

AS History: Unit 1

Stalin's Russia

1924-53

Comment [b1]:



D4 Stalin's Russia, 1924-53

- The struggle for power — the making of the new *vozhd* 1924-29: personalities and policies.
- Transforming the Soviet Union: the collectivisation of agriculture and its social and economic impact; industrialisation and its economic and social impact; the three five-year plans; changing social policies.
- Persecution and control: the origins and course of the purges; culture and the arts in the service of a totalitarian regime.
- The making of a superpower: the Great Patriotic War; devastation; war production; victory.

AS History: Unit 1

Russia Before 1924



Key Events: 1894-1924

1894: Nicholas II becomes Tsar of Russia.

1903: The Bolsheviks are formed – a left-wing Revolutionary group.

1905: The failed 1905 Revolution.

1914: Russia joins World War I

1917: February/March: Tsar abdicates and Provisional Government Formed.

April: Lenin, leader of the Bolsheviks, returns from exile.

November: Bolsheviks seize power.

December: Cheka – the new secret police is set up.

1918: March: Russia surrenders to Germany and gives up land under the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

Bolsheviks change their name to Communists.

June: Civil War starts.

1921: January: End of Civil War

March: Red army crushes the Kronstadt Rebellion.

March: New Economic Policy Introduced.

Bolsheviks in Power: 1917-1924

Following the seizure of power in 1917, Lenin and the Bolsheviks attempted to make the world's first socialist society. How did they try to do this?

Early changes, 1917-1918

Lenin ended the war with Germany and ordered the granting of land to the peasants. He also granted independence to the various national groups within Russia. This was all popular and made it easier for the Bolsheviks to tighten their control on Russia. However, this was not their only approach to seizing power – they set up a secret police (the Cheka) and controlled the newspapers to ensure opposition was kept to a minimum.

Civil War, 1918-21

By 1918, the Bolsheviks had changed their name to the Communists. However, the name change did not make them any more popular with their opponents who were plotting to overthrow the new Government. The White Army had been formed and was keen to

reinstate the monarchy. They were soon joined by troops from Britain, France, Japan and the USA.

The Communist Army, called the Red Army, was led by Leon Trotsky. It was highly disciplined and brilliantly organised. By 1921, the Red Army had defeated the combined forces of their opponents and secured the Revolution.

War Communism

Lenin introduced an economic policy during the Civil War that was aimed at underpinning his victory. This policy, known as War Communism, was geared towards military production and achieving equality.

- Private property was abolished
- Money was abolished
- Work or military service were compulsory
- Food was rationed
- Food was requisitioned (seized) from the peasants in the countryside

One of the bleakest side effects of War Communism was famine. The peasants stopped producing food because they were angry at not being paid. The result was food shortages and a bitter famine. Terror was used to ensure food was found for the industrial workers in the towns. Arrests and executions were common.

The New Economic Policy

When the Civil War ended Lenin did not abandon either the terror of War Communism. This created unrest, notably amongst the hero sailors of the Revolution at the naval base in Kronstadt. They mutinied when their demands for more democracy and an end to War Communism were ignored.

Lenin acted swiftly. He sent 40,000 Red Army troops to Kronstadt and killed ten thousands sailors. He then said he would end War Communism!

He then launched the New Economic Policy and ended War Communism. Private business was allowed and profit making was permitted. He ended the seizure of grain and allowed some limited capitalism.

However, Lenin would not allow more democracy. Arrests continued. "Show trials" of opponents were common, censorship continued and the peasants were brutally repressed. Also, the once-mighty Orthodox Church was stripped of its wealth and standing. Many priests were imprisoned and killed.

Lenin in Decline: 1922-24

In the spring of 1922 Lenin suffered a stroke, which was followed by two more in late 1922 and another in early 1923. After his second stroke Lenin's role in politics was limited one; after the third he was totally out of action. He died in January 1924 and left behind a power vacuum at the top of Russian politics.

AS History: Unit 1

The Struggle for Power: 1924-29



(1) The struggle for power — the making of the new vozhd (Great Leader) 1924-29: personalities and policies.

This section looks at the struggle for power between Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin and Stalin in the five years following Lenin's death.

It will look at the main policy issues and disagreements that came up during the struggle for power:

- The disagreement over the continuation of New Economic Policy.
- The debate over 'socialism in one country' as opposed to 'world revolution'.

It will also look at the influence of

- The influence the personalities of the various contenders had on the outcome of the power struggle.
- The influence of the various political institutions of the new Soviet Union had on the outcome of the power struggle.

Possible exam questions could include:

- How significant were the personalities of the contenders to succeed Lenin in accounting for Stalin's defeat of his opponents in the years 1924–29?
- How far does Stalin's position as General Secretary explain his success in defeating his rivals in the years 1924–29?

The Contenders:

Following Lenin's retirement from public life, no one leader emerged. However, there were a number of possible contenders for the job.

