pride in working to achieve a better society and resisting the efforts of the USA to undermine the gains of the 1959 Revolution, for example by volunteering to work overtime for no extra pay. Such people would be keen to be part of the movement to bring about a worldwide revolution and so create a better world for the majority of the people.

performer – experienced some declines as well as successes. By 1970, Cuba’s economy in general was in crisis; and by 1982, Cuba’s terms of trade with the Soviet Union were over 30% lower than in 1975 – largely as a result of lower sugar prices.

## Industry

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, a new management system was introduced to give more autonomy to managers. Once again, higher wages and bonuses were paid for higher quality work, increased productivity and overtime.

Consequently, the economy prospered spectacularly during the first half of the 1970s. From 1975 to 1985, there was good economic and industrial growth, with an annual growth rate of 4.1%, and with a significant improvement in the early 1980s (the comparable figure for Latin America as a whole was 1.2%). By 1982, its hard-currency debt reached about \$3 billion; by 1986, Cuba had a record deficit of over \$199 million and a foreign debt of \$3.87 billion, 6.9% higher than in 1985. An economic recession thus began in 1986, and continued for the rest of the decade.

## The Special Period and beyond, 1990–present

### Agriculture

*Plaza Organopónico is one of many small organic farm co-operatives in Havana creating work and fresh food for the city’s inhabitants*





In 1990, with the start of the Special Period, Cuba experienced an economic disaster. Despite government measures to improve things, there remained mismanagement and shortages. After 1993, 'free' farmers' markets, in which farmers were free to sell directly to the public, were restored, with good results. By 2000, markets (known as 'kiosks') were established on almost every block in Havana, providing a wide variety of foods; they exist in most towns and cities.

Despite such efforts, many areas of agricultural production in Cuba remained weak – apart from eggs and citrus fruits. However, the *organopónicos* – about 7000 small organic plots, mainly located in urban areas – have been a success. These now produce 90% of Cuba's fruit and vegetables, and obviously require no expensive – and harmful – pesticides or fertilisers. In addition, experts from Australia have taught the methods of permaculture – a sustainable agricultural system.

### Industry

Cuba's import capacity dropped 70% between 1989 and 1992 (from \$8.1 billion to \$2.3 billion). This was mainly because of the drop in earnings from sugar and the loss of external financing, mostly from the Soviet Union. As well as oil, there were also shortages of spare parts, chemical fertilisers and animal feedstuffs. However, the government maintained the revolution's gains of free education and a free health service – no hospitals or schools were closed during the Special Period.

After 1993, the economy very slowly began to improve. GDP, at 0.7% in 1994, stopped falling and, after 1996, averaged out at 3.5% a year. One important element in helping Cuba overcome its biggest problems was Hugo Chávez, a great admirer of Castro, who became president of Venezuela in 1998. Chávez signed trade deals that were beneficial to Cuba.

In 2000, the first Cuba–Venezuela agreement was reached, to provide Cuba with considerable amounts of oil; by 2006, Cuba was importing 100,000 barrels of oil a day from Venezuela at a preferential price well below average world market prices. Meanwhile, in 2008, Russia agreed to help fund oil production off the coast of Cuba.

## What were the main social policies in Castro's Cuba?

When Castro took power in 1959, Cuba ranked amongst the top five Latin American countries for literacy, infant mortality and life expectancy; in healthcare and medical services, it was third. However, these statistics are misleading, as most services were based in Havana and the large regional towns. Conditions and services in the rural areas were very different – many rural areas had few doctors and few schools.

### Living standards

Castro's policies to redistribute wealth have been very successful. By providing jobs for all those who are able to work, the goal of ending unemployment was met. Prices of basic goods were kept low, while rationing ensured fair distribution. In particular, the improvement in living standards for the rural poor was outstanding.



### Theory of knowledge

#### History and ethics

Utilitarianism is a theory of ethics that says that the supreme moral principle is the 'greatest good for the greatest number of people'. Do the social policies of Castro's government after 1959 justify the expropriation and nationalisation of land and businesses owned by wealthy Cubans and foreigners? Are the political theories of socialism and Marxism therefore more moral than those of liberal capitalism?

#### Fact

There was, however, a brief reappearance of unemployment in the late 1970s – it reached 5.4% in 1979.

## Healthcare

Healthcare is one of the most successful social policy areas for Castro's government. Healthcare services were quickly established as the right of every Cuban citizen, and the system of free healthcare, which had existed before the revolution of 1959, was greatly expanded. This was especially true of the rural areas. However, the various political and military mobilisations – resulting from real or imagined threats from the USA – disrupted the expansion of medical services.

The improvement in the economy in the 1970s meant great advances were made. By 1981, the infant mortality rate had fallen to 18.5 per 1000 while pre-1959 diseases especially associated with poverty (such as TB and diarrhoeal disease) had been greatly reduced.

## Housing

Before 1959, only 15% of rural inhabitants had running water (it was 80% for urban dwellers), and only 9% of households had electricity. However, the revolutionary government's performance in housing was less successful. There were inefficiencies in the construction and construction-materials industries, and insufficient production, as the government gave higher priority to the building of hospitals and schools.

From 1949 to 1959, when the Cuban population was half of the figure for the late 1970s/early 1980s, about 27,000 housing units were built each year. In the 1960s, figures dropped considerably, although they rose to 16,000 units per year during the first Five-Year Plan (1976–80). In 1973, a high of 21,000 units was reached, but by 1980 figures had declined again.

## What were Castro's policies towards women, ethnic and other minorities, and religion?

### Women

The lives of women changed greatly under Castro's regime after 1959. As well as social policies affecting them – such as easier divorce, free abortions and subsidised family planning – the proportion of women in the labour force doubled from the late 1950s to the late 1980s.

#### SOURCE E

At present, more than 40% of the workforce is made up of women, constituting an estimated 60% of the upper levels of technicians and 67% of professionals. Women constitute 61% of prosecutors, 49% of professional judges, 47% of magistrates and 30% of state administrators and ministry officials.

Saney, I. 2004. *Cuba: A Revolution in Motion*, London, UK. Zed Books. p. 94.

#### Fact

A particular problem was the US embargo placed on trade with Cuba, which disrupted medical supplies – at first, Cuban production of these was inefficient. This particularly hit the upper-income urban consumers who had bought imported medicines before 1959.

#### Fact

According to Bethell, the increase in the number of women in the labour force was not fundamentally the result of government policies (some of which did encourage women's participation in the job market), but was more a social trend of advancing modernisation.

### Vilma Espin (1930–2007)

Espin was one of the leaders of the 26 July Movement in Santiago before 1959. She later married Raúl Castro and retained her power base in the FMC when they separated. In 1992, as president of the FMC, she challenged prejudices against gay men and lesbians, and formed a section to support the concerns of lesbians.



#### Fact

Vilma Espin was the first woman to enter the party's politburo, in 1986. Women were also under-represented in the middle ranks of leadership.

#### Question

How far have Castro's policies for gender equality overcome the pre-1959 traditions of *machismo* and patriarchy in Cuba?

Cuban women are guaranteed equal pay, and the Women's Commission on Employment monitors hiring and workplace practices for discrimination. However, the highest paid jobs in mining, fishery and construction are restricted to men only, on the grounds that they would damage women's health. Thus, on average, women's salaries are 15% behind those of men in the public sector.

There has been an impressive increase in the number of women throughout the education system. Cuba has one of the highest rates of school enrolment of young girls. Also, more than 60% of university students are female, and 47% of university instructors are women – in medicine, women actually outnumber men, forming 70% of students. Although they remain under-represented in engineering, and over-represented in primary and secondary school teaching and in the humanities, a fundamental shift has nonetheless occurred.

In August 1960, the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) was set up. It has gone a long way in changing sexist opinions and behaviour. For many years, its president was **Vilma Espin**.

The FMC played a crucial role in getting an egalitarian Family Code adopted in 1975. This was designed to equalise the status of spouses in the family and obliged husbands to do half of all family chores. However, surveys suggest the persistence of Latin American *machismo* (male chauvinism) and gender stereotyping in the home. Women thus bear the brunt of the 'second shift' (i.e. household work), doing 36 hours of household work per week, compared to 10 hours for men.

Women's participation in politics has been significantly less equal than in the workplace. By the mid 1980s, only 19% of the PCC members and candidate members and only 13% of the PCC's Central Committees were women. There were no women in the party secretariat or the top government organ, the Council of State. However, by 2003, women formed over 30% of the active membership of the PCC and 16.1% of the Council of State, and five ministries were headed by women. Women also held 52.5% of union leadership positions, and 31% of all managers of state enterprises were women. According to historians such as Saney, Cuba compares favourably with other countries and ranks fifth in the Americas in terms of overall equality for women. In the 1988 elections, 27.6% of delegates were women; in 2003, this rose to 35.9%. Female representation in the National Assembly puts Cuba tenth in the world. Despite some problems, the Cuban Revolution maintains a strong commitment to achieving full equality between women and men.

### Black people

Before 1959, Castro's programmes and manifestos had not alluded to the 'colour question'. However, after 1959, the improved treatment of black people soon became an important achievement of Castro's regime. In March 1959, he made his 'Proclamation against discrimination' speech, calling for a campaign against racial discrimination and making it clear that differences in skin colour were of no significance. The revolutionary government quickly repealed the pre-1959 laws that allowed or enforced racial discrimination. However, Castro did not support black separatism, and the societies and associations of black intellectuals and politicians that had existed before 1959 were closed.

As a result of government social and economic policies, Cuba's black and mulatto population – which was disproportionately poor – saw their living



standards improve considerably after 1959. Consequently, surveys show support for Castro's government is greater among black people than among whites.

The leaders of the 1959 revolution were overwhelmingly white, and white people have continued to fill the top political positions. Consequently, as with women, black people are still significantly under-represented in the top organs of both party and state. By 1979, only five of the 34 ministers were black; there were only four black members of the 14-strong politburo of the PCC; and only 16 of the 146 members of its Central Committee. So, at the party congress in 1986, Castro declared it a priority to increase the black share of top political jobs.

## Same-sex relations in Cuba

Today, same-sex relations are not illegal in Cuba. However, **homophobia**, though not violent as in many other states, persists in certain sections of society. The situation of gay men and lesbians has altered over the decades since the revolution of 1959. After 1959, same-sex relationships were at first seen as aspects of 'bourgeois decadence' resulting from capitalism. Such early attitudes were strengthened in the 1960s and 1970s as Cuba moved closer to the Soviet Union, whose laws reflected such prejudices.

As early as 1965, the Revolutionary Armed Forces forcibly recruited gay men into UMAP (Military Units to Help Production) work battalions. These military labour camps, however, were mainly intended for men who, as conscientious objectors, refused to do military service, or for young men who were considered unfit for military service. This led to significant criticism in Cuba – in 1967, Castro ordered the camps to be disbanded and the internees released.

However, this did not end discrimination in other areas of life. In 1971, the government described same-sex relationships as incompatible with the revolution – gay men and lesbians were expelled from the Communist Party and several artists, actors and teachers lost their jobs. However, this was overturned by the Supreme Court in 1975, and Armando Hart, head of the new Ministry of Culture, began to promote a more liberal approach.

