

# MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

DEPARTMENTS OF HISTORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

---

## SOVIET POLITICS AND SOCIETY, 1917-1991

17.57J/21H.467J

Spring 2003

Mondays and Thursdays, 1-2:30pm

Prof. David Woodruff

Prof. Elizabeth Wood

At its greatest extent the former Soviet Union encompassed a geographical area that covered one-sixth of the Earth's landmass. It spanned 11 time zones and contained over 100 distinct nationalities, 22 of which numbered over one million in population. In the 74 years from the October Revolution in 1917 to the fall of Communism in 1991, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, its leaders and its people, had to face a number of difficult challenges: the overthrow the Tsarist autocracy, the establishment of a new state, four years of civil war, a famine, transition to a mixed economy, political strife after Lenin's death, industrialization, collectivization, a second famine, political Show Trials, World War II, post-war reconstruction and repression, the "Thaw" after Stalin's death, Khrushchev's experimentation, and Brezhnev's decline. Each of these challenges engendered new solutions and modifications in what can be loosely called the evolving "Soviet system."

### Assignments and Grading

Students will be asked to write three papers over the course of the semester, totaling twenty pages in length. Grading in the course will be determined as follows: 15% for attendance and participation; 60% for the three papers (20% each); and 25% for the final examination.

Grades are assigned as letters and then combined using the above weights and following numerical equivalents: A+=4.3, A=4, A-=3.7, B+=3.3, B=3, etc.

Participation grading will not be highly differentiated. Regular attendance guarantees a B, infrequent participation – a B+. Any student who participates regularly will receive an A-; thought-provoking participation will earn an A or A+.

Standards for grading the papers are as follows:

A Excellent thesis, excellent execution

A- Interesting to excellent thesis, good to excellent execution

B+ A good thesis, good execution

B Summary of others' thoughts (no original thesis!)

B- Poor summary of others' thoughts  
C+ and below Increasingly inadequate thought and effort

**Texts Recommended for Purchase (at the MIT Bookstore)**

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 1994)

Richard Sakwa, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union, 1917-1991* (Routledge, 1999)

Gennady Khomiakov-Andreev, *Bitter Waters: Life and Work in Stalin's Russia* (Westview Press, 1998)

Victor Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens* (Penguin USA, 2003)

**Sourcepack:**

Remaining materials for the course come from a sourcepack, on reserve in three copies in the Humanities library. You may want to make a copy for your own purposes. Materials from the sourcepack are indicated below with a \*.

Week 1.

**Feb. 5- Introduction to the Course**

Week 2.

**Feb. 10- The Setting: Tsarism (66 pages)**

Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, pp. 15-23, 31-39

*Workers and War*

\*"Father Gapon's Petition," pp. 96-99

\*"Memorandum to Nicholas II," pp. 476-478

\*Leon Trotsky, "Peculiarities of Russia Development," *The Russian Revolution*, pp. 1-10 (as marked)

*The Peasantry*

\*Frank, "Popular Justice," pp.239-265

\*Peter Stolypin, "We Need a Great Russia," pp. 457-464 (as marked)

*The National Question*

\*Richard Pipes, "The National Problem in Russia," *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, pp. 1-8

## **Feb. 12- The Revolutionary Tradition (45 pages)**

Fitzpatrick, pp. 23-31

### *Revolutionary Theory I: General*

\*Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, pp. 13-33

\*Daniels: pp. 23-25 (Trotsky on "Permanent Revolution")

### *Revolutionary Theory II: Bolsheviks vs. Mensheviks*

\*Daniels: pp. 6-17 (Lenin's Theory of the Party, Lenin on the Party Split, Marxist

Reactions to Lenin)

\*Pavel Axelrod, "The Unification of Russian Social Democracy and Its Tasks," pp. 48-52

### *The National Question*

Sakwa: 1.17 ("The Right of Nations to Self-Determination")

Week 3.