Leon Trotsky:

Background:

Born into a well off Jewish family 1879. His parents were independent farmers. Became involved in radical politics and was exiled by the Tsar. Escaped from exile and went to work with Lenin in London.

Role in Revolution:

Heavily involved in 1905 Revolution where he organised strikes. Helped plan the 1917 Revolution. His oratorical skills became famous at this time. He was central in the Bolshevik seizure of power and ran the Red Army during the Civil War.

Appeal within the Party:

Young Communists loved Trotsky's rousing speeches and admired his role in the 1905 and 1917 Revolutions. His status as a hero of the Civil War also boosted his appeal.

Trotsky was, however, seen as a bit too western and a bit too urban. His middle-class background and western ways meant the largely peasant population and party membership did not trust the intellectual Trotsky. Could be arrogant.

Many were also jealous of Trotsky's relationship with Lenin. Trotsky was seen as too much of a thinker who saw debate as being beneath him.

Relationship with Lenin:

Early in the revolutionary movement Trotsky did not support Lenin. They argued well into 1917 about how the revolution should be brought about and what the new Russia should be like. He only became a Bolshevik member in the summer of 1917.

Although they sometimes disagreed after 1917, Lenin and Trotsky saw eye to eye on the best way to fight the Civil War. Trotsky became the closest advisor to Lenin during his time as leader.

What Lenin felt:

Lenin felt that Trotsky was the most capable man in the Communist Party – but he was too obsessed with administration. He was seen as arrogant by Lenin.

Nikolai Bukharin

Background:

Born into a family of teachers in 1888 he joined the Communists in 1906. He organised strikes from an early age. He was arrested and exiled. Left Russia in 1910 and met Lenin in 1912.

Role in Revolution:

Based in Moscow he helped organise the seizure of power in the city in 1917. He wrote revolutionary articles during the Civil War. He was popular with German Communists.

Appeal within the Party:

Bukharin was popular and had a good reputation as a young and enthusiastic party member.

Relationship with Lenin:

Lenin and Bukharin admired each other's abilities, but they did not always agree. Bukharin said the peace treaty with Germany was a mistake.

What Lenin felt:

Felt he was a young and able - favourite of the whole Party. However, not really a proper communist.

Gregory Zinoviev

Background:

Born into a Jewish family in 1883. His father was a dairy farmer. He was home schooled and his level of education was low. He was exiled to Switzerland in 1907 after four years of revolutionary activity. Became a close friend of Lenin during his exile.

Role in Revolution:

Opposed the 1917 seizure of power and during the Civil War he lived in a luxury hotel far away from the fighting.

Appeal within the Party:

A good speaker. But his vanity, ambition and lack of political "know how" made many doubt his abilities.

Relationship with Lenin:

Wrote a number of books with Lenin. Stayed with Lenin during Lenin's period of hiding in 1917. He did disagree with Lenin over the 1917 Revolution, but they became close again once the Bolsheviks were in power.

What Lenin felt:

Had reservations about the way Zinoviev had not supported the Revolution of 1917.

Lev Kamenev

Background:

Born into a working class background in 1883. He was expelled from school for revolutionary activity in 1900. He went into exile in 1902 and joined Lenin in Paris. He went back to Russia to stir up support amongst the working class, but was exiled on two more occasions.

Role in Revolution:

Opposed the 1917 seizure of power and many of Lenin's main ideas on what to do with Russia. He played no role in the Civil War.

Appeal within the Party:

A weak speaker who was too tied up in big ideas that most people could not follow. Had little ambition and made few friends. He was liked and well regarded by those who met him.

Relationship with Lenin:

Close at the start and end of their careers. However, Kamenev's opposition to Lenin's ideas made their friendship a little strained.

What Lenin felt:

Had reservations about the way Kamenev had not supported the Revolution of 1917.

Josef Stalin

Background:

Son of Georgian peasants, Stalin was born in 1879. He was educated in a religious school and started to train as a priest. Joined the Communists in 1902 and spent his time robbing banks to raise money for the cause. Exiled to Siberia – escaped five times.

Role in Revolution:

During the Revolution Stalin was a follower, not a leader. He put the decisions of others into practice. During the Civil War Stalin spent time on committees and never really proved himself as a leader.

Appeal within the Party:

Stalin worked within the Communist Party organisation and was its General Secretary after 1922. He won the loyalty of the people he appointed and advanced within the party structure. Stalin always appeared moderate and calm. Stalin made sure he kept the various nationalities within Russia happy and he did his best to win their favour.

Relationship with Lenin:

First met Lenin on 1905. During the 1917 Revolution Stalin's ability to organise and administer Lenin's policies meant he had access to Lenin. Stalin agreed with Lenin on all major issues.

When Lenin fell ill, Stalin started to oppose him and speak out against him. Stalin also fell out with Lenin's wife.