As a result, during the second half of the 1970s, attitudes towards same-sex relationships were questioned in various ways. In 1977, the *Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual* (CNES) was founded on the initiative of the Cuban Women's Federation (FMC) – this encouraged a more enlightened outlook on sexual orientation and started to undermine traditional sexual prejudices and taboos.

The work done by the CNES has contributed to changes in attitudes and laws. In 1979, the law was changed to remove same-sex acts between consenting adults as a criminal offence from the Penal Code. More recently, the age of consent for same-sex relations was equalised to that for heterosexual relations.

There have been further reforms, often emanating from Raúl Castro and his daughter Mariela Castro. These reforms include free hormone therapy in 2008 and free state-sponsored gender reassignment surgery in 2010. However, there is no recognition of same-sex marriage or civil partnerships or unions. Gay and lesbian organisations and publications are banned, as are gay pride marches. Yet since 1995, gay and lesbian groups have been allowed to participate in – and even lead – the May Day parades. Castro more recently criticised *machismo* and urged acceptance of same-sex relationships, describing these as a 'natural aspect and tendency of human beings, that must simply be respected'.

### Fact

The 1981 census showed one-third of the total Cuban population was black, but the black share of the Central Committee in 1986 was only one-fifth. However, in elections to local municipal assemblies, black people were represented in numbers comparable to their share of the population.

**homophobia** Homophobia is the irrational fear and/or set of mistaken prejudices/ideas/practices held by individuals about gay men and lesbians.

### Historical debate

Historians are divided over the degree of toleration of gay men and lesbians in Cuba today. Does the record of Castro's government on this issue since 1959 warrant the many criticisms that have been made of it – including those from some on the left, who have been otherwise supportive of the revolution?



Castro with Pope John Paul II in January 1998, during the Pope's visit to Cuba

## Religion

The Catholic Church had not grown deep roots in Cuba as in other Latin American states. By the late 1990s, out of a population of 11 million, only about 150,000 regularly attended Sunday mass. There were also various ecumenical Protestant sects, which experienced some growth in the 1990s. But the numbers of Catholics and Protestants combined was less than the 5 million who followed various forms of Afro-Cuban religion.

At first the Church leadership accepted the revolution; but the secularisation of education, and the reduction of the Church's role in government, changed the situation. By the end of 1959, the radical turn taken by Castro and his *Fidelistas* led to tensions with the Catholic Church.

However, during the 1980s, the Vatican, and the Cuban and US Catholic Churches, condemned the US embargo on Cuba. Pope John Paul II (who was strongly anti-communist) even mildly criticised the effects of neo-liberal capitalist economics.

In July 1992, amendments to the 1976 Constitution declared the state to be secular rather than atheist, while the PCC allowed religious believers to join. Then, in January 1998, Pope John Paul II visited Cuba, where he conducted four masses. The Pope negotiated the release of about 300 prisoners and gained greater room for activity by the Church, despite government concerns about faith-based oppositionist groups, which were still closely monitored.

## What impact has the Cuban Revolution had on education, young people and the arts?

### Education

Education has been the most impressive of Castro's achievements. Cuba in 1959 had a generally ill-educated population. As early as his attack on the Moncada barracks in July 1953, Castro had promised reform of education; in his speech to the UN in 1960, he promised that the revolution would end illiteracy within a year.

The drive to eliminate illiteracy began in 1961 – designated the 'Year of Education'. The revolutionary government took over all private and Church schools and, after some difficulties, achieved virtual universal attendance at primary schools. Over 100,000 volunteer student teachers, recruited into brigades, took part – most were teenagers. They were often the target of US-sponsored counter-revolutionaries, and over 40 were killed in these terrorist attacks. Yet these teachers taught over 1 million to read and write – thus allowing the fulfilment of Castro's promise. Over 3000 schools were built in the first year, and over 300,000 children attended school for the first time.

The literacy campaign and school reforms continued throughout an extensive adult education system. Later, with some Soviet assistance, Cuba developed a greatly improved educational system, which was free to all – and without parallel in Latin America.

### Fact

According to the 1970 census, illiteracy still stood at 12.9%; by 1979, this had dropped to 5.6%.

A primary school classroom in Havana in 2007 – note the poster of Che Guevara on the wall at the back

As a result, average levels of education in the labour force jumped from bare literacy in the 1964 labour census to sixth-grade level in the 1974 census, and to eighth-grade level by 1979. However, differences in access to quality education between urban and rural Cubans – though greatly reduced – did not completely end; but the improvements made in the late 1960s were built on in the 1970s. Many people deserve credit for these improvements: apart from Castro (who pushed for it as a priority), **José Ramón Fernández** played a key role.



Improvements in higher education were more limited. Departments were at first hit, both by the early emigrations and by the dismissal of ‘politically unreliable’ staff. There was a strong bias towards technical education, with engineering being prioritised over the humanities and the liberal arts; and academic study of the social sciences was neglected.

Overall, Castro successfully carried through a real educational revolution after 1959. This has not only been a source of great pride for the Cuban government and people, but has also been an inspiration for other developing countries. Despite economic crises (including the ‘Special Period’) Castro has insisted that the ‘historic socialist achievements of the revolution’ – free education and free medical care – be preserved untouched.

### The media and the arts

In 1960, all the mass media came under government control; the only avenue of criticism was via the letters-to-the-editor pages – such letters had to relate to specific problems rather than criticising general policy.

There was greater – though still limited – freedom of expression and publication in the arts and the academic worlds for those who supported the revolution, and who wrote on topics other than contemporary politics. However, in 1961 Castro said about culture: ‘Within the revolution, everything; against the revolution, nothing’. Thus, material opposed to the revolution, or written by known opponents, was not published.

### End of unit activities

- 1 Carry out some further research on the methods used by Castro to redistribute economic resources more equally amongst the citizens of Cuba. Then complete a chart, showing which groups have benefitted most.
- 2 Re-read pages 206–211 and produce a chart summarising (a) the main social policies introduced by Castro’s government since 1959 and (b) their results.
- 3 Find out more about the development of organic farming and recycling in Cuba during and after the ‘Special Period’. How significant do you think these have been in helping Cuba survive the loss of support from the Soviet bloc?

**José Ramón Fernández (b. 1923)** During Batista’s tyranny, Fernández was imprisoned from 1956 to 1959 for his involvement with the opposition group ‘Los puros’. He took part in operations during the Bay of Pigs incident in 1961. He was first deputy minister of education until 1972 and minister of education from 1972 until 1990.

**Fact**  
As part of Castro’s foreign policy, Cuban teachers went to many developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to give others the benefit of their methods and experience.

**Question**  
How far, and for what reasons, have Castro’s educational policies since 1959 been successful?



# End of chapter activities

## Paper 1 exam practice

### Question

Compare and contrast the views expressed in Sources A and B below on the impact of the Bay of Pigs incident as regards Castro's consolidation of power. [6 marks]

### Skill

Cross-referencing

#### SOURCE A

The victory at Playa Girón was celebrated amid national euphoria. It was as if the United States had finally received its comeuppance after a century of meddling in the affairs of Cuba. Castro's prestige among the population would never be higher ... Later the same year, he declared on television that he was a Marxist and that the Cuban Revolution would have a 'Marxist-Leninist' programme. The words of a popular song of the post-Playa Girón days, 'Cuba Si, Yanquis No', suggest how collective faith in Castro seemed to override the residue of old ideologies; if Fidel was in charge, they implied, it did not matter which direction the revolution went.

Balfour, S. 2009. *Castro*. London, UK. Longman. p. 65.

#### SOURCE B

The invasion was one of the major strategic errors of the United States in the 20th century, reinforcing Castro's control over Cuba, ensuring the permanence of his revolution and helping to drive him into the Soviet camp ... Before he left Havana [to supervise the military operation against the invaders], Castro had ordered the arrest of anyone suspected of counter-revolutionary activities, and 35,000 people were detained in the capital alone, including the auxiliary bishop of Havana. The CIA's hope that thousands would rise up against the revolution were thwarted on the first day.

Gott, R. 2004. *Cuba: A New History*. New Haven, USA. Yale University Press. pp. 190–94.

### Examiner's tips

Cross-referencing questions require you to compare **and** contrast the information/content/nature of **two** sources, relating to a particular issue. Before you write your answer, draw a rough chart or diagram to show the **similarities** and the **differences** between the two sources. That way, you should ensure you address **both** aspects/elements of the question.

### Common mistakes

When asked to compare and contrast two sources, make sure you don't just comment on **one** of the sources! Such an oversight happens every year – and will lose you 4 of the 6 marks available.

## Simplified markscheme

Band		Marks
1	<b>Both</b> sources <b>linked</b> , with <b>detailed references</b> to the two sources, identifying <b>both</b> similarities <b>and</b> differences.	6
2	<b>Both</b> sources <b>linked</b> , with <b>detailed references</b> to the two sources, identifying <b>either</b> similarities <b>or</b> differences.	4–5
3	Comments on both sources, <b>but</b> treating each one <b>separately</b> .	3
4	Discusses/comments on just <b>one</b> source.	0–2

## Student answer

Sources A and B give very different views of the impact of the Bay of Pigs incident on Castro's consolidation of power. Source A gives a much more positive view, pointing out how 'his prestige among the population would never be higher'.

However, Source B focuses on Castro relying on repression, rather than the popularity mentioned in Source A, to consolidate his rule: it refers to how he used the invasion to reinforce his control by arresting any suspected counter-revolutionaries – '35,000 people were detained in the capital alone'.

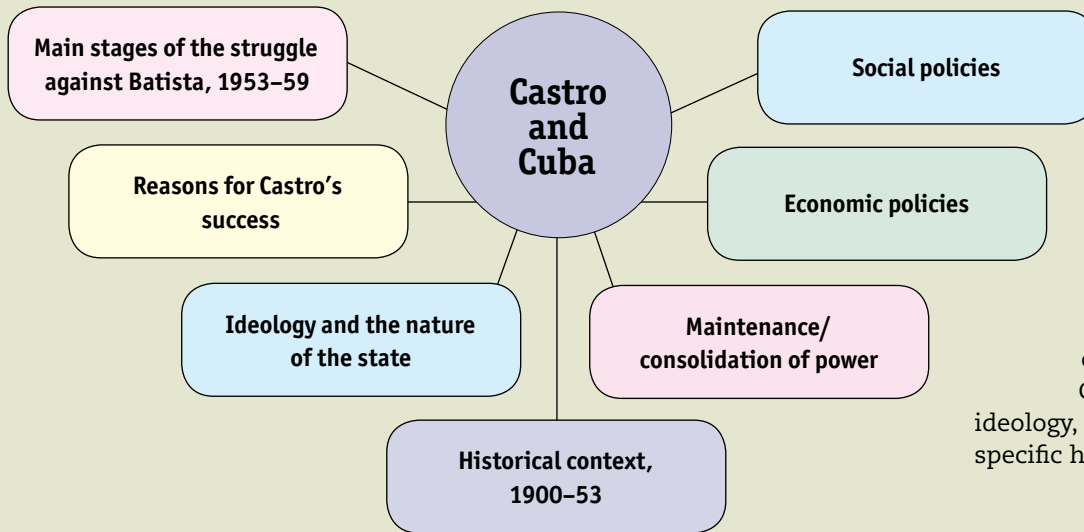
## Examiner's comments

There are some clear/precise references to **both** the sources, and one main **difference/contrast** is identified. Also, the sources are linked in the second paragraph, rather than being dealt with separately. But only one clear difference is identified, so the candidate's answer is on the borderline between Band 3 and low Band 2 – this would score 3–4 marks. As no similarities/comparisons are shown, this answer fails to get into Band 1.

