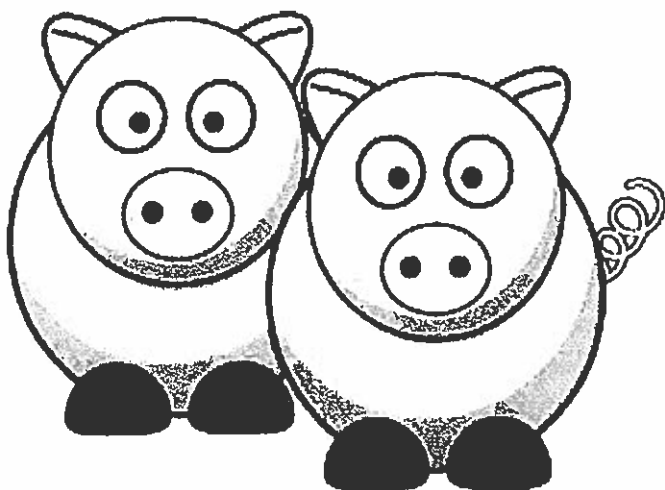


## Historical Context

Russian society in the early twentieth century was bipolar: a tiny minority controlled most of the country's wealth, while the vast majority of the country's inhabitants were impoverished and oppressed peasants. Communism arose in Russia when the nation's workers and peasants, assisted by a class of concerned intellectuals known as the *Intelligentsia*, rebelled against and overwhelmed the wealthy and powerful class of capitalists and aristocrats. They hoped to establish a socialist utopia based on the principles of the German economic and political philosopher Karl Marx.

In *Das Kapital* (*Capital*), Marx advanced an economically deterministic interpretation of human history, arguing that society would naturally evolve—from a monarchy and aristocracy, to capitalism, and then on to communism, a system under which all property would be held in common. The dignity of the poor workers oppressed by capitalism would be restored, and all people would live as equals. Marx followed this sober and scholarly work with *The Communist Manifesto*, an impassioned call to action that urged, "Workers of the world, unite!"

In the Russia of 1917, it appeared that Marx's dreams were to become reality. After a politically complicated civil war, Tsar Nicholas II, the monarch of Russia, was forced to abdicate the throne that his family had held for three centuries. Vladimir Ilych Lenin, a Russian intellectual revolutionary, seized power in the name of the Communist Party. The new regime took land and industry from private control and put them under government supervision. This centralization of economic systems constituted the first steps in restoring Russia to the prosperity it had known before World War I and in modernizing the nation's primitive infrastructure, including bringing electricity to the countryside. After Lenin died in 1924, Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky jockeyed for control of the newly formed Soviet Union. Stalin, a crafty and manipulative politician, soon banished Trotsky, an idealistic proponent of international communism. Stalin then began to consolidate his power with brutal intensity, killing or imprisoning his perceived political enemies and overseeing the purge of approximately twenty million Soviet citizens.



## Timeline

- 1859 Marx and Engels publish *The Communist Manifesto*.  
*Animal Farm*: Old Major lists the tenets of Animalism.
- 1917 March: Czar Nicholas II abdicates. A provisional republic is established.  
November: Bolsheviks seize power.  
*Animal Farm*: Animals drive out Jones.
- 1918 The Communist Party is established.  
*Animal Farm*: Pigs take control of the farm.
- 1918-20 Red Army, led by Trotsky, defeats Whites in the Civil War.  
*Animal Farm*: Animals, led by Snowball, defeat Jones at the Battle of the Cowshed.
- 1924 Lenin grows ill; Stalin and Trotsky compete for power.  
*Animal Farm*: Napoleon and Snowball compete for power.
- 1925 Trotsky is ousted and goes into exile.  
*Animal Farm*: Snowball is driven off the farm.
- 1928 Stalin crushes revolt by farmers who refuse to surrender their harvests.  
*Animal Farm*: Napoleon crushes revolt by hens who refuse to surrender their eggs.
- 1932 Massive famine in Soviet Union after farm production drops.  
*Animal Farm*: Animals suffer from hunger after farm harvest declines.
- 1933 Soviets begin limited trading with the West.  
*Animal Farm*: Napoleon begins limited trading with humans.
- 1934-38 Great Purge: Stalin uses secret police to eliminate opposition.  
*Animal Farm*: Napoleon uses dogs to eliminate opposition.
- 1939 Stalin signs Non-Aggression Pact with Hitler.  
*Animal Farm*: Napoleon makes timber deal with Frederick.
- 1941 Germans invade Soviet Union. Russians stop the invasion but suffer heavy losses.  
*Animal Farm*: Men, led by Frederick, invade the farm and destroy the windmill. The animals drive them off but suffer heavy losses.
- 1943 Western leaders, led by Roosevelt and Churchill, meet with Stalin.  
*Animal Farm*: Pilkington and other humans have dinner with Napoleon.