What Lenin felt:

Lenin felt that Stalin was very powerful in his role as General Secretary. However, Lenin argued that Stalin would not be able to exercise this power with caution.

The Powerbases of the Contenders:

The authority and popularity of the various contenders within the Party was dependent on their background and personality. However, their ability to exploit their standing within the Party was dependent on their ability to use their roles and offices within the Party.

The powerbases of each contender within the Party were very significant as they allowed the contenders to build up support and use governmental resources for their own ends.

Party Positions

At the top of the party was the Politburo - it had ten members and was the effective government of Russia. It made decisions and issued policies. All five contenders had a seat on the Politburo. They also had other roles within the Communist Party.

Kamenev became **Chairman of the Central Committee** – potentially very powerful as the Central Committee elected the Politburo.

Stalin was **General Secretary** – head of the Party Secretariat. In this role Stalin was responsible for the various parts of the Party bureaucracy – this was important because the bureaucracy was responsible for implementing Politburo policy. The Politburo was also dependent on the Secretariat for information. Stalin also had tremendous patronage in his role as Party Secretary. He was responsible for recruiting and appointing party workers to posts all across Russia. Stalin also controlled Party Membership. He expanded party membership through a projects known as the **Lenin Enrolment**. This doubled the party membership and brought many poorly educated peasants and workers into the party – they were loyal to Stalin.

As well as hiring, Stalin had the power of firing. He was able to sack anyone accused of corruption in his role as **Head of the Central Control Commission**. He used this power to weed out real corruption and at the same time to sack innocent Party member he suspected of disagreeing with him. Stalin used all of his roles to spy on his rivals. He kept records on his Politburo colleagues – he had detailed files on virtually all of them.

However, his role was seen as a rather mundane and unimportant one by the rest of the Politburo and this led some to underestimate Stalin. One colleague called him the “grey blur”; others referred to him as “comrade card index” because his willingness to do routine jobs. This meant Stalin slipped into the background and was sometimes overlooked.

The Comintern was set up by Lenin to ensure that the Revolution had an international dimension. Its role was to encourage and coordinate revolutions on the world stage. Zinoviev had the prestigious role as its head; this boosted his authority.

Zinoviev was also head of the important **Leningrad Communist Party**. Kamenev headed the **Moscow Party**. These roles should have allowed them to build up a local powerbase in the two largest cities in Russia. Kamenev was less successful than Zinoviev at fulfilling this role and he did not make the most of his power.

Bukharin was the unofficial head of Party ideology. He edited the Communist Party newspaper **Pravda**. This gave Bukharin a chance to influence the thoughts of the mass party.

Government Positions

The Sovnarkom was the main committee of the Soviet government. Stalin and Trotsky were both members. Trotsky had the glamorous and heroic position of heading the **Red Army**. This made him popular with many young communists, but made his rivals jealous and suspicious – they worried he would use the army against them. Equally, many peasants were slow to forget that Trotsky's Red Army had brutally seized their grain during the Civil War.

Stalin was **Commissar of Nationalities** – this meant he was responsible for overseeing the 50% of the Soviet population who were not actually Russian. This gave him influence and power and allowed him to communicate with senior local officials throughout the country. Stalin was well known and was able to build up an army of followers by appointing his supporters to key jobs.

The Role of Ideology:

The contenders for power all agreed on certain key issues. A great deal united them:

- They all agreed that the Revolution needed to be preserved and protected.
- They believed that History was moving in the right direction and that eventually Russia would become a socialist and then a communist country.
- They all passionately believed that the revolution would eventually spread across Europe and then the world.
- They all understood that Russia was in a dire state and that it needed reform.

However, they could not agree on how these aims should be achieved. They all subscribed to a different ideology and they used their ideological position to help achieve power. Rather than attacking each other personally, the contenders would attack each others ideas. They also formed alliances based on their ideology. Crucially Stalin managed to stay in the centre and avoid being labelled one way or the other.

Different Interpretations of Leninism

The Left Wing of the Party saw Leninism as being at its peak during the Civil War. Capitalism was abolished along with private property and money. This was the most idealistic view of Leninism and was popular with Trotsky.

The Right Wing preferred the New Economic Policy phase of Leninism. They liked the focus on gradual change and the education of the people into accepting the idea of communism. This was advocated by Bukharin.

Stalin never really committed himself and so kept his options open without alienating either side. Kamenev and Zinoviev moved from right to left and in doing so lost all credibility.

The Great Industrialisation Debate

Communist theory believed that capitalism and industrialisation are vital if a country is going to become socialist and then communist. The industry is needed to provide society with abundant products so people can live in harmony. This explains why Lenin was not unhappy with the idea of the NEP. Lenin said that the NEP would “last for a long time, but not forever”. What he meant by this was interpreted differently by the contenders.