## **Feb. 17 - No Class-President's Day**

## **Feb. 19- The Revolutions of 1917 (64 pages)**

Fitzpatrick, pp. 40-67

### *Revolution and War*

Sakwa: 2.1-2.3 (Order No. 1, April Theses, Lenin on the Imperialist War)

### *The Grain Crisis*

\*Documents from *The Provisional Government: 1917*

### *Dual Power*

\*Sunny: pp. 35-38 (A.F. Kerenskii's Statement..., Iraklii Tsereteli's Speech...)

\*Daniels: pp. 44-47 (Lenin on the Dual Power)

\*Sunny: pp. 41-43 (Tsereteli and Lenin's Exchange of Words...)

\*Daniels: pp. 57-59 (The Military-Revolutionary Committee)

### *On Seizing Power*

Sakwa: 2.9-2.11, 2.13 (Lenin: For, Kamenev and Zinoviev: Against)

\*Sunny: pp. 45-47 (Letter to Central Committee...)

### *Victory*

Sakwa: 2.16-2.18, 2.23 (Victory Address, *Izvestiya's* Condemnation, Decrees on Peace and Land, and Bogdanov's Criticism)

*Revolution from Below*

\*Sunny: pp. 43-45 (Report to Commissar)

\*Steve A. Smith, "Petrograd in 1917: the view from below," pp. 63-64

Week 4.

**Feb. 24-- The Civil War (71 pages)**

Fitzpatrick, pp. 68-92

*Eliminating Political Opposition*

\*Sunny: pp. 67-73 (Dissolution of the Constituent Assembly)

*Withdrawing from War*

Sakwa: 3.6-3.7

*Running a State, Fighting a War*

\*Orlando Figes, pp. 1-6, 246-249, 271-273

\*Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary*, pp. 181-182

\*W. Bruce Lincoln, *Red Victory*, pp. 476-478

\*Leon Trotsky, "The Train," *My Life*, pp. 411-422

Sakwa: 2.11 (review), 3.1, 3.8, 3.10, 3.18 (Secret Police, Red Army, State Capitalism, Terror)

*Red Opposition*

\*Sunny: pp. 77-82 (Iulii Martov's Letter...)

Sakwa: 3.9, 3.11-3.12, 3.19 (Workers' Control, Left Communists, Democratic Centralists)

**Feb. 26- The Crisis of War Communism & the Shift to NEP (60 pages)**

Fitzpatrick, pp. 93-106

\*Paul Avrich, "The Crisis of War Communism," *Kronstadt 1921*, pp. 7-34

*The Opposition Suppressed*

Sakwa: 3.22-3.25, 3.27-3.28 (Party Reform, Workers' Opposition, Kronstadt, Bureaucratism, Ban on Factions, Trade Union Debate)

*The Shift to NEP*

\*Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Lenin Anthology*, pp. 511-517 (Importance of Gold Now and After...)

Week 5

**March 3- Defining Bolshevism (60 pages)**

\*Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Bolsheviks' Dilemma: The Class Issue in Party Politics and Culture," *The Cultural Front*, pp. 16-36

\*A. A. Solts, "Communist Ethics," pp. 42-54

\*Elizabeth Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade*, pp. 123-26, 147-53, 194-208

*Renewed Opposition and its Demise*

Sakwa: 4.7-4.8, 4.18-4.20, 4.22 (Declaration of the Twenty-Two, Workers' Truth, Declaration of the Forty-Six, the New Course, Stalin on Dictatorship)

\*Sunny: pp. 124-126 (Bukharin and Dzerzhinskii Disagree..., Letter from Nikolai Bukharin..., Letter from Dzerezhinskii)

*The Lenin Cult*

\*Sunny: pp. 126-128 (Joseph Stalin, "The October Revolution...")

## **March 5- First paper due in class**

Film: "Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks"

Week 6.