## Activity

Look again at the two sources, the simplified markscheme, and the student answer above. Now try to write a paragraph or two to push the answer up into Band 1, and so obtain the full 6 marks – as a tip, try to identify any similarities.

## Summary activity



Draw your own spider diagram and, using the information from this chapter and any other materials that you have available, make notes under each of the headings. Where there are differences in the relative importance of the various reasons for Castro's success, or his ideology, try to mention the views of specific historians.

## Paper 2 practice questions

- 1 Analyse the conditions and actions that helped Castro in his bid for power.
- 2 'The main reason Castro came to power in 1959 was because of Batista's mistakes.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?
- 3 Compare and contrast the methods used by Hitler and Castro to obtain power.
- 4 To what extent, and in what ways, can Castro's ideology be described as Marxist in the years after 1953?
- 5 Assess the methods used by Castro to maintain power.
- 6 Compare and contrast **either** the economic **or** the social policies of Mao and Castro.
- 7 To what extent was Castro successful in achieving his aims?
- 8 Examine the role of education **or** the arts in **two** single-party states, each chosen from a different region.

## Further reading

Try reading the relevant chapters/sections of the following books:

- Balfour, S. 2009. *Castro*. London, UK. Longman.
- Bethell, L. (ed.). 1993. *Cuba: A Short History*. Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press.
- Coltman, L. 2003. *The Real Fidel Castro*. New Haven, USA. Yale University Press.
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# 6 Exam practice

## Introduction

You have now completed your study of the main aspects and events of Authoritarian and Single-Party States. In the foregoing chapters, you have had practice at answering some of the types of source-based question you will have to deal with in Paper 1. In this chapter, you will gain experience of dealing with:

- a the longer Paper 1 question, which requires you to use both sources and your own knowledge to write a mini-essay
- b the essay questions you will encounter in Paper 2.

## Exam skills needed for IB History

This book is designed primarily to prepare both Standard and Higher Level students for the Paper 2 topic Origins and Development of Authoritarian and Single-Party States (Topic 3). However, by providing the necessary historical knowledge and understanding, as well as an awareness of the relevant key historical debates, it will also help you prepare for Paper 1. The skills you need for answering both Paper 1 and Paper 2 exam questions are explained below.

The example below shows you how to find the information related to the 'W' questions that you will need in order to evaluate sources for their value and limitations.

### SOURCE X

It is sometimes asked whether it is not possible to slow down the tempo a bit, to put a check on the movement. No, **comrades**, it is not possible! The tempo must not be reduced! On the contrary, we must increase it as much as is within our powers and possibilities ... We are 50 or 100 years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or they crush us.

*Extract from an article* written by **Stalin** in **1931**, on the **need to industrialise** as quickly as possible. Quoted in Laver, J. 1991. *Russia 1914–1941*. London, UK. Hodder Arnold H&S. pp. 60–61.

### Extract from an article

WHAT? (type of source)

**Stalin** WHO? (produced it)

**1931** WHEN? (date/time of production)

**need to industrialise** WHY? (possible purpose)

**comrades** WHO? (intended audience)

# Paper 1 exam practice

## Paper 1 skills and questions

This section of the book is designed to give you the skills and understanding to tackle Paper 1 questions, which are based on the comprehension, critical analysis and evaluation of different types of historical sources as evidence, along with the use of appropriate historical contextual knowledge.

For example, you will need to test sources for reliability and utility – a skill essential for historians. A range of sources has been provided, including extracts from official documents, personal diaries, memoirs and speeches, as well as visual sources such as photographs, cartoons and paintings.

In order to analyse and evaluate sources as historical evidence, you will need to ask the following **‘W’ questions** of historical sources:

- **Who** produced it? Were they in a position to know?
- **What** type of source is it? What is its nature – is it a primary or secondary source?
- **Where** and **when** was it produced? What was happening at the time?
- **Why** was it produced? Was its purpose to inform or to persuade? Is it an accurate attempt to record facts, or is it an example of propaganda?
- **Who** was the intended audience? Decision-makers, or the general public?

This will help you to become familiar with interpreting, understanding, analysing and evaluating a range of different types of historical sources. It will also aid you in synthesising critical analysis of sources with historical knowledge when constructing an explanation or analysis of some aspect or development of the past. Remember – for Paper 1, as for Paper 2, you need to acquire, select and deploy relevant historical knowledge to explain causes and consequences, continuity and change; and to develop and show an awareness of historical debates and different interpretations.

Paper 1 questions will thus involve examining sources in the light of:

- a their **origin** and **purpose**
- b their value and limitations.

The **value and limitations** of sources to historians will be based on the **origin and purpose** aspects. For example, a source might be useful because it is primary – the event depicted was witnessed by the person producing it. But was the person in a position to know? Is the view an untypical view of the event? What is its nature – is it a private diary entry (therefore possibly more likely to be true), or is it a speech or piece of propaganda intended to persuade? Even if the value of a source is limited by such aspects, it can still have value – for example, as evidence of the types of propaganda put out at the time. Similarly, a secondary – or even a tertiary – source can have more value than some primary sources – for instance, because the writer might be writing at a time when new evidence has become available.

**origin** ‘Who, when, where and why?’ questions.

**purpose** This means ‘Reasons, what the writer/creator was trying to achieve, who the intended audience was’.

**Remember** – a source doesn’t have to be primary to be useful. Remember, too, that content isn’t the only aspect to have possible value – the context, the person who produced it, etc., can be important in offering an insight. Finally, when in the exam room, use the information provided by the Chief Examiner about the five sources, as it can give some useful information and clues to help you construct a good answer.

Paper 1 contains four types of question. The first three of these are:

- 1 *Comprehension/understanding of a source.* Some will have 2 marks, others 3 marks. For such questions, write only a short answer, making 2 or 3 points – save your longer answers for the questions carrying the higher marks.
- 2 *Cross-referencing/comparing or contrasting two sources.* Try to write an integrated comparison. For example, comment on how the two sources deal with one aspect; then compare/contrast the sources on another aspect. This will usually score more highly than answers that deal with the sources separately. Try to avoid simply describing each source in turn – there needs to be explicit comparison/contrast.
- 3 *Assessing the value and limitations of two sources.* Here it is best to deal with each source separately, as you are not being asked to decide which source is more important/useful. But remember to deal with **all** the aspects required: **origins, purpose, value and limitations.**

These three types of questions are covered in the chapters above. The other, longer, type of Paper 1 question will be dealt with below.

## Paper 1 – Judgement questions

### Examiner's tips

- This fourth type of Paper 1 question requires you to produce a mini-essay to address the question/statement given in the question. You should try to develop and present an argument and/or come to a balanced judgement by analysing and using the **five** sources **and** your own knowledge.
- Before you write your answer to such a question, you may find it useful to draw a rough chart to note what the sources show in relation to the question. Note, however, that some sources may hint at more than one factor/result. This will also make sure you refer to all or at least most of the sources. When using your own knowledge, make sure it is relevant to the question.
- Look carefully at the simplified markscheme below – this will help you focus on what you need to do to reach the top bands and so score the higher marks

### Common mistakes

When answering Paper 1 argument/judgement questions, make sure you don't just deal with sources **OR** own knowledge! Every year, some candidates (even good ones!) do this, and so limit themselves to – at best – only 5 out of the 8 marks available.

As with the other types of Paper 1 questions, a simplified markscheme is provided to help you target the most important skills that examiners are looking for.

### Simplified markscheme

Band		Marks
1	<b>Developed and balanced</b> analysis and comments using <b>BOTH</b> sources <b>AND</b> own knowledge. References to sources are precise; and sources and detailed own knowledge are used together; where relevant, a judgement is made.	8
2	<b>Developed</b> analysis/comments using <b>BOTH</b> sources <b>AND</b> some detailed own knowledge; with some clear references to sources. But sources and own knowledge not always <b>combined together</b> .	6–7
3	<b>Some developed</b> analysis/comments, using the sources <b>OR</b> some relevant own knowledge.	4–5
4	<b>Limited/general</b> comments using sources <b>OR</b> own knowledge.	0–3



## Student answers

Those parts of the student's answers below will have brief examiner comments in the margins, as well as a longer overall comment at the end. Those parts of student's answers that make use of the sources will be **highlighted in green**; those parts that deploy relevant own knowledge will be **highlighted in purple**. In this way, you should find it easier to follow why particular bands and marks were – or were not – awarded.

### Question 1

Using Sources A, B, C, D and E, and your own knowledge, analyse the effects of Stalin's purges. [8 marks]

#### SOURCE A

I am guilty of nothing, nothing, nothing before the party, before the Central Committee and before you personally. I swear to you by everything that is sacred to a Bolshevik. I swear to you on Lenin's memory. I cannot even imagine what could have aroused suspicion against me. I beg you to believe my word of honour. I am shaken to the depths of my soul.

Zinoviev to Stalin in December 1934, following his arrest after the assassination of Kirov. Quoted in Volkogonov, D. (trans. Shukman, H.). 1991. *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy*. London, UK. p. 277.

#### SOURCE B

The first show trial, 1936



#### SOURCE C

The purges created numberless vacancies in every field. From 1933 to 1938, about half a million administrators, technicians, economists, and men of other professions graduated, and filled the ranks of the purged and emptied offices. They, brought up in the Stalinist cult from childhood, threw themselves into their work with a zeal and enthusiasm undimmed by recent events.

Deutscher, I. 1966. *Stalin*. London, UK. Penguin Books. pp. 380–81.

## SOURCE D

It cannot be said that the cleansings were not accompanied by grave mistakes. There were, unfortunately, more mistakes than might have been expected. Undoubtedly, we shall have no further need to resort to the method of mass cleansings. Nevertheless, the cleansings of 1933–36 were unavoidable and their results, on the whole, were beneficial.

Stalin reporting to the 18th Party Congress in March 1939 on the purges from 1933 to 1936. Quoted in Ward, C. 1993. *Stalin's Russia*. London, UK. Hodder Education. p. 119.

## SOURCE E

The location of Soviet Union labour camps



## Student answer

The main effects of Stalin's purges were on the Soviet Communist Party and on the armed forces – but they also affected large numbers of administrators and technicians, and even ordinary people who were denounced by people who simply wanted their jobs, wanted revenge for some past slight, or just wanted to get rid of a rival.

## Examiner's comment

This is a good introduction, showing a clear understanding of the topic and the question.

Source A, which is a letter from Zinoviev to Stalin, shows the fear that the arrests and purges under Stalin had on the Communist Party in the late 1930s – he is begging for Stalin to believe his innocence, and says he is 'shaken to the depths of my soul' at being arrested. The fear must have been widespread, as Zinoviev had been one of the triumvirs who, in the late 1920s, had worked with Stalin against Trotsky. This can be related to Source B, which shows the first show trial in 1936 – one of the people in that trial was Zinoviev, along with Kamenev, who had also been one of the triumvirs.

## Examiner's comment

There is reasonable and clear use of Sources A and B, with a little own knowledge – but this is not very extensive.

**Examiner's comment**

Again, there is good explicit use of Sources C and E – but there is limited precise own knowledge.