Trotsky and the Left felt that the NEP was too capitalist and that it spent too much time and resources helping the peasants at the expense of the workers. He said that it was not delivering industrialisation and was causing shortages. Trotsky wanted policies that would squeeze out the peasants and create a “**dictatorship of industry**”. By wanting to abandon the NEP, Trotsky looked as if he wanted to move away from Lenin’s Policy.

Bukharin and the Right felt that the peasants and the workers needed to be cared for as Russia was made up of both groups. They advocated industrialisation “at a snails pace” in order to carefully establish a base on which to build.

Stalin was essentially a Nepist – until it started to fail and then he distanced himself from it.

World Revolution

The Left and Trotsky wanted **Permanent Revolution** across Europe and then the world. They believed the revolution could not last if it was only taking place in Russia.

The Right adopted the notion of “**Socialism in one Country**”. They believed Russia was a unique country with a great people and a mass of resources. Therefore they could survive alone. This was appealing to many people because it was a very patriotic view.

The Future of the Revolution

The Left said the Revolution had become a government of bureaucrats who had no link with the ordinary people. This view was advanced by Trotsky and was popular with the Left – however, it alienated the mass of people who had jobs working within the bureaucracy.

The Right on the other hand said that there was a danger of Trotsky using the Red Army to seize power. They pointed out that a similar thing had happened in the French Revolution when Napoleon Bonaparte used the army to become Emperor of France. This accusation of **Bonapartism** made Trotsky a figure of suspicion.

Stalin's personal strengths:

Stalin had a number of things on his side that made it likely he would emerge as leader:

- His reputation for being a “grey blur” – he was so boring and apparently on the margin that some did not take him seriously until it was too late.
- The Bolshevik's view of revolutionary history made Stalin appear safe. The Bolsheviks believed that strong figures were likely to threaten the Revolution in the way Napoleon had done in France in the 19th Century.
- Stalin was a shrewd politician who managed to outmanoeuvre his opponents. He managed to ensure that he moved in the right direction at the right time.
- Stalin was an opportunist who would change his opinions when needed. This allowed him to adapt and survive the struggle for power.
- He was also ruthless in exploiting situations and his opponents' weaknesses.
- Stalin knew when to stay out of arguments – he let his rivals do the arguing while he stood aside and kept his reputation clean.
- Stalin kept his ideas simple. He appealed to the mass of the party by keeping his ideas simple and understandable. This set him apart from the more intellectual members of the Politburo.

Trotsky's personal Weaknesses:

Conversely, Trotsky had a number of weaknesses that made it unlikely he would emerge as leader:

- His strengths, particularly his role as Head of the Red Army, made him appear as a threat to the other contenders. They feared him and were keen to crush him early in the struggle. The accusations of Bonapartism and dictatorship were damaging to Trotsky.
- Trotsky advocated world revolution – but this was a complete failure. No other country went along the communist route and this made Trotsky appear to be a failure.
- Likewise, his insistence that the future of Communist Russia could not be guaranteed without a world revolution made him appear to be unpatriotic.
- Trotsky would not simplify his ideas – he felt it was beneath him to explain things simply.
- He also lacked political skill – he would not compromise or take part in arguments or intrigues. He failed to make alliances and was left isolated.
- Trotsky attacked the Party bureaucracy and the peasants. These were two large groups that he needed to keep on side.

Who ruled – Stage 1 – The Triumverate:

When Lenin stepped down the first alliance of Politburo members was the Triumverate (or Troika) of the Zinoviev, Lenin and Stalin. Formed in 1923, its main aim was to keep Trotsky out of power.

Against this Triumverate was Trotsky and his supporters, known as the Left Opposition. The Left Opposition proposed ideas and policies opposed to those offered by the Triumverate. They advocated Permanent Revolution (the worldwide spread of communism) and rapid industrialisation and collectivisation of agriculture. The Triumverate used their position to keep Trotsky from building up his power. They tried to minimise his role in the Party and questioned his ideas.

Lenin's Testament

One of the early threats to the Triumverate was **Lenin's Testament** – his final thoughts on each of the leading Politburo members. This was critical of Zinoviev, Stalin and Kamenev and could have threatened their support in the Politburo. In particular it said that Stalin should be sacked. Zinoviev and Kamenev did not want this to happen as they needed Stalin to keep their majority on the Politburo. They acted quickly and argued that the document was critical of so many members of the government that it would damage the progress of Communism and should therefore be suppressed. They won the argument and the Testament was suppressed.

Control of the Party Congress

Stalin kept his job and started to use it to ensure that only his supporters were sent to important Party meetings – especially the Party Congress. The Party Congress elected the Central Committee and they in turn elected the Politburo. At the same time he kept Trotsky's supporters away from important decisions.

During this time Trotsky was taken ill and was not very active in politics. He attended few meetings and lost touch. He also refused to enter into alliances and so became isolated.