## **March 10- The Politics and Economics of NEP (68 pages)**

Fitzpatrick, pp. 106-119, 124-129

\*Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR*, pp. 101-114 (also review Wood, pp. 123-126)

*Monetary Reform*

\*Vladimir Maiakovskii, "Burzhui, say goodbye to your pleasant money"

*Lenin's Last Thoughts*

Sakwa: 4.13, 4.15-4.16 (Lenin's Last Testament, Socialism in Russia, Better Fewer, But Better)

*The Party Opposition: The Left, United, and the Right*

\*Daniels: pp. 144-147 (The Zinoviev-Kamenev Opposition)

\*Daniels: pp. 151-153 (Bukharin on the United Opposition)

Sakwa: 4.27 (Bukharin Warns against Stalin)

*The Industrialization Debate: Stalin vs. Bukharin*

Sakwa: 4.24-4.25 (Socialism in One Country, Primary Socialist Accumulation)

\*Stalin, "On the Grain Crisis" and "Siberian Speech," pp. 159-162, 41-48 (as marked)

\*Daniels: pp. 162-163, 166-169 (Bukharin on Peasant Policy, Equilibrium)

*The National Question*

\*Sunny: pp. 122-124 (The Question of Nationalism....)

### **March 12- The Great Break: Collectivization & Industrialization (66 pages)**

Fitzpatrick, pp. 120-124, 129-141

*Collectivization*

\*Merle Fainsod, "Collectivization: The Method," pp. 95-106

Sakwa: 5.3-5.6 (Liquidation of Kulaks, Dizzy with Success, Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition)

*Industrialization*

\*Stephen Kotkin, "Peopling a Shock Construction Site," *Magnetic Mountain*, pp. 72-82, 86-103 (as marked)

\**Stalin's Letters to Molotov*, pp. 168-169, 175, 200-201, 209, 218-221

Sakwa: 5.7-5.8, 5.16 (Stalin on Industrialization, Against Wage Equality, *Forward, Oh Time!*)

Week 7.

### **March 17- The New Economy (65 pages)**

Gennady Khomiakov-Andreev, *Bitter Waters*, pp. 185-188, 4-13, 22-25, 39-55, 69-85, 105-122

### **March 19- Purge and Terror (65 pages)**

Fitzpatrick, pp. 163-170

\*Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin in Power*, pp. 441-478

\*"Last Plea of the Accused Bukharin," *The Great Purge Trial*, pp. 327-328, 656-668 (as marked)

Sakwa: 5.17-5.19, 5.23-5.24, 5.30, 5.32 (Ryutin Group, Congress of Victors, Kirov Murder, Purge Plenum, Show Trials, Criticisms)

Week 8.

### **March 24 & 26--Spring Break--No Classes**

Week 9.

### **March 31- World War II (79 pages)**

\*John Barber, *The Soviet Home Front*, pp. 19-44, 59-67  
Sakwa: 6.1-6.5, 6.7-6.9, 6.11-6.26, 6.28, 6.30-6.32, 6.39 (Soviet-Nazi Pact, War, Appeals to Patriotism, Mass Deportations, Victory Toast)  
Khomiaikov-Andreev, pp. 146-151, 163-171

### **April 2-- The Origins of the Cold War (74 pages)**

\*Sunny: pp.273-285 ("The Premises of Policy," from *Stalin and the Bomb*)  
*Ending World War II*  
Sakwa: 6.33-6.36

*The Rise of Rivalry*  
Sakwa: 7.2-7.5, 7.13 (Two Camps, Long Telegram, Iron Curtain, Mr. X)  
\*"The Novikov Telegram," pp. 3, 8, 12-16

*Internal Consolidation*  
Sakwa: 7.8, 7.14 (Attack on Cosmopolitanism, Preserving Peace)

*Khrushchev and Kennedy*  
\*Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, pp. 182-188, 236-74

Week 10.