Sources C and E can also be linked, as they relate to the impact of the purges on administrators and technicians. Source C shows how, from 1933 to 1938, about half a million people were able to get jobs – often merely taking over from those who had been purged. Source E is a map of the many Gulag or labour camps that grew up under Stalin's rule – many of those purged administrators and technicians mentioned in Source C may have been sent there. In fact, the Gulags were first set up in 1930 – before Stalin began his purges; but they soon became filled with the less-important victims of the purges during the second half of the 1930s.

**Examiner's comment**

This is a better section, with explicit use of Source D and some precise own knowledge, which is integrated to produce a synthesis of both source and own knowledge.

Another impact or effect of the purges is touched on by Source D, which is an admission by Stalin in 1938 that, although the 'cleansings of 1933–36 were unavoidable', there had been some 'grave mistakes'. This refers to those ordinary people and workers who, at local levels, were purged for motives of personal advantage or revenge. In fact, as early as 1937, Stalin raised doubts about the purging of such people. As a sign of this, Beria replaced Ezhov as the person in charge of the NKVD and the purges – Ezhov was executed some months after Stalin made his speech shown in Source D. Shortly after that, the mass purges came to an end, and many were released from prisons and the Gulags.

**Examiner's comment**

There is some relevant and precise own knowledge here – but this is an 'add-on', rather than being integrated with the sources.

However, the sources do not say anything about the impact of the purges on the armed forces. In May 1937, Tukhachevsky – the head of the Red Army – and several other top officers were arrested and accused of plotting with Trotsky and foreign enemies. These generals were executed, and the purge of the armed forces then spread downwards.

In conclusion, one of the main effects of the purges was to create a state of terror throughout the whole of the Soviet Union, as no one could ever feel entirely safe.

**Overall examiner's comments**

There is good and clear use of sources throughout, but the use and integration of precise own knowledge to both explain and add to the sources is rather limited. The overall result is an answer clearly focused on the question, but with own knowledge that, in the main, is not integrated with the sources. The candidate has done enough to be awarded Band 2 and 6 or 7 marks.



## Activity

Look again at all of the sources, the simplified markscheme and the student answer above. Now try to write your own answer to this question. See if you can make some extra points with the sources and integrate some additional own knowledge to give a fuller explanation of the results of the purges.

## Question 2

Using Sources A, B, C, D and E, and your own knowledge, explain why Mao came to power in China in 1949. [8 marks]

### SOURCE A

Mao had an extraordinary mix of talents: he was visionary, statesman, political and military strategist of genius, philosopher and poet. To these gifts he brought a subtle, dogged mind, awe-inspiring charisma and fiendish cleverness ... To Mao, the killing of opponents – or simply of those who disagreed with his political aims – was an unavoidable, indeed a necessary, ingredient of broader campaigns.

Short, P. 1990. *Mao: A Life*. London, UK. John Murray. pp. 630–31.

### SOURCE B

Has there ever been in history a Long March like ours? No, never. The Long March is also a manifesto ... The Long March has sown many seeds in eleven provinces, which will sprout, grow leaves, blossom into flowers, bear fruit and yield a crop in future.

*From a speech by Mao in December 1935 on the importance of the Long March of 1934–35. Quoted in Schools Council. 1977. Rise of Communist China (Modern World Studies). Edinburgh, UK. Holmes McDougall. p. 29.*

### SOURCE C

We don't want civil war. However, if Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi] insists on forcing civil war on the Chinese people, the only thing we can do is take up arms and fight him in self-defence to protect the lives and property, the rights and well-being of the people of the Liberated Areas. This will be a civil war he forces on us.

*From a warning, issued by Mao to the GMD in August 1945. Quoted in Tarling, N. 1977. Mao and the Transformation of China. Auckland, New Zealand. Heinemann Educational Books. p. 38.*

## SOURCE D

Mao Zedong announced in 1948 that the communist armies were going to shift from a strategy of predominantly guerrilla warfare to one of conventional battles in open country, employing massed armies of troops. The communists managed to seize and hold Kaifeng for a week in late June ... the communist troops won a propaganda victory by maintaining strict discipline and meticulously refusing to harm the civilian population. The communist retreat therefore brought little lasting comfort to the Guomindang whose senior military officers made a survey of relative troop strengths and came to the conclusion that the communists were making relentless gains. Chiang Kai-shek's [Jiang Jieshi's] waning popularity suffered further damage in July 1948 with the senseless killing of unarmed students by government forces.

Spence, J. D. 1999 (2nd edn). *The Search for Modern China*. New York, USA. W. W. Norton and Company. pp. 481–82.

## SOURCE E

A poster depicting Mao as the peasants' hero, 1951



## Student answer

## Examiner's comment

The opening makes it clear that a number of factors will be considered and the grouping offers an effective structure for the answer. However, it fails to make any direct reference to the source material, even though some of the factors mentioned in it are directly linked to them.

There are a variety of reasons as to why Mao came to power in China in 1949. The main reason was the military victory that he achieved in the civil war, but underlying this are a number of different factors. These include Mao's own leadership, the military advantages of his forces during the civil war, and popular support, particularly among the peasants, which grew from his economic ideas on land reform. Mao's advantages must, however, be balanced against the weaknesses of the nationalists under *Jiang Jieshi* to understand why he was able to rise to power by 1949.

Mao's victory over the GMD followed a civil war that broke out after the surrender of Japan in 1945, which removed the nationalists' and communists' common enemy. Mao's forces were ably led by Lin Biao, who transformed the peasant recruits (increasingly swelled by nationalist deserters) into an effective fighting force. The communists' experience in guerrilla warfare was used to good effect in Manchuria, which they seized early in 1948, but they shifted to more conventional battles once troops were sufficient trained. The communists understood the importance of seizing railway junctions and surrounding major cities, such as Beijing, which was captured in January 1949. The seizure of Nanjing and Shanghai in April and May 1949 were also crucial, allowing the PLA to march into the last nationalist strongholds in southern China and achieve victory, driving Jiang Jieshi from the mainland, so allowing Mao to declare the PRC in October 1949.

#### Examiner's comment

The paragraph provides a lot of useful detail about military factors but there is no source reference – even though the point about switching from guerrilla to conventional warfare could have been exemplified from Source D.

Mao's victory was also the result of his own leadership and 'extraordinary mix of talents' (Source A). Mao had established himself as an undisputed leader through the Long March (Source B) and during the days at Yan'an. He had removed his opponents and his own 'thought' had become the party's dogma. Communist troops were ideologically indoctrinated and were prepared to endure hardship for their cause. Mao maintained motivation and morale, ensuring unity and confidence, and was a pragmatic decision maker. It was Mao who had ordered co-operation with his former nationalist opponents in the fight against Japan, between 1937 and 1945, but then turned on them after 1945 (Source C). It was also Mao who ordered some restraint in communist persecution of landlords in 1948, when it threatened to get out of hand.

#### Examiner's comment

This paragraph shows an understanding of Mao's leadership and makes reference to Sources A, B and C. However, it fails to look at the source detail in any depth and leaves the reader to work out the link between the source and essay text.

Another factor contributing to Mao's rise to power was the popular support the communists received, particularly from the peasants. Mao's policy of land reform benefited the poorest peasants as large estates were confiscated in the programme of land redistribution. Furthermore, in communist-held urban areas, an effort was made to control corruption and crime, ensure supplies were fairly distributed and introduce fair taxation. By maintaining production and controlling inflation, the communists widened their support base considerably after 1948. Source E, although propagandist, shows the widespread adulation for Mao.

#### Examiner's comment

This paragraph makes some relevant comment on Mao's popular support, linking briefly to Source E and observing that this is a piece of propaganda. However, the source reference could have been fuller and relevant material in Source A has not been included here.



**Examiner's comment**

This paragraph offers some balance and shows some detailed understanding of nationalist weaknesses. The reference to 'Source D' at the end needed comment, however. Merely putting it in brackets has not made it clear which sections the student was referring to. Again an opportunity to incorporate source reference has been lost.

Much of the communist success, however, was due to the weaknesses of the nationalists. Although the nationalists had the military advantage at the beginning of the war with around 2.8 million troops and 6000 artillery pieces as against the communists' 320,000 troops and 600 pieces of artillery, they squandered this and were ultimately overwhelmed. Jiang sent all his best troops to Manchuria at the beginning of the war and never fully recovered from the losses there. The mainly conscript nationalist army suffered from low morale, made worse by meagre pay (and that sometimes stolen by their officers), which led them to ill treat local populations. The nationalists were also over-reliant on corrupt local warlords and foreign support, which added to their poor standing in the eyes of the Chinese people. They were associated with a dictatorial regime in the 1930s, which had done little to improve conditions in China and inefficiency, economic mismanagement, internal splits and Jiang's weak leadership all contributed to the ultimate Communist victory (Source D).

**Examiner's comment**

This is a weak finish to the essay. Although this conclusion repeats the view advanced in the introduction that military victory was the main reason why Mao came to power, it makes no reference to the sources and ends rather limply.

Mao therefore came to power in China for a variety of reasons, of which the military victory in the civil war was the most important. However, without the nationalists' weaknesses, it would have been far harder for him to have achieved political power, so this must also be seen as a very important factor.

**Overall examiner's comments**

This answer shows a very good understanding of a variety of factors and provides plentiful and, in places, detailed own knowledge in response to the question. It is also a well-structured response that maintains its focus throughout and offers some judgement. However, its use of sources is minimal. Although each is mentioned, most receive only a reference in brackets and only once is a source directly cited. Despite the instructions in the question, much of the actual detail contained in the sources has been ignored and therefore the answer is not worthy of more than Band 3. Since there is a little more than just own knowledge, it would qualify for the top of the band – 5 marks, but an important aspect of this question that demands clear source reference has been missed.

# Paper 2 exam practice

## Paper 2 skills and questions

For Paper 2, you have to answer two essay questions from two of the five different topics offered. Very often, you will be asked to comment on two states from two different IB regions of the world. Although each question has a specific markscheme, a good general idea of what examiners are looking for in order to be able to put answers into the higher bands can be gleaned from the general 'generic' markscheme. In particular, you will need to acquire reasonably precise historical knowledge in order to address issues such as cause and effect, or change and continuity, and to learn how to explain historical developments in a clear, coherent, well-supported and relevant way. You will also need to understand and be able to refer to aspects relating to historical debates and interpretations.

Make sure you read the questions carefully, and select your questions wisely – a good idea is to then produce a rough plan of **each** of the essays you intend to attempt, **before** you start to write your answers: that way, you will soon know whether you have enough own knowledge to answer them adequately.

Remember, too, to keep your answers relevant and focused on the question – for example, don't go outside the dates mentioned in the question, or answer on individuals/states different from the ones identified in the question. Don't just describe the events or developments – sometimes students just focus on one key word or individual, and then write down all they know about it. Instead, select your own knowledge carefully, and pin the relevant information to the key features raised by the question. Also, if the question asks for 'reasons' and 'results', or two different countries, make sure you deal with **all** the parts of the question. Otherwise, you will limit yourself to half marks at best.

## Examiner's tips

For Paper 2 answers, examiners are looking for clear/precise analysis, and a balanced argument, linked to the question with the use of good and precise relevant own knowledge. In order to obtain the highest marks, you should be able to refer to different historical debate/interpretations or relevant historians' knowledge, making sure it is relevant to the question.