Destroying Trotsky's Reputation

The marginalisation of Trotsky was one thing – but the Triumverate wanted to go on and destroy his reputation. To do this the Triumverate introduced the concept of "The Cult of Lenin". This involved idealising Lenin and turning him into a god-like figure. To be seen as being disloyal to Lenin's memory was to be seen as being disloyal to the Revolution.

Stalin started this process by giving Trotsky the wrong date for Lenin's funeral. This meant Trotsky missed the funeral and appeared disrespectful and arrogant. To make matters

worse, Stalin delivered the funeral oration and came out of the whole affair with an enhanced reputation.

Then Zinoviev and Kamenev criticised Trotsky's account of the Revolution, *The Lessons of October*, by saying it overplayed Trotsky's role and ignored Lenin's contribution. Again Trotsky appeared disloyal to Lenin. Zinoviev then accused Trotsky of developing his own set of ideas – Trotskyism – that were a rival to those of Lenin. The disloyalty seemed to go on-and-on.

Finally the Triumvirate said that by setting up the Left Opposition, Trotsky had broken Lenin's 1921 command that there should be no "factions" within the Party as unity was vital. This accusation of factionalism was another major blow. In 1924 Trotsky was condemned by the Party Congress and the Left Opposition was defeated.

Who ruled – Stage 2 – The Duumvirate:

With Trotsky defeated the Triumvirate had no common enemy and they started to fall out. Stalin then developed his idea of abandoning ***Permanent Revolution*** (promoting the spread of communism around the world) in favour of ***Socialism in One Country*** (where Russia would concentrate on developing itself without a World Revolution) and this drove Zinoviev and Kamenev away.

Stalin now linked up with Bukharin to form the Duumvirate. Stalin controlled the Party machine, but lacked any real theoretical authority – by joining with Bukharin he was able to get some credibility in this area. Bukharin also agreed with Socialism in One Country and the continuation of the New Economic Policy. Together they controlled the Politburo and the Central Committee.

Destroying the New Opposition

Kamenev and Zinoviev formed the ***New Opposition***. They attacked Stalin at the Fourteenth Party Congress. They wanted to end the NEP and speed up industrialisation. They also criticised Socialism in One Country. Bukharin spoke against them – his quick mind and speaking skills were vital in crushing their attack. However, much more important was Stalin's ability as General Secretary to appoint members of the Congress. He packed the meeting with his supporters and won the vote by 559 to 65.

Zinoviev and Kamenev lost their Politburo seats. Kamenev lost his role as Moscow Party head and Zinoviev was removed as head of the Comintern.

Further Weakening Trotsky

Trotsky had stayed out of this struggle, but he was still being criticised. It was suggested that he may use the Red Army as a way of gaining power. This was known as **Bonapartism**. As a result, he was stripped of his main powerbase as the head of the Red Army.

The United Opposition

From mid-1926 Russian industry was starting to fail. It could not produce enough goods for the Russian people to buy. The lack of goods meant that the rich peasants, the **Kulaks**, did not see the point in selling their grain and the result was a "Grain Strike". Food shortages followed and grain prices rose. Tensions in the towns were growing and were made worse by the rumour that a war was likely with Germany.

Zinoviev and Kamenev now feared Stalin and linked up with their old enemy, Trotsky. They all now wanted to scrap the NEP and introduce rapid industrialisation. They also all opposed "Socialism in One Country". They formed the "**United Opposition**". As the Duumvirate were facing some real problems, not least the failure of NEP, the United Opposition argued the time was right for new leadership.

However, Stalin used his position as General Secretary to pack the 1927 Fifteenth Party Congress with his supporters. The Congress expelled Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev from the Party! Trotsky went into exile. The weakened Zinoviev and Kamenev apologised and were accepted back into the Party.

Who ruled – Stage 3 – Stalin:

In 1928, having fought off the United Opposition to the NEP, Stalin abandoned it and adopted the position that rapid industrialisation was needed. He had totally reversed his position and in doing so split with Bukharin. Stalin had eliminated the leadership of the Left of the Party and now took over their role. He was advocating the left's policies and won their supporters to his cause.

The Right Opposition

Bukharin now linked up with Rykov and Tomsky. They had powerbases in the Trade Unions and the Government. Bukharin hoped that his control of the media and their power bases would allow him to defeat Stalin.

Stalin, however, started to discredit Bukharin by pointing out that he was the theorist behind the NEP. He also pointed out that Bukharin had often disagreed with Lenin. Stalin also made sure that his own ideas were widely read by the new Party recruits who had joined during the Lenin Enrolment. Stalin pushed his ideas forward as an alternative.

