Beria’s reforms of the MVD

• Beria led the reforms to calm his rivals’ fears that he would use the MVD against them
• Beria informed the Presidium that the Gulag system was inefficient & difficult to manage → reformed:
  o March 53: amnesty for non-political prisoners → April: extended to some counter-revs
  o May: commission investigates past executions → <5k rehabilitated (forced confessions)
  o Responsibility for mining & construction passed from MVD to economic ministries
• 53→56: Gulag population: 2.4million → 1.6million

Beria’s reforms of the republics

• June 53: B introduced 2 measures to make republican gov’t more representative:
  o All senior Party officials required to speak language of the republic they worked in
  o All official publications = in republic’s language as well as Russian
• June 53 Presidium Meeting: K accuses B of crimes against the Soviet people → executed

Khrushchev’s early government reforms

• 53→56 replaced ½ regional Party secretaries & < ½ Central Committee with his own supporters
• 54: cut number of Soviet ministries from 55 → 24 in ‘anti-bureaucracy campaign’
• Increased amount of economic power exercised by the republics → industry controlled by gov’t decreased
• 55: Bulganin (K’s ally) becomes Premier

De-Stalinisation

• K & M = Leninists & critical of ‘cult of personality’ / terror → de-Stalinisation
  o Annual Stalin prizes & birthday celebrations cancelled
  o Newspapers started quoting Marx & Lenin rather than Stalin
• Feb 56: K criticises Stalin in his Secret Speech (x under-performing system)
  o Stalin = dictator (abandoned collective leadership) → made mistakes, e.g. purging Red Army before WW2 → terror = unlawful deaths of hundreds of thousands of people
  o Revealed scope of terror & Lenin’s testament
  o Conclude ideological dispute
• May 54: K & M set up commission = review cases of political prisoners in Gulags
  o 56: <½ prisoners released from Gulags

Khrushchev’s retreat from de-Stalinisation

• Hungary = students elected a new PM & ended military alliance with USSR → K crushed it
• 57: Moscow state university = protest for multi-party democracy = suppressed
• June: revised speech issued by CC
• Dec: K secretly approves commission (led by Brezhnev) to suppress anti-Communist activity
• NYE: K’s speech says all Communists were ‘Stalinists’

Democratisation & centralisation

• 57: reduces size & power of central party
• Democratisation = 54→64: Party membership = 6.9→11million (60% = workers / peasants)
  o Introduced fixed terms for senior communists = replaced regularly
• Decentralisation = abolished central economic ministries → power given to 105 economic councils
  o Moved Ministry of Agriculture away from Moscow = unpopular

The Anti-Party Group

• June 57: a majority of the Presidium voted to replace K → he says only the CC can do that
• K becomes PM to consolidate his position → shows power of leader depends on the CC
  o Also shows that senior communists wouldn’t use terror against each other anymore 😊
• 1922: Dzerzhinsky introduces Glavlit = increased censorship:
  o GPU police all publications with new professional censors
  o ALL books investigated for anti-Communist bias
    ▪ List of banned books compiled = book Gulags

Cult
• Jan 1918: first photo of Lenin published
  o Assassination attempt = described as modern day Christ
• Propaganda = simple so peasants could understand
  o Similar techniques to the Tsar / Orthodox Church
  o Focus on good / kind leader, e.g. wore a cap = man of the people
• Busts of him made during the Civil War = ‘Leader of the Revolutionary Proletariat’

4 – Media & Propaganda - Stalin

Media
• 1928: Glavlit controls access to economic data
• Restrictions put on ‘bad news’ = when published = the work of saboteurs
• Propaganda focussed on archetypal Soviet Workers
  o E.g. 1937: The Worker and the Collective Farm Woman = Socialist Realist

Cult
• Purpose:
  o Emphasise legitimacy to leadership
  o Create semi-divine figure = trusted by the people
• ‘The Myth of Two Leaders’
  o Mid-30s: Zinoviev, Kamenev, & Trotsky purged from libraries
  o Stalin & Lenin’s works rewritten
  o 38: two histories of the Communist Party published
  o CB version = Lenin & Stalin worked closely together
  o Other leaders edited out of photos with Lenin
• Continuing Lenin’s path:
  o Grigory Shegal: ‘Leader, Teacher, Friend’ = Stalin in front of bust of Lenin
  o Gustav Klutsis’ photomontages = Marx-Lenin-Stalin
• The vozhd = no legal limitations
• 1945: becomes Generalissimo = military genius, saviour of the nation
• Cult of Impersonality = Robert Service
  o Stalin personified heroic sides of the regime, NOT focussed on as an individual