## Common mistakes

- When answering Paper 2 questions, try to avoid simply describing what happened – a detailed narrative, with no explicit attempts to link the knowledge to the question, will only get you half marks at most.
- Also, if the question asks you to select examples from **two** different regions, make sure you don't choose two states from the same region. Every year, some candidates do this, and so limit themselves to – at best – only 12 out of the 20 marks available.

## Simplified markscheme

Band		Marks
1	Clear analysis/argument, with very specific and relevant own knowledge, consistently and explicitly linked to the question. A balanced answer, with references to historical debate/historians, where appropriate.	17–20
2	Relevant analysis/argument, mainly clearly focused on the question, and with relevant supporting own knowledge. Factors identified and explained, but not all aspects of the question fully developed or addressed.	11–16
3	<b>EITHER</b> shows reasonable relevant own knowledge, identifying some factors, with limited focus/explanation – but <b>mainly narrative</b> in approach, with question only implicitly addressed <b>OR</b> coherent analysis/argument, but limited relevant/precise supporting own knowledge.	8–10
4	<b>Some limited/relevant</b> own knowledge, but <b>not linked effectively</b> to the question.	6–7
5	<b>Short/general</b> answer, but with very <b>little accurate/relevant knowledge and limited understanding</b> of the question.	0–5

## Student's answers

Those parts of the student's answers that follow will have brief examiner comments in the margins, as well as a longer overall comment at the end. Those parts of student's answers that are particularly strong and well-focused will be **highlighted in purple**; errors/confusions/loss of focus will be **highlighted in blue**. In this way, you should find it easier to follow why marks were – or were not – awarded.

## Question 1

Assess the methods used by one leader of a single-party state to ensure that opposition to his rule was ineffective. [20 marks]

### Skill

Analysis/argument/assessment

### Examiner's tip

Look carefully at the wording of this question, which asks for an **assessment** of **methods** used in curbing opposition. This will involve consideration of the most/least important or most/least effective methods and does not require a detailed description of 'opposition' in itself.



## Student answer

Adolf Hitler was the ruler of a single-party state who was able to ensure that opposition to his rule was ineffective. *He did this through a mixture of legal and illegal actions, policy decisions, propaganda and terror.* As a result no individual or group opposed to his rule ever succeeded in removing him from power.

When Hitler came to power as chancellor of Germany in January 1933, he was faced with the task of *destroying any opposition as swiftly as possible.* At this stage he faced opposition from a number of groups, including the communists, the socialists and those within the army and on the right who regarded him as a rabble rouser and not to be trusted. *His actions in 1933 were crucial to the later ineffectiveness of opposition.* He took action against the communists following the Reichstag Fire and persuaded President Hindenburg to issue a decree whereby communists could be rounded up. *He then proceeded to* influence the elections of March 1933 and got the Enabling Act passed by intimidating the Reichstag. He pruned the civil service in April and in May destroyed the trade unions through which workers could have opposed his rule by joint strike action. *Workers were brought into a new Nazi-controlled DAF, which made opposition impossible.*

*Hitler's consolidation of power was completed by* overturning local governments and installing Nazi gauleiters, and the Night of the Long Knives of June 1934, which destroyed the power of the SA. Hindenburg's death in August 1934 enabled Hitler to assume the position of Führer and head of the armed forces, and the army took an oath of loyalty. A combination of legal methods and violence had made opposition virtually impossible.

*Preventing opposition was also the result of the policy decisions* adopted by Hitler. He brought about full employment – removing women from the workplace and setting up public works schemes *and, although this was aided by circumstance,* it brought him widespread support. Concern for jobs, sympathy with his aims – which included the destruction of the hated Treaty of Versailles – and *a traditional respect for authority,* which kept the civil service and army reasonably supportive, all played a part in weakening any opposition. *The traditional élites were won over* and, after the von Blomberg and von Fritsch affair of 1938, that included the army. Furthermore, *what opposition there had been was weak and divided,* whether between right and left, the SPD and KPD or the Protestant and Catholic branches of the Churches.

### Examiner's comment

This introduction is quite well thought through. It identifies the leader to be discussed and also itemises the range of methods the essay will examine, but it fails to provide any further comment on those methods – for example, which of them might be considered the most important.

### Examiner's comment

There is a full consideration here of the elimination of the opposition in 1933–34 and for the most part this succeeds in avoiding too much listing and descriptive writing. However, it is best to avoid 'then' in essays and the second of these two paragraphs would have been more effective had it begun with a reference to the question and more comment provided on the significance of the events mentioned.

### Examiner's comment

This is an effective paragraph that looks at how economic and foreign policies helped Hitler (although it doesn't mention any others – for example, policies towards women, the Churches or youth). It has some depth of understanding in its reference to the traditional élites and the divisions among the opposition.

**Examiner's comment**

These paragraphs look at propaganda and terror, as promised in the introduction. However, the material on propaganda is not fully linked to the ineffectiveness of opposition. The second paragraph is much better and shows some detail.

**Examiner's comment**

This is an effective conclusion. It stresses the importance of terror as the main reason behind the ineffectiveness of the opposition and explains why this is felt to be so important. It also shows how this relates to the other factors discussed in the essay, although it still assumes that all of Hitler's policies were successful.

Opposition remained ineffective because of the **heavy use made of propaganda** in the Nazi state. Propaganda was **used to win loyalty** from all sections of society but particularly from the youth who were indoctrinated by the Hitler Youth movement. **Germans were fed a diet of propaganda on their radios and only saw and heard of 'German splendour' in the art galleries and concert halls.**

Finally and perhaps most importantly, **opposition was ineffective because of the security apparatus of the state.** The SS and Gestapo together with a network of informants ensured that everyone lived in fear of being found out for subversive activity and **made the co-ordination of opposition virtually impossible.** Arbitrary imprisonment, a Nazi-controlled judiciary and a concentration camp network enabled potential troublemakers to be readily identified and dealt with. This meant **opposition became largely individual and low-key** and, when individuals tried to widen their net – as in the case of General Beck in 1938, von Stauffenberg in 1944 and Sophie Scholl, a leader of the student White Rose group – they were rapidly discovered and executed as a warning to others.

Hitler's methods to ensure that opposition was ineffective were similar to those of other authoritarians. **By keeping the repressive activities of his regime reasonably unobtrusive or even secret, he was able to give the illusion of total support, which in itself acted as a curb to other potential opponents.** There is little doubt that terror, intimidation and repression were the key element in the prevention of effective opposition, but without Hitler's initial moves to consolidate his power, his propaganda and his successful policies, Hitler would probably have not been able to continue in power as easily as he did.

**Overall examiner comments**

This answer provides some good focused material on the methods used by Hitler. It is also well organised. There are a few deficiencies in the style and content as outlined in the margin comments, but overall it is a strong survey worthy of a mark at the top of Band 2 –16 marks. To improve it further, more discussion of the individual methods employed and some **mention of relevant historians/historical interpretations** would be necessary and such would secure a Band 1 mark.

**Activity**

Look again at the simplified markscheme and the student answer, and identify where it can be improved to ensure a Band 1 mark of 20. Try to provide a little more linkage and analysis as well as integrating some references to relevant historians/historical interpretations.

## Question 2

Examine and assess the methods used by Castro to maintain power between 1959 and 1996. [20 marks]

### Skill

Analysis/argument/assessment

### Examiner's tip

Look carefully at the wording of this question, which asks for the methods used by Castro to maintain his power in the period 1959–96. If high marks are to be achieved, answers will need to consider a variety of methods, and their relative success. And remember – don't just **describe** what he did.

### Student answer

Castro came to power in Cuba in 1959, at the head of a popular movement that ousted the dictator Batista, who had been supported by the USA. In order to remain in power, Castro used a *variety of different methods – some of which were more successful than others – ranging from popular social and economic policies to repressive actions.*

#### Examiner's comment

This is a brief but clear and well-focused introduction, showing a good grasp of the key requirements of the question.

For many years, Cuba had been under the political and economic influence of the USA. *This had begun after the Spanish–American War of 1898 and the Platt Amendment of 1901. In 1933, there had been a 'Sergeants' Revolt' in the Cuban army, led by Batista who, from 1934 to 1959, ruled Cuba.*

*Many Cubans came to resent the lack of democracy and the influence and power of the USA. One of those to do so was Fidel Castro who, along with his brother, Raúl, and some other supporters, launched an attack on the army barracks at Moncada on 26 July 1953. This failed, and they were imprisoned. On their release, Castro went to Mexico, where he formed his 26 July Movement, and plotted the overthrow of Batista's dictatorship.*

*In 1956, Castro and a small band of guerrillas – which included Che Guevara – landed on the coast, and set up base in the Sierra Maestra mountains. Castro then began a guerrilla war that gradually became more and more successful. In January 1959, Batista fled and Castro's 26 July Movement took over.*

#### Examiner's comment

There is lot of accurate supporting own knowledge here – unfortunately, it is entirely focused on the period **before** Castro came to power; and thus not relevant to the question.



**Examiner's comment**

This is better – though rather vague at times. This **is** focused on a method of maintaining power after 1959. Unfortunately, the end of the paragraph then slips back to the pre-1959 period, and so gains no marks at all – despite being accurate. Rather descriptive.

Once in power, Castro used different methods to stay in power. One was the use of his charisma and speeches. He was a brilliant orator and was popular because he had put himself forward as a Cuban nationalist – this was especially true after the defeat of the US-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. Since the days of Martí in the 19th century, many Cubans had wanted Cuba to become truly independent. Castro claimed later that he had fused Martí with Marx – this proved a popular claim. On average, Castro made about two speeches a week – some of which lasted hours. This became a main way of staying in power. In fact, he had also used a radio station – Radio Rebelde – before 1959: this had spread messages against Batista and had been used by Castro to proclaim his policies if he came to power.

**Examiner's comment**

Again, there is some relevant supporting own knowledge – but it is rather vague. In particular, it is a shame that more specific details of the healthcare and educational reforms are not given – for example, how educational reforms have helped poor people and women.

At first, Castro allowed moderates such as Urrutia to head the government, while he took charge of the Rebel Armed Forces. However, he soon set up an organisation of his closest friends, which began to take the most important decisions. Eventually, the moderates either resigned or were forced out, and members of the 26 July Movement or the communist PSP took over their posts.

Some of the things they then did helped Castro to stay in power – these were his social and economic policies. In particular, his healthcare and educational policies were very popular, and have been seen as his greatest achievements – such as the increase and redistribution of doctors, and the wiping out of diseases associated with poverty. These have played a key role in maintaining his power as dissatisfaction with other aspects of his rule were seen as less important than his social reforms. Castro also did much to improve the living standards of the poorer sections of Cuban society.

In addition, he has also tried to get ordinary people involved in mass organisations and movements as a way of staying in power – such as the Committees in Defence of the Revolution. Since 1976, when the constitution was changed, there have also been the many local discussions that take place on social and economic issues as part of Poder Popular, or People's Power.

At the same time, Castro has taken various steps to repress or contain any opposition that does arise. For example, in the first few months after January 1959, many of those who had acted as senior policemen and torturers under Batista were executed. This got rid of potential opponents, and led many more to emigrate to the USA. In subsequent years, Castro has encouraged others to leave – thus reducing potential opposition. However, there were some armed groups – often financed, trained and armed by the USA – who for the first few years carried out counter-revolutionary sabotage and terror against government facilities and personnel.