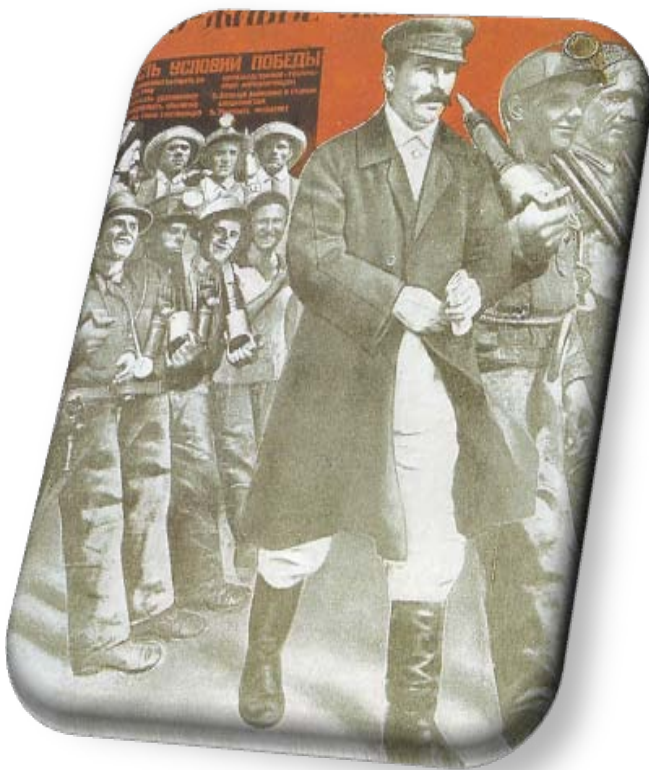
Stalin accused Bukharin of plotting with Zinoviev and Kamenev. Bukharin was angered by this and arranged a secret meeting with his two old enemies to tell them it was not true. Stalin leaked the meeting and said it was evidence that he was right. Throughout this time Bukharin always tried to keep the fight fair – something that worked against him.

Stalin becomes Vozhd

At a meeting of the Central Committee in April 1929 Stalin finally managed to defeat Bukharin. Stalin forced Bukharin to admit his errors and support Stalin's ideas. Stalin then issued a number of new stories that criticised Bukharin. Bukharin was then removed from his various roles and the Politburo. Stalin was officially the Vozhd (Great Leader)

AS History: Unit 1

Transforming the Soviet Economy



(2) Transforming the Soviet Union: the collectivisation of agriculture and its social and economic impact; industrialisation and its economic and social impact; the three five-year plans; changing social policies.

The important changes in social and economic policies between 1928 and 1941.

Collectivisation:

- reasons for the decision to promote collectivisation
- its effects not just on rural areas but its connection to industrialisation and urbanisation.

Five Year Plans:

- why they were introduced
- the changing nature and priorities of the three five-year plans
- the successes and failures of these plans.

Changing social policies on:

- education,
- the family (including women and children)
- divorce

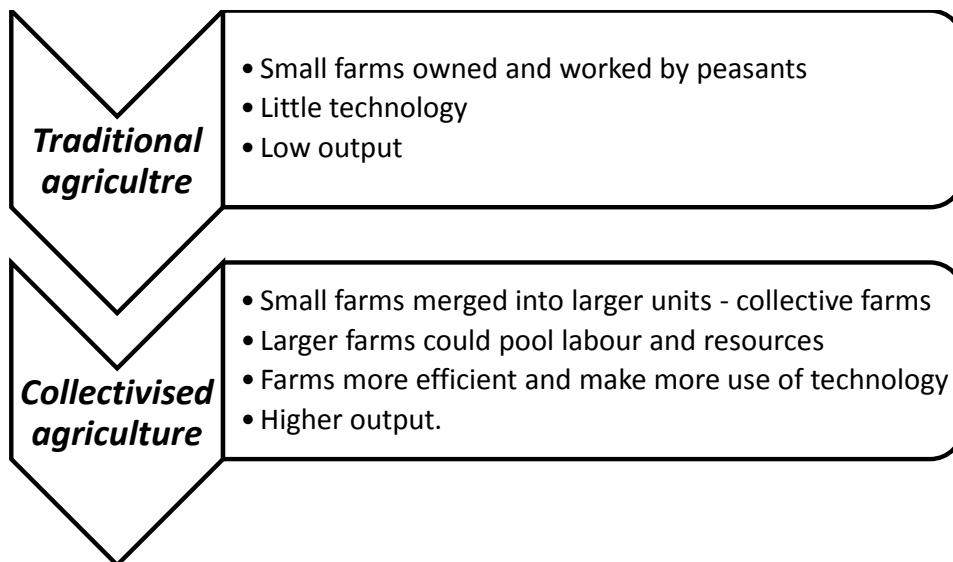
Possible exam questions could include:

- How far were economic problems responsible for Stalin's decision to replace the New Economic Policy in 1928 with the first Five-Year Plan?
- How far do you agree that the collectivisation of agriculture made an essential contribution to Stalin's transformation of the Russian economy?
- How far did Stalin's social policies change the lives of children and women in the years to 1945?
- How far did the priorities of the three Five-Year Plans change in the years 1929–41?

