**Christmas in Stalin’s USSR**

**A. The Soviet Attack on Christmas**

Divide 10 points between each of the four options to indicate how confident you are of the correct answer. Your teacher will tell you the correct answers later; add up your score to determine the winner.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Persecution of the Church** |  |  |  |  |
| Following the Russian Revolution, Christmas traditions were actively discouraged because they were considered to be "bourgeois and religious". Karl Marx famously stated that: | “religion is the bedrock of society”  | “religion is the opium of the people”. | “religion is the vodka of the proletariat” | “religion is the crystal meth of the masses” |
| Joseph Stalin readily agreed, banning all religion in the Soviet Union in: | 1933 | 1939 | 1928 | 1925 |
| Continuous persecution of the church in the 1930s resulted in its near-extinction as a public institution. The number of former priests executed in the purges of 1937-38 is estimated to be: | 10,000 | 50,000 | 75,000 | 100,000 |
| **Carols** |  |  |  |  |
| Communist leaders secularized a favorite Christmas carol, "Nova Radist Stala" (Joyous News Has Come to Us). The original song began with these words: "The joyous news has come which never was before. Over a cave above a manger a bright star has lit the world, where Jesus was born from a virgin maiden" • The rewritten version of the song included all of the following phrases except one. Which is it? | "Long-awaited star of freedom lit the skies in October”  | “Where formerly lived the kings and had the roots their nobles, there today Lenin's glory hovers". | "A red star with five tails has brightly lit the world".  | “Comrade Stalin protects the proletariat and the peasantry” |
| **Santa Claus** |  |  |  |  |
| The Russian equivalent of Santa Claus is “Grandfather Frost”, whose Russian name is… | Jason Mraz | Ded Moroz | Dredd Scotz | Vladzik Miskel |
| He would bring presents in a big red bag if children were good; otherwise, they’d get… | Ashes | Pigs’ Pudding | Typhus | Hay |
| In 1928 he was “Unmasked as an ally of the priest and the… | Kulak | Capitalist | Bourgeois Counter-Revolutionary | Trotskyite Devationists |
| **Christmas Trees** |  |  |  |  |
| Christmas Trees were introduced to Russia by the Tsarina Alexandra Fyodorovna, the wife of… | Tsar Alexander II | Tsar Peter the Great | Tsar Nicholas II | Tsar Nicholas I |
| Initially small fir trees were used to decorate the tables in the Winter Palace, in St. Petersburg to remind the Tsarina of the fir trees decorated with lit candles of her childhood in… | Austria | Germany | Italy | Hungary |
| Lenin had been amenable to the use of a fir tree as long as it was “freed from its Christmas interpretation”. So the Soviets initially replaced the 6-pointed Bethlehem star with the … | Hammer and Sickle | Profile of Lenin | Red five-point star | Head of Trotsky |
| Christmas Trees were banned outright in 1928 as a… | “counter-revolutionary plot” | "bourgeois and religious prejudice” | “capitalist assault on the proletariat” | “snivelling and irrational symbol of Christianity” |
| The sale and transport of Christmas Trees was made an offence punishable by how many years’ imprisonment? | 5 | 2 | 10 | Life |

**B. Stalin’s Revival of Christmas**

• Seeking to eradicate Christmas, the Communists established a secular Winter Festival during the last half of December as a period devoted to feating, fantasy, fireworks, and parades. New Year’s Day was transformed into an official Soviet holiday.

• This process began following the publication of a famous letter to Pravda by **Pavel Postyshev** on December 28, 1935. Postyshev believed that the origins of the holiday, which were pre-Christian in any case, were less important than the benefits it could bring to Soviet children.



*Kaganovich, Stalin, Postyshev and Voroshilov (c. 1935)*

• He noted that before the revolution “through windows, the children of workers looked with envy at fir trees sparkling with multi-coloured lights and the children of the rich enjoying themselves around the tree”. He argued that Soviet children should not be denied this pleasure just because some ‘left deviationists’ regarded it as a “bourgeois undertaking”. He proposed that the Komsomol should organise “collective” fir trees in “schools, orphanages, children’s clubs”.

• In 1937, the first Soviet tree, 15-metres tall, was unveiled at the Hall of Columns in Moscow's Trade Union House on January 10, 1937. By the next year, New Year's trees were in every part of the country following the Kremlin's example. In addition, a man playing Ded Moroz arrived at the Moscow Palace of Unions for the first time. Joseph Stalin ordered Palace of Unions' Ded Morozes to wear only blue coats, so that they would not be mistaken for Santa Claus. During Stalinist times, Ded Moroz and his helpers - Snegurochka (or "Snow Maiden"), and New Year Boy - were featured in Communist-type Nativity scenes, or public appearances, with Ded Moroz as the equivalent of Joseph, Snegurochka as the equivalent of Mary, and the New Year Boy as the equivalent of the Christ child.

**Task**

**EITHER** Read the additional information on the following web page. What does it add to your knowledge? <http://www.adventuresofrustywaters.com/a-most-unlikely-christmas-story>

**OR** Find out some further information about Postyshev.

Record your findings here and share your ideas with the class later:

Click here to enter text.

**Task**

• EITHER search the web for “Soviet Holiday Cards” to obtain a suitable communist ‘winter card’, OR design one yourself using an image of Ded Moroz that you find. If you prefer, you can use an image of Stalin in a suitably festive scene.

• Turn this into a communist card with a suitably motivational communist message inside. To get you in the mood.

• Finally, print it off in colour and write the Christmas card to your choice of ‘comrade’ in the class!

TIP: Your teacher may wish to show you [this video](http://www.activehistory.co.uk/main_area/videoplayer/index.php?id=443198411) of a ‘communist christmas’ prior to setting you on this task to give you some inspiration; there is also this sample “[Soviet-style Xmas card](http://www.activehistory.co.uk/Miscellaneous/menus/xmas/Stalin_sample_card.pub)” from ActiveHistory!