**Examiner's comment**

There is some accurate supporting own knowledge, clearly focused on the maintenance of power.



*In conclusion, after 1959 and the winning of power, Castro did a variety of things to ensure he remained in power. Despite some opposition, and the failure of some of his economic policies, he was able to stay in power until his health problems forced him to hand over to his brother Raúl in 2008.*

#### Examiner's comment

This is a brief but reasonably well-focused conclusion.

### Overall examiner comments

The candidate seems, in the main, to have understood the demands of the question, and there is some relevant own knowledge. However, this is often not very detailed; and there is a slight tendency to drift into narrative. One of its main weaknesses is the fact that, particularly at the beginning, there are sections that are not relevant, as they focus on the period **before** 1959 – these will not gain any marks.

The answer is good enough to be awarded Band 3, but probably only at the bottom end – 8 or 9 marks. To reach Band 1, some examination of economic policies, and those relating to control of the media, would have been useful; as would more specific details of those methods that have been identified. Also needed would be an examination of the creation of a one-party state, and the decision not to hold elections from 1959 to 1976. Finally, mention of the arguments/points of **relevant historians/historical interpretations** would be useful.

### Activity

Look again at the simplified markscheme, and the student answer above. Now try to write a few extra paragraphs to push the answer up into Band 1, and so obtain the full 20 marks. As well as making sure you address **all** aspects of the question, try to integrate some references to relevant historians/historical interpretations.

### Question 3

Compare and contrast the policies towards women and youth of two rulers of single-party states, each chosen from a different region. [20 marks]

### Skill

Analysis/argument/assessment

### Examiner's tip

Look carefully at the wording of this question, which asks for similarities **and** differences (comparing and contrasting) between the policies of **two different** rulers, each from a **different** region, towards women **and** youth. All aspects need to be addressed for high marks, so it is important to make a quick plan – ensuring two appropriate rulers are chosen and each part of the question considered. Describing the policies of each ruler in turn will score lowly. This question demands explicit analysis and comparison throughout.

**Examiner's comment**

The first sentence provides a direct start that clearly identifies the rulers to be considered and shows an understanding of the question. However, the introduction does not go on to set out a view or argument to be maintained and the last sentence **is** unnecessary.

**Student answer**

*Mao Zedong and Adolf Hitler were rulers of apparently contrasting left- and right-wing single-party states in two very different regions. It might therefore be expected that their policies towards women and the youth would be very different. They do, however, have a surprising number of similarities, although there are also a number of differences. In this essay I will look first at Hitler and Mao's policies towards women and then at their policies towards the youth.*

The main similarity between the policies of Hitler and Mao is that **both regarded women as having a major role within the state**. Propaganda was specifically directed towards them and in both regimes women were given a specific role alongside men that **differed from the role they held in the previous regime**. Both also emphasised the need for **women to bear children for the state** and to bring them up immersed in the ideology of their country. Their task was to ensure that children attended schools and youth groups, and were correctly instructed. *In Nazi Germany there was even talk of bearing a child for the Führer.*

However, although both Mao and Hitler sought to change women's roles, for Hitler this followed a policy of **reaction against the former liberal views of the Weimar Republic**, whereby women played an active role in politics and public affairs **towards a more traditional outlook**, which placed women in the home, concerned only with domestic duties. In the peacetime Nazi years, **women were discouraged from undertaking professional or factory work** and even in wartime this was only permitted with reluctance. Women were **expected to be child bearers with large families** and there was even a system of medals to reward fecundity.

On the other hand, Mao reacted against a system that had made women second-class citizens. In Maoist China, **women were given full civil rights including the right of property owning, with legislation outlawing arranged marriages**. They were expected to play a role in **party committees** (although few reached the higher echelons of the party) and to **work alongside men in the factories and mines. This made life very hard for women, who often had to combine their roles as mothers and workers**. Few concessions were made for pregnancy and, from a few weeks old, children were placed in crèches and nurseries, the mother's task complete. Although births were encouraged in the early years to build communist support, these were increasingly discouraged once Mao was established in power.

**Examiner's comment**

These paragraphs are well structured and show good understanding in their consideration of similarity and difference. There are two incidences of extraneous detail creeping in and it is a shame that there are no specific examples to exemplify the Nazi policies or dates to accompany the mention of Maoist legislation.



With regard to policies towards youth, there were also important similarities. Both Mao and Hitler were aware that *young people needed to be made 'ideologically aware'* to ensure the continuation of their regimes. Both thus placed an emphasis on *state-controlled education*, with a restricted curriculum, censored materials and a *heavily vetted teaching profession*. They *discouraged intellectualism* and study for its own sake, seeing all education as developing idealism, patriotism and support for the values of the state. They also built up *youth movements* and saw these as an initial training ground for their powerful armies. *Millions joined the Hitler Youth but it was probably the adventurous activities and comradeship that were the main draw.*

Whilst Hitler built on the traditional system of schooling in Germany, supplementing it *with a few extra Nazi-inspired schools*, Mao built a *whole new educational system*. He *encouraged practical activities* – even involving children in making things, as well as undertaking factory visits and sending young people for spells in the countryside. Although there were a few incidents of pupils reporting their non-ideologically pure teachers in Nazi Germany, this was far more widespread in communist China. Mao deliberately *encouraged the Chinese youth to reject the older generation, ignore and shame 'bourgeois' teachers* and, with the coming of the Cultural Revolution, to take the future into their own hands.

There was nothing in Nazi Germany to resemble the mayhem created when *bands of Chinese youth, known as Red Guards, took to the streets, ransacked homes and caused near anarchy*. Indeed, it was to prevent such activity that *Hitler turned on the rabble-rousing youth of the SA in the Night of the Long Knives in 1934*. *Personal challenges and achievement* were important in encouraging youth to meet Hitler's goals once he was in power and *discipline* through military drill in the ranks of the Hitler Youth was crucial. Mao's youth, however, were expected to lead the way *in rejecting the old or established* and thus played a very different role.

There are clearly a number of similarities to be discerned in the policies of Hitler and Mao towards women and youth, but the differences are probably more striking, especially in the former's case.

#### Examiner's comment

These paragraphs again address the similarities and differences with clarity and control showing some depth of understanding. There could sometimes be more specific references to policies, however, and the sections indicated in blue are either unnecessary or too general and unsupported.

#### Examiner's comment

This is a disappointing conclusion that makes a comment but fails to substantiate it. Its length might indicate a lack of time but it is crucial to show an overall awareness at the end of an answer and provide some sensible judgement.

### Overall examiner's comments

This answer is very well focused, and well planned to cover all the issues that the question demands. It contains a good deal of analysis and avoids passages of description. However, it is rather thin on precise supporting detail and lacks the 'very specific and relevant own knowledge' that would be necessary for Band 1. Furthermore, it makes no reference to historical views. Some consideration of Hitler's policy of *Volksgemeinschaft* for example, or of the conflict between practical needs and Maoist ideology, could have been included and shown some higher level understanding. The answer is therefore worthy of Band 2 – although not quite at the top because of the limitations of the factual evidence – 15 marks.

### Activity

Look back over the material you have studied on both Hitler and Mao and select a number of relevant examples that could be used to provide supporting detail in this response. Re-read the simplified markscheme and consider where you might be able to refer to historiography and/or historical debate as required for Band 1. When you have gathered the necessary material rewrite the answer so that it would be worthy of the full 20 marks. Don't forget that the best essays state their argument in the introduction, sustain it throughout the answer and reach a clear and well-supported conclusion.

## Further information

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## Index

100 flowers campaign, China 137, 140  
26 July Movement, Cuba 169, 171, 177

abortion 51, 100, 207

agriculture

- in China 135, 146–7, 151–2
- in Cuba 198, 200–1, 202–3, 204–6
- in Germany 66, 92–3
- in Russia 20, 43, 45–7, 49–50

Anschluss 65, 87, 95

anti-rightist campaign, China 137, 140, 141

anti-Semitism 10, 11

- in Germany 74, 75, 78, 82, 102, 105
- in Russia 55, 56

arts, the

- in China 135, 158
- in Cuba 211
- in Germany 108–9
- in Russia 58

Aryanism 74, 76, 105, 108

asocials, Germany 103

Auténticos, Cuba 167, 168

authoritarian, definition of 5

authoritarian dictatorships 11–12

Baptists 53

Batista, Fulgencio (1901–73) 167, 168–9, 172, 173

Bay of Pigs (1961) 180

Beer Hall Putsch (1923), Germany 66, 67

Beria, Lavrenti (1899–1953) 37

biological outsiders, Germany 103–5

black people, treatment of in Cuba 208–9

Blitzkrieg, definition of 97

Bolsheviks 14, 15, 22, 25, 28, 39

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich (1906–45) 88

Brezhnev, Leonid 201

Brüning, Heinrich 69, 71

Buddhism 53, 157

Bukharin, Nikolai (1888–1938) 16, 20, 21, 34, 36, 45

Bush, George W. 192

capitalism 15, 27

Caracas Pact (1958) 177

Castro, Fidel (b. 1926) 168, 194–5

Bay of Pigs (1961) 180

and the communist party 189–90

consolidation of power 187–95

Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) 180

early influences 178

economic policies 197–206

forms the 26 July Movement 169

'History will absolve me' speech 169, 176

ideology 176–82

manifestos 176–7

and mass organisations 190, 193

opposition to 188–9, 192

overthrows Batista 172–4

preparing for revolution 169–72

rectification campaign 190–1, 201

rise to power 168–74

social policies 206–11

'Special Period in Time of Peace' 192, 202–4, 205–6

Castro, Raúl (b. 1931) 177, 195, 209

Catholic Church 106–7, 157, 210

CCP (Chinese Communist Party) 117–23, 133, 136, 137

CDRs (Committees for the Defence of the Revolution) 193–4

censorship

in China 137, 158

in Cuba 211

in Germany 85, 108

in Russia 40, 58

Central Committee, Russia 17, 19, 20, 29, 31, 34

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) 178, 180

children *see also* education; families

in concentration camps 103

euthanasia programme 103

infanticide 153

propaganda aimed at 40

at work 149, 154

youth organisations 40, 57, 87, 101–2, 134, 155–7

China

the 100 flowers campaign 137, 140

agriculture 135, 146–7, 151–2

anti-rightist campaign 137, 140, 141

becomes a republic 117

censorship 137, 158

civil war 120–1

collectivisation 146, 147

constitution 132–3, 138, 140

the Cultural Revolution 130, 138

culture 135, 158

economic policies 128, 145–52

education 128, 154–5

ethnic minorities 134

food shortages 128, 142, 151–2

the Great Leap Forward 128, 137, 148–9

historians on 146, 147

ideology 126–7

industry 128, 148–51, 150–2

the Japanese in 117, 120–1

and the Korean War 133, 135

labour camps 137, 140, 141, 142

the legal system 140–1

living standards 134–5

the Long March (1935) 119–20

Mao becomes ruler 121–3

Mao's rise to power 117–23

mass mobilisation campaigns 135–6

the nature of the state 128–30

propaganda 129, 135, 138–9

Red Army 118–23

Red Guards 129, 138, 152, 155, 156, 157

religion 135, 157

repression methods 140

role of women in 152–4

Russian involvement in 148, 151

social policies 134–5, 152–8

US involvement in 121

the Yan'an Soviet 120

Chinese Communist Party (CCP) 117–23, 133, 136, 137

Christianity

in China 135, 157

in Cuba 210

in Germany 106–8

in Russia 53

CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) 178, 180

cinema *see* films

civil war

in China 120–1

in Cuba 189

in Russia 14–15

co-operative farming 146–7, 198

Cold War 51

collectivisation

in China 146, 147

in Russia 34, 44, 46–7, 49–50

Comintern 18, 117

Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) 193–4

communes, China 147, 149, 152, 153

communism 8, 9–10, 176

Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) 185, 188, 189–90, 192, 193