Section A: Agriculture and Collectivisation

What Was Collectivisation?

Collectivisation was the process by which Russian agriculture was reformed:

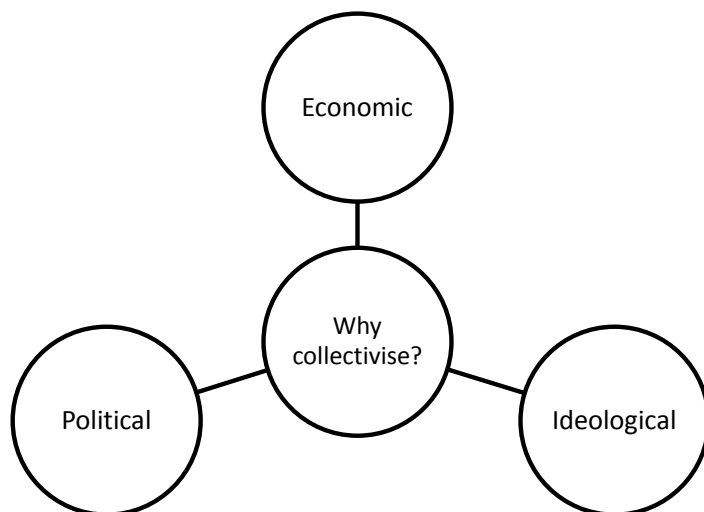


There were three main types of collective farm:



Why Collectivisation?

There were three main reasons why Stalin was keen to see collectivisation:



Economic Factors

Stalin was aware that there had been rumours of a war with Germany in 1927. This made self-sufficiency in food production and rapid industrialisation even more important. Russia needed to prepare itself for war against the capitalist powers.

The 1926 harvest was a record one for the people of Russia. However the harvests of 1927, 1928 and 1929 were all disappointing. Falling farm output led to rising food prices which in turn hit the standard of living of the urban workers.

However, the falling output hit the wider economy in very serious ways. The Communist government needed to sell grain abroad so they could make money to buy the technology and machinery for industrialisation. If there was no grain surplus, there would be no export income and no industrialisation. At this time Stalin was also trying to rapidly industrialise Russia and he could not do this without happy and well-fed workers and the money to buy machinery.

Stalin believed that collectivisation was needed to increase efficiency and introduce mechanisation. All of this would lead to a rise in output. Higher output would lead to lower prices and a better standard of living for urban workers. It would also create a surplus to

sell abroad and so facilitate wider economic development. In short, the countryside was overpopulated and the factories needed labour – collectivisation would correct this.

Mechanisation of agriculture would lead to a fall in demand for labour in the countryside. The surplus agricultural workers could then be moved to the towns to work in the factories and so help boost industrial production.

Ideological Factors

In 1917 the Bolsheviks had seized all land and distributed it amongst the peasants. However, the Bolsheviks did not intend to let the peasants actually own the land, only use it for the good of everyone. This would fit with the communist ideology. However, the peasants, especially the richer ones (known as **kulaks**), had started to run their farms like capitalists. The NEP had encouraged them to do this.

Stalin and the Left of the Party had become concerned that the peasants had never really embraced the Revolution. They operated their farms like traditional capitalist – they grew food to feed themselves and to make a profit; but they had no interest in helping the wider society. The peasants had withheld grain under War Communism and did the same in the years 1927-29. After 1927, in order to further push up prices and so to make higher profits, the kulaks refused to hand over what grain they had. This “Grain Strike” and general lack of support for the Revolution worried the communist. They felt that the journey to communism would be much slower, and maybe even endangered, if the peasants were not brought on board. For Stalin, collectivisation was a way of breaking this capitalist mentality and allowing the Revolution to move on.

Political Factors

Many ordinary Party members (especially those on the left) were keen to see an end to the kulaks. They wanted the Revolution to be taken to the countryside and they were putting pressure on the leadership to act.

Collectivisation was popular with the Left of the Party and Stalin knew it would boost his popularity. Collectivisation would also make Russia self-sufficient in terms of food and so avoid having to depend on foreign grain imports. This would also be popular as it would make Russia appear stronger and save money which could be used to improve living conditions. If Stalin could deliver this he would be much safer in his new leadership role.

Stalin wanted to collectivise to help his battle against Bukharin and the Right. Bukharin was keen to promote the NEP and Stalin needed to make sure it was discredited. Stalin was able to claim, with some justification, that collectivisation was the answer to a failing NEP.

Stalin also knew that he had to solve the problem of food shortages in the cities. Bread rationing was causing grumbles and Stalin was worried. The urban workers were keen to

see action against the peasants and were calling for the government to speed up change in the countryside.

“Revolution from above” or reaction?