4 – Media & Propaganda - Khrushchev

Media
• Magazines encouraged to publish readers’ letters BUT very negative
  o E.g. scarcity / bad quality of consumer goods
  o Rabotnitsa (the Woman Worker) = male alcoholism inequalities & domestic violence
• Didn’t suppress letters → started campaign against worthless men
  o BUT focussed on commitment to Communism = NOT real issues
  o E.g. Krokodil cartoons = men who arrived at parades drunk / late / never
• Cinema liberalised in a cultural thaw = didn’t focus on Stalin’s achievements
  o 1959: The Ballad of a Soldier = achievements of ordinary people in WW2
  o 1963: TV shows about Valentina Tereshkova
1920: Department of Agitation Propaganda created = ‘agitprop’
1918: avant-garde artist Lissitzky creates ‘Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge’
Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA) produces >100 posters in the civil war
Experimental filmmaker Vertov creates Kino-Pravda (film-truth) documentaries in the Civil War
Revolutionary filmmaker Eisenstein creates agitational films
  o E.g. 1920s: 7-part film series ‘Towards Dictatorship of the Proletariat’
  o ‘October: Ten Days That Shook The World’

Success
Oct 1920: National Congress of Proletkult votes to voluntarily merge with the Commissariat of Education
1923: Proletkult abolished = becomes subsidiary for the CofE
1920s: Party leaders use the OGPU to break up parties where Jazz was being played
  o Because it encouraged drunkenness & promiscuity

5 – Culture - Stalin

Aims of Socialist Realism
- Termination of the avant-garde & replacement with:
  o Realistic art
  o Simple literature
  o Neoclassicism
- Reflect government priorities > individual creativity

Characteristics
- Celebrating the successes of the regime & collectivisation
- 1932: The Union of Soviet Writers (USW) created = develop socialist realism
  o President = Kulik
- Always focussed on socialist issues / subject related to building communism
- Artists set targets for number of paintings produced
- 1936: Great Terror = artists purged = new ‘creative atmosphere of enthusiasm’
- Traditional musical style
- Focussed on the people

Examples
- Klutsis: ‘In the Storm of the Third Year of the Five-Year Plan’
- Adlivankin: ‘Voting to Expel the Kulak from the Collective Farm’
- Vasilev: ‘They are Writing about us in Pravda’
- Shostakovich: music for ‘Maxim’s Youth’
  o Revolutionary, based off nationalistic themes (e.g. Russian folk tunes), used accordions (common instrument the people could relate to), strong traditional themes that could be sung along to

Success
- Only room for dissent = celebrating achievements of Lenin rather than Stalin
  o E.g. Vertov: ‘Three Songs about Lenin’ film trilogy
- 1941: German invasion --> relaxation in artistic ideological constraints
  o Policing for formalist deviation scaled back

5 – Culture - Khrushchev

Khrushchev’s Aims
- Forge alliance between creative intellectuals & the government
Turned church buildings into schools
• BUT no resources → failure
  o Not free / compulsory until 50s
  o Stuck to traditional teaching methods
• Choice to leave education @ 12 years old → menial labour
• 1927: schools fees abolished
  o 1928: 60% children in 1ry education
    ▪ BUT rural children unlikely to complete
    ▪ & funded locally = 97% students paid fees

Secondary
• Vocational → polytechnic schools
  o 4 hours traditional teaching
  o 4 hours factory skills workshop
  o BUT NEP = financial difficulties:
    ▪ Schools shut
    ▪ Fees introduced for most students
    ▪ Plans for school-orphanage stopped
• 25% middle class & 3% peasants finished 2ry education
• Komsomol = ‘Young Communist League’ = ages 16-28
• Young Pioneers = ages 10-15
  o Used to campaign = political & anti-religious
  o BUT infamous for drunks, promiscuity, & hooliganism

Illiteracy
• AIM = 1928: 100% literacy
• Produced 6.5million rhyme textbooks BUT more focussed on letters, not words
• Lunacharsky organised likpunkty = ‘liquidation points’
  o 6-week courses on literacy = failed because not essential to survival
• 1925-1927: adult literacy = 86→96%

10 – Education - Stalin

Aims
• Completely eradicate illiteracy
• Foundation-level educated workforce
• 100% 8-12 year olds in 1ry education

Actions
• 1st 5-yr plan = 1ry education made compulsory
  o Blamed teachers for illiteracy
  o Cultural battalions made to fight a cultural war
• 1932-35: changes in schools to reflect values of Stalinist society
  o E.g. hard work, discipline, & traditional skills
  o Work experience in collective farms / gov’t factories
• Workers given:
  o Strict discipline (e.g. how to sit / stand)
  o Requirement of foundation-level education
• History textbooks focussed on ‘great men’, no languages offered
• Increased ‘discipline’ (i.e. examination system) in higher education
  o & university staff replaced by ‘Red specialists’ in purges