concentration camps 82, 85, 93, 95, 103, 104, 105

Confucianism 126, 157

Congress, Russia 17, 29, 34–5

constitution

in China 132–3, 138, 140

in Cuba 167, 176, 184, 190

Cuba

26 July Movement 169, 171, 177

agriculture 198, 200–1, 202–3

Bay of Pigs (1961) 180

Castro's manifestos 176–7

Castro's rise to power 168–74

CDRs (Committees for the Defence of the Revolution) 193–4

censorship 211

civil war 189

Communist Party of Cuba (CPP) 185, 188, 189–90, 192, 193

consolidation of Castro's power 187–95

constitution 167, 176, 184, 190

Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) 180

*cubiana* 177

and democracy 182–4

economic policies 173, 179, 182, 190–1, 197–206

education 208, 210–11

elections 184–5

emigration and exile 194

historians on 173, 189, 193

ideology 176–82

independence 165

industry 198–200, 201–2, 203–4, 205, 206

mass organisations in 190, 193

the media in 211

nature of the state 182–5

opposition in 188–9, 192

rectification campaign 190–1, 201

religion 210

revolutions in 166–7, 172

role of women in 167, 207–8

Russian involvement in 178, 180, 182, 200, 201–2

- same-sex relationships in 208, 209  
 social policies 206–11  
 tourism 204  
 the treatment of black people 208–9  
 unemployment 173, 198  
 US involvement in 165–7, 172, 173–4, 178–80, 189, 192, 198, 204  
 the Varela Project 192–3  
 Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) 180  
*cubiana* 177  
 Cultural Revolution, China 130, 138  
 culture  
   in China 135, 158  
   in Germany 85, 108–9  
   in Russia 58
- DAF (German Labour Front) 82  
 Darwin, Charles (1809–82) 75  
 Dawes Plan (1924) 66  
 democratic centralism 9, 27  
 Deng Xiaoping (1904–97) 128, 137, 138, 152, 157  
 dictatorships 11–12, 29  
 divorce  
   in China 153, 154  
   in Cuba 207  
   in Russia 51  
 ‘Doctors’ Plot’ (1953) 32  
 domestic policies  
   in China 145–58  
   in Cuba 197–211  
   in Germany 91–109  
   in Russia 41–58
- Ebert, Friedrich (1871–1925) 64  
 economic policies  
   in China 128, 145–52  
   in Cuba 173, 179, 182, 190–1, 197–206  
   in Germany 66, 92–9  
   in Russia 15, 17, 19, 22, 42–51  
 Edelweiss Pirates, Germany 87, 102  
 education  
   in China 128, 154–5  
   in Cuba 208, 210–11  
   in Germany 102  
   in Russia 40, 49, 51, 56–7  
 Eisenhower, Dwight D. 178, 180  
 emigration, Cuba 194  
 Enabling Act (1933), Germany 72  
 Engels, Friedrich (1820–95) 9, 25, 27  
 Enlightened Communist Youth, Russia 57  
 Espin, Vilma (1930–2007) 208  
 ethnic minorities  
   in China 134  
   in Cuba 208–9  
   in Germany 103–5  
   in Russia 54–5  
 euthanasia, Germany 103  
 executions  
   in China 135, 141, 142  
   in Cuba 172, 187, 191  
   in Germany 85, 87  
   in Russia 37, 56  
 exile, Cuba 194  
 Ezhov, Nikolai (1895–1940) 36, 37  
*Ezhovshchina* 36
- families  
   co-operative farming 146–7  
   equality in the home 208  
   standard of living, in China 134–5  
   standard of living, in Cuba 206  
   standard of living, in Russia 49  
   undermining of 154  
 Family Code, Russia (1926) 51  
 family planning *see* contraception  
 famine *see* food shortages  
 fascism 8, 10–11  
 Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) 208, 209  
 Fernández, José Ramón (b. 1923) 211  
 films  
   Chinese propaganda in 139, 158  
   German propaganda in 85  
   ‘five revolutionary laws’, Cuba 169  
   Five-Year Plans, Russia 42–5  
   FMC (Federation of Cuban Women) 208  
   food shortages  
     in China 128, 142, 151–2  
     in Russia 20, 44, 45, 46–7, 49  
   foot binding, China 152, 153  
   Four Cleanups Campaign, China 128  
   Four-Year Plan, Germany 97  
   Freikorps, Germany 66  
   *Führerprinzip* 68, 69, 74, 75
- Gang of Four, China 138  
 Gao Gang (1905–54) 133, 136, 149  
 German Christian Movement 106  
 German Faith Movement 106–7  
 German Labour Front (DAF) 82  
 Germany  
   agriculture 66, 92–3  
   anti-Semitism 11, 74, 75, 78, 82, 102, 105  
   Beer Hall Putsch (1923) 66, 67  
   concentration camps 82, 85, 93, 95, 103, 104, 105  
   consolidation of Hitler’s power 81–3  
   culture 85, 108–9  
   economic policies 66, 92–9  
   education 102  
   elections 69–70, 71  
   ethnic minorities 103–5  
   historians on 66, 69, 85, 87, 93, 95, 97–8  
   ideology 74–9  
   industry 77, 93, 94, 97, 98–9  
   Kapp Putsch (1920) 66  
   Night of the Long Knives (1934) 82–3  
   opposition to Nazi rule 87–8  
   preparations for war 93, 95, 96–8  
   propaganda 70, 72, 83–4, 103, 108  
   reparations 65, 66  
   religion 106–8  
   the rise of Nazism 67–72  
   role of women in 74, 78, 94, 99–101  
   Second World War 82, 93, 98–9  
   social policies 99–109  
   the Spartacus League 65  
   Treaty of Versailles (1919) 64–5  
   unemployment 69, 94, 95  
   the Weimar Republic 65–72, 100, 101  
   Young Plan (1929) 68  
   youth organisations 87, 101–2
- Gestapo, Germany 82, 85  
*Gleichschaltung* 72, 78  
 GMD (Guomindang) party, China 117, 118–21, 134, 135  
 Goebbels, Paul Joseph (1897–1945) 70, 83, 108  
 Goering, Hermann (1893–1946) 82, 86, 97, 98  
 Gorbachev, Mikhail 38, 191, 192, 201  
 Gosplan, Russia 43, 44, 45  
 grain crisis, Russia 43, 45, 48  
 Great Leap Forward, China 128, 137, 148–9  
 Great Purge, Russia 35–8  
 Great Terror, Russia 36–9  
 Group of Five, China 138  
 Guevara, Ernesto ‘Che’ (1928–67) 169, 170, 173, 178, 199, 200  
 Guiteras, Antonio (1906–35) 167, 176  
 Gulag, Russia 37, 49  
 Guomindang (GMD) party, China 117, 118–21, 134, 135  
 gypsies, persecution of 104
- healthcare  
   in China 134–5  
   in Cuba 207  
   in Russia 51  
 Helm-Burton Act (1996) 192, 204  
 Himmler, Heinrich (1900–45) 82, 85, 105  
 Hindenburg, Paul von (1847–1934) 65, 70, 71, 72, 83  
 Hitler, Adolf (1889–1945) 67, 88–90  
   anti-Semitism 76, 82  
   assassination attempts 87  
   becomes chancellor 70–1  
   Beer Hall Putsch (1923) 66, 67  
   commits suicide 83  
   consolidation of power 81–8  
   early influences 76  
   economic policies 92–9  
   elections 69–70, 71  
   ethnic minorities 103–5  
   and the *Führerprinzip* 68, 69, 74, 75  
   *Gleichschaltung* 72, 78  
   historians on 69, 82, 88, 89–90  
   ideology 74–9  
   imprisonment 67  
   *Mein Kampf* 67, 76–7  
   Night of the Long Knives (1934) 82–3  
   propaganda about 83–4  
   religion 106–8  
   on the role of women 99–101  
   social policies 99–109  
   the use of repression 85  
 Hitler Youth 101–2  
 homosexuality 87, 208, 209  
 Hossbach Conference (1937) 87  
 Hüber, Ernst 85  
 hyperinflation, Germany 66
- ideology  
   Bolshevism 22  
   communism 8, 9–10, 176  
   definition of 5  
   fascism 8, 10–11  
   Fidel Castro’s 176–82