### **April 7- Second paper due in class**

Film: "Cranes are Flying"

### **April 9- The Khrushchev Years: Thaw and Social Change**

\*Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, pp. 175-182

*Agrarian and Political Reform*  
\*Roy Medvedev and Zhores Medvedev, *Khrushchev*, pp. 30-45, 56-65, 94-101, 117-122  
Sakwa: 8.1-8.3, 8.4, 8.6, 8.10, 8.12 (The New Course, Virgin Lands, Secret Speech, Annuling Deportations, 1961 Party Program)

*Foreign Policy*  
Sakwa: 8.16-8.17 (Peaceful Coexistence, Imperialist Threat)

*Opposition, Dissent, and Khrushchev's Fall*  
Sakwa: 8.7, 8.15, 8.19-8.21 (Anti-Party Group, Solzhenitsyn, Khrushchev's Ouster)

Week 11

## **April 14- The Brezhnev Era: Politics and Economics**

\*Timothy Colton, "Brezhnev's Ambiguous Legacy," *The Dilemma of Reform in the Soviet Union*, pp. 6-31

\*Boris Yeltsin, *Against the Grain*, pp. 43-56, 61-82

*The Brezhnevite System and Foreign Policy*

Sakwa: 9.1-9.4 (1965 Reforms, Stagnation, Detente, Developed Socialism)

*End of the Thaw and the Rise of Dissent*

Sakwa: 9.17, 9.19 (Call for Reform, KGB Surveillance).

## **April 16- The Brezhnev Era: Social Change**

\*Timothy Colton, "What Ails the Soviet System?" *The Dilemma of Reform in the Soviet Union*, pp. 32-67

*Society*

\*Sunny: pp. 360-379 (The "New Soviet Man" turns Pessimist, The Little Deal...)

*The Andropov Years*

Sakwa: 9.32-9.35 (Continuity, Flexibility, Ideology, Novosibirsk Report)

Week 12.

## **April 21-No Class- Patriot's Day**

## **April 23-- Gorbachev's Political Revolution**

\*Michael McFaul, "Gorbachev's Design for Reforming..., The End of the Soviet Union", *Russia's Unfinished Revolution; Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin*, pp. 33-86

*Economic Reform*

Sakwa: 10.1-10.6 (Anti-Alcohol Campaign, Perestroika)

*Political Reform*

Sakwa: 10.8-10.18 (Seventieth Anniversary Speech, Nina Andreeva, Nineteenth Party Conference, Congress of People's Deputies, Abolition of the Party's Leading Role, New Political Thinking)

Week 13.

## **April 28-- Nationalism**

\*Geoffrey Hosking, "The flawed melting pot," *The Awakening of the Soviet Union*, pp. 82-88

*The Baltics and Central Asia*

\*Victor Zaslavsky, "The evolution of separatism in Soviet society under Gorbachev," pp. 71-79

*Georgia*

\*Stephen Brook, "Civil War or Ice-Cream," *Claws of the Crab*, pp. 6, 8, 17, 21-33

*Russia*

\*Roman Szporluk, "Dilemmas of Russian Nationalism," pp. 441-462

**April 30- Collapse of the Soviet Union**

\*McFaul: pp.86-117 (The End of the Soviet Union)

\*Caroline Humphrey, "'Icebergs,' barter, and the mafia in provincial Russia," pp. 8-13  
Sakwa: 10.20-10.22, 10.24-10.32, 10.37 (Sovereign Russia, Union Treaty, Referendum, August Coup, Suspension of Communist Party, Gorbachev's Resignation)

Week 14.

**May 5- New Russia Emerges, 1991-1993**

\*David Remnick, "The October Revolution," *Resurrection*, pp. 37-83

**May 7- Third paper due in class**

Week 15.

**May 12- From Yeltsin to Putin, 1993-2001**

\*Sunny: pp. 564-573 (What Russia Teaches Us Now: How Weak States Threaten Freedom)

Other Readings TBA

**May 14- Contemporary Russia**

Victor Pelevin, *Homo Zapiens*

MIT OpenCourseWare  
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

17.57J / 21H.467J Soviet Politics and Society, 1917-1991  
Spring 2003

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.