- Leninism 9, 27–8, 39, 181  
 Maoism 126–7  
 Marxism 9–10, 25, 26, 27, 29, 126  
 Marxism–Leninism 10, 26, 28–9, 126, 181  
 nationalism 10, 11, 30, 54–5, 58, 64, 77, 177–8  
 Nazism 69, 74–9  
 Stalinism 10, 25–6, 28–9  
 Trotskyism 10, 25–6, 27–9  
 ultra-nationalism 10, 11
- industry  
   in China 128, 148–51, 150–2  
   in Cuba 198–200, 201–2, 203–4, 204, 205, 206  
   in Germany 77, 93, 94, 97, 98–9  
   in Russia 20, 25, 43–5, 48–51
- Integrated Revolutionary Organisations (ORI), Cuba 189
- internationalism 25, 27, 28
- Islam *see* Muslims
- Jews  
   anti-Semitism 10, 55, 56, 74, 75, 76, 78, 82, 102, 105  
   concentration camps 82, 93, 95, 105  
   Zionism 55–6
- Jiang Jieshi (1887–1975) 117, 118, 119, 120–1, 122
- Jiang Qing (1912–91) 138, 158
- Joven Cuba* (Young Cuba) 167
- Kamenev, Lev (1883–1936) 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 34, 36
- Kapp Putsch (1920) 66
- Kennedy, John F. 180
- Khrushchev, Nikita 151, 180
- Kirov, Sergei (1888–1934) 17, 35
- kolkhozes, Russia 46, 50
- Komsomol 40, 57
- Korean War (1950–53) 133, 135
- Kreisau Circle, Germany 88
- Kronstadt Rising (1921) 14, 15
- Krupp, Alfred 93
- kulaks, Russia 22, 38, 43, 45, 46, 49
- labour camps  
   in China 137, 140, 141, 142  
   in Russia 37, 49
- land reform  
   in China 119, 120, 135, 146–7  
   in Cuba 198
- Länder governments, Germany 81, 82
- Lebensborn* (Spring of Life) project, Germany 100
- Lebensraum* (living space), Germany 74, 77, 86
- Left Opposition, Russia 17, 20
- Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich (1870–1924) 9, 15–16, 21, 26, 39, 181
- ‘Leningrad Affair’ (1949) 32
- Leninism 9–10, 27–8, 39, 181
- Lin Biao (1908–1971) 123, 137, 138, 157, 158
- literature  
   in China 135, 158
- in Russia 58
- Little Red Book (Mao Zedong) 125, 139, 158
- Liu Shaoqi (1898–1969) 128, 137, 138
- Lushan Conference (1959) 137
- Manchuria, the Japanese in 121
- Mao Zedong (1893–1976) 121  
   becomes ruler 121–3  
   campaign against the warlords 117  
   consolidation of power 134–42  
   disappears from public life 137  
   early influences 126  
   economic policies 145–52  
   formation of government 132–4  
   forms the Red Army 118–19  
   historians on 129, 140, 141–2  
   ideology 126–7  
   leadership 128–30  
   the Long March 119  
   mass mobilisations and purges 135–6  
   *On New Democracy* 127  
   propaganda 139  
   rise to power 117–23  
   social policies 134–5, 152–8  
   writings 127  
   the Yan’an Soviet 120
- marriage loans, Germany 100
- marriages  
   in China 152, 153, 154  
   in Germany 100, 104  
   in Russia 51
- Martí, José (1853–95) 165, 176
- Marx, Karl (1818–83) 9, 25, 183
- Marxism 9, 27, 29, 126
- Marxism–Leninism 10, 27, 26, 28–9, 126, 181
- mass mobilisations, China 126, 135–6
- Matthews, Herbert (1900–77) 171, 181
- media  
   in China 139, 158  
   in Cuba 211  
   in Germany 88  
   in Russia 40, 58
- medical experiments, Germany 104
- Mein Kampf* (Hitler) 67, 76–7
- Mengele, Dr Josef 104
- Mensheviks 15
- Mingrelian Case (1951) 32
- Molotov, Vyacheslav (1890–1986) 45
- Moncada attack, Cuba 168–9
- Müller, Ludwig (1883–1946) 106
- Munich Putsch *see* Beer Hall Putsch
- music 109, 158
- Muslims 51, 53, 157
- Mussolini, Benito (1883–1945) 11, 67
- nationalism 10, 11, 30, 54–5, 58, 64, 77, 177–8
- Nazi Party *see* Germany
- Nazi–Soviet Pact (1939) 98
- Nazism 11  
   ideology 69, 74–9  
   rise of 67–72
- nepmen, Russia 22, 43
- New Economic Policy (NEP), Russia 15, 17, 19, 20, 22, 42–3, 45
- Niemöller, Martin (1892–1984) 106
- Night of the Broken Glass (1938) 105
- Night of the Long Knives (1934) 82–3
- NKVD (People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs) 35, 36, 37, 39
- Nuremberg Laws 104, 105
- Nuremberg Trials 86, 93, 94, 98
- Ochoa, Arnaldo (1930–89) 191
- On New Democracy* (Mao Zedong) 127
- organopónicos*, Cuba 205, 206
- Orthodox Church 53
- Ortodoxos, Cuba 167, 171
- paganism 107–8
- País, Frank (1930–57) 171
- Papen, Franz von 69, 70, 71, 83
- Paris Commune (1871) 29
- Partido Socialista Popular* (PSP), Cuba 167
- party cadres, China 134, 135, 139, 146, 149
- passive resistance, Germany 66
- Pastor’s Emergency League, Germany 106
- PCC (Communist Party of Cuba) 185, 188, 189–90, 192, 193
- Peng Dehuai (1898–1974) 137, 151
- Peng Zhen 138, 158
- People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD), Russia 35, 36, 37, 39
- People’s Liberation Army (PLA), China 121–2
- ‘permanent revolution’ ideology 9, 25–6, 27
- Perón, Juan 178
- PLA (People’s Liberation Army), China 121–2
- Platt Amendment (1901) 166, 167
- Poder Popular* (People’s Power), Cuba 184, 185, 192
- Politburo  
   in China 133, 134  
   in Cuba 191  
   in Russia 16, 17, 29, 31, 34
- population growth  
   in China 148, 154  
   in Russia 51
- Pravda* 20, 25, 40
- propaganda  
   in China 129, 135, 138–9  
   in Cuba 176  
   in Germany 70, 72, 83–4, 103, 108  
   in Russia 40
- Protestant Church 106–7, 157, 210
- PSP (*Partido Socialista Popular*), Cuba 167
- purges  
   in China 136, 137  
   in Cuba 192  
   in Germany 82–3  
   in Russia 34–8, 45
- racial equality 208–9
- racial supremacy 74–5, 76
- racism 10, 55–6
- RAD (Reich Labour Service) 94
- radio, propaganda on 84–5, 139
- Rao Shushi (1903–75) 136
- rearmament, Germany 93, 95, 96–8



- Red Army, China 118–23  
 Red Army, Russia 37  
 Red Guards, China 129, 138, 152, 155, 156, 157  
 Reich Food Estate 92  
 Reich Labour Service (RAD) 94  
 religion  
   in China 135, 157  
   in Cuba 210  
   in Germany 106–8  
   in Russia 51, 52–3  
 reparations, Germany 65, 66  
 revolutions  
   in China 116  
   in Cuba 166–7, 172  
   in Russia 9, 14, 21, 25  
 RSDLP (Russian Social Democratic Labour Party) 14  
 Russia  
   agriculture 20, 43, 45–7, 49–50  
   civil war in 14–15  
   the Cold War 51  
   collectivisation 34, 44, 46–7, 49–50  
   culture 58  
   ‘Doctors’ Plot’ (1953) 32  
   economic policies 42–51  
   education 40, 49, 51, 56–7  
   the effects of the Second World War 50  
   ethnic minorities 54–5  
   Five-Year Plans 42–45  
   food shortages 20, 44, 45, 46–7, 49  
   forced-labour camps 37, 49  
   the Great Purge and Great Terror 35–9  
   historians on 12, 21–3, 26, 30, 38–9, 48–50  
   ideology 25–9  
   industry 20, 25, 43–5, 48–51  
   involvement in China 148, 151  
   involvement in Cuba 178, 180, 182, 200, 201–2  
   Kronstadt Rising (1921) 14, 15  
   the Left Opposition 17, 20  
   ‘Leningrad Affair’ (1949) 32  
   Mingrelian Case (1951) 32  
   nature of the state 29–32  
   New Economic Policy (NEP) 15, 17, 19, 20, 22, 42–3, 45  
   the power struggle 17–23  
   propaganda 40  
   purges 34–8, 45  
   religion 51, 52–3  
   revolution in 9, 14, 21, 25  
   role of women in 49, 51–2  
   show trials 35, 36–7  
   social policies 51–8  
   the Stakhanovite movement 44  
   the triumvirate 16, 17  
   unemployment 43, 49  
 Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) 14  
 Ryutin, Martemyan 34  
 Schacht, Hjalmar (1877–1970) 94, 96  
 Schleicher, Kurt von 69, 70, 71, 83  
 SDEP (System of Direction and Planning of the Economy), Cuba 191, 201  
 Second World War (1939–45)  
   concentration camps 85, 93, 95  
   the effect on Russia 50  
   German industry during 93  
   German economy during 98–9  
   Germany in 82  
   Germany invades Russia (1941) 45, 56  
   Nuremberg Trials 86, 93, 94, 98  
   Russia in 31  
 secret police  
   in Germany 82, 85  
   in Russia 35, 37  
 sexual equality 51–2, 100, 101, 167, 208  
 show trials, Russia 35, 36–7  
 smychka 42  
 Social Democratic Party (SPD), Germany 70, 81, 87  
 social policies  
   in China 134–5, 152–8  
   in Cuba 206–11  
   in Germany 99–109  
   in Russia 51–8  
 Social Revolutionaries, Russia 15  
 socialism 181, 182  
 ‘socialism in one country’ ideology 25–6, 27, 28  
 Socialist Education Movement, China 128, 137  
 Spartacus League, the 65  
 SPD (Social Democratic Party), Germany 70, 81, 87  
 ‘Special Period in Time of Peace’, Cuba 192, 202–4, 205–6  
 Speer, Albert (1905–81) 88, 98–9  
 Stakhanovite movement, the 44, 52  
 Stalin, Joseph (1880–1953) 10, 14, 121  
   agriculture 45–7  
   becomes ‘Generalissimo’ 31, 40  
   Castro and 182  
   consolidation of power 33–40  
   ‘cult of personality’ 30, 31, 40  
   death of 32  
   economic policies 42–51  
   historians on 21–3, 55  
   ideology 25–6, 28–9  
   the nature of the state 29–32  
   purges 34–8  
   rise to power 16, 17–23  
   show trials 35, 36–7  
   social policies 51–8  
 Stalinism 10, 25–6, 28–9  
 Strasser, Gregor 70, 83  
 struggle sessions, China 135  
 student rallies 137, 167  
 Sun Yat Sen (1866–1925) 116–17  
 Swing Movement, Germany 87, 102  
 System of Direction and Planning of the Economy (SDEP), Cuba 191, 201  
 Taiwan 123, 134, 137  
 Tibet 134, 151, 157  
 Torricelli Act (1992) 192, 204  
 totalitarian dictatorships, definition of 12  
 totalitarian theory, Russia 30, 38–9  
 tourism, in Cuba 204  
 trade unions *see* unions  
 Treaty of Versailles (1919) 64–5, 117  
 triumvirate, Russia 16, 17  
 Trotsky, Leon (1879–1940) 10, 17, 21, 39  
   expelled from Soviet Russia 20  
   expelled from the Communist Party 19  
   forms the United Opposition 18  
   and the Great Terror 38  
   ideology 10, 25–6, 27–9  
   rise in the party 16  
   on Stalin’s rise 22–3  
   triumvir’s campaign against 17  
 ultra-nationalism, definition of 10  
 unemployment  
   in Cuba 173, 198  
   in Germany 69, 94, 95  
   in Russia 43, 49  
 uninterrupted week, Russia 49, 53  
 unions  
   in Cuba 190, 193  
   in Germany 82, 95  
 United Opposition, Russia 18–19  
 Urrutia, Manuel 178, 183, 187  
 USA  
   involvement in China 121  
   involvement in Cuba 165–7, 172, 173–4, 178–80, 189, 192, 197, 198, 204  
   in the Korean War 133, 135  
 Varela Project, Cuba 192–3  
 Vesenkha, Russia 43  
 Volksgemeinschaft (community), Germany 74, 78  
 voluntarism, definition of 126  
 Wagner, Richard 75, 109  
 Wall Street Crash (1929) 66  
 warlords, China 117  
 Weimar Republic, Germany 65–72, 101, 108  
 White Rose group, Germany 87  
 Wilhelm II, Kaiser 64, 75  
 women  
   abortion 51, 100, 207  
   arranged marriages 153, 154  
   contraception 51, 100, 207  
   equality in the home 208  
   foot binding 152, 153  
   role in China 152–4  
   role in Cuba 167, 207–8  
   role in Germany 74, 78, 94, 99–101  
   role in Russia 49, 51–2  
   in the workplace 49, 51–2, 94, 100–1, 153–4, 207–8  
 Yagoda, Genrihk (1891–1938) 35, 36  
 Young Plan (1929), Germany 68  
 youth organisations  
   in China 134, 155–7  
   in Germany 87, 101–2  
   in Russia 40, 57  
 Zhdanov, Andrei (1896–1948) 32  
 Zhou Enlai (1898–1976) 123, 133, 138, 152  
 Zhukov, Georgi (1896–1974) 31  
 Zinoviev, Grigori (1883–1936) 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 34, 35, 36

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