A debate exists amongst historians about the main forces behind collectivisation:

<i>Revolution from above</i>	<i>Reaction to events</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stalin had a clear plan and was in control of the changes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stalin was having to react to events and other factors and had no real plan.

What evidence is there so far for each theory?

How was collectivisation carried out?

Collectivisation did not happen all at once. It was done gradually in stages. Stalin appeared to have no grand plan for the process; rather he adopted measures that suited the time.

Stage 1: Emergency Collectivisation

The Grain Procurement Crisis following the Grain strike caused shortages in basic food stuffs. Stalin introduced rationing and at the end of 1928 he started to requisition grain. Peasants who hoarded grain could be punished and Stalin rewarded poorer peasants for informing on the richer kulaks. Stalin expanded the requisitioning process to meat and made hoarding punishable by transportation to a labour camp.

Stage 2: Liquidation of the Kulaks

Stalin had initially wanted 30% of all farms collectivised by 1934. However, in 1929 he decided that it should be a country-wide reform. In 1929 mass collectivisation kicked off. Stalin ordered the “liquidation of the kulak as a class”. **Dekulakisation** was meant to rid the countryside of capitalism. In doing so it would speed up collectivisation. He also hoped that the fear he created would scare the peasants into agreeing to collectivisation.

Stalin called for 25,000 urban workers to go into the countryside and advise on the collectivisation process and provide technical help. However, these “**Twenty-five-thousanders**” knew nothing about farming and ended up being used to enforce Dekulakisation.

However, the peasants were less than happy with this and they rebelled. They did not want to lose their independence or their income. Many poor peasants refused to hand over the kulaks. The peasants destroyed their livestock and ate the seed grain. 18 million horses and 100 million sheep were destroyed to stop them falling into communist hands. Farm machines were also sabotaged.

Whole families and in some cases whole villages were rounded up and deported to labour camps in Siberia for appearing to stand in the way of the process. Alongside this terror, propaganda was used. The benefits of collectivisation were extolled in the propaganda. Children were also encouraged to betray their parents for hoarding grain.

Stage 3: Dizzy With Success

The rapid collectivisation caused problems in the countryside and the economy in general. Stalin called a halt to the process in 1930. He blamed local officials for doing too much too soon and said in an article in Pravda that they had become “Dizzy with success”. He said he had met his targets and so the process could be suspended. At this time half of Russia’s farms were collectivised. However, the peasants soon went back to their own ways and by the end of 1930 only 25% were collectivised.

Stage 4: Resumption of Collectivisation – 1931

Stalin started to reapply pressure to the collectivisation process in 1931. Stalin set high targets for the farmers and when they failed to meet them he said saboteurs and wreckers were to blame. He sent the Red Army and the OGPU (Secret Police) to seize grain. All grain was confiscated and hoarders were shot. Peasants were forced into collectivisation and by 1934, 50% of farms were collectivised. By 1937 that figure had risen to 90%.

Does this process suggest that Stalin has a plan?

The effects of collectivisation

Peasant Unrest

The peasants did not submit quietly to collectivisation. Many revolted and killed their animals and destroyed livestock. Others rioted and attacked the collectivisation squads. OGPU men and party officials were attacked and murdered. The reaction to this was massive. Rounds ups were widespread. Deportation grew and the Red Army was used to smash the peasants. In some cases the airforce simply bombed troublesome villages out of existence. Between 5 and 10 million peasants were killed in this process.

Changes to Villages

Old farming practices were swept aside. Along with them went many of the traditional social structures and local officials. Priests, school masters and village elders were all got rid of and replaced by party structures. Young communists were sent spy on the villages and ensure their cooperation. Of course, the old kulak classes were also wiped out.

The communist state had taken control of the countryside. The Party became all important and it had a direct hand in the running of agriculture. The Revolution was now well into the rural areas.

Planning was often chaotic and the new farm managers were untrained in how to run farms. They were often urban workers or party officials whose knowledge of agriculture was very poor.

Stalin set up Motorised Tractor Stations (MTS) that were meant to mechanise the farms. However, these MTS were not up and running until the mid-1930s and they did not make up for the millions of horses that had been slaughtered by the peasants.

Shortages and Famine

When the kulaks slaughtered their livestock and destroyed their crops they created widespread shortages. Between 1928 and 1933 for example, the number of cattle halved and there was a serious shortage of meat and milk.

Grain output fell by 10 million tonnes. The Red Army was ordered to find grain for the towns and to sell for export. They seized food from the countryside and created famine in the agricultural regions of the Ukraine, Kazakhstan and the Caucasus. This famine lasted for 1932-33. The peasants were banned from leaving the countryside to look for food. Stalin effectively imprisoned them on the collective farms. In 1933 alone 4 million peasants died of starvation. Throughout the 1930s between 10 and 15 million Russians starved to death.

Output and Consumption

Collectivisation hit output significantly:

	1930	1931	1932	1933
Sheep (millions)	109	78	52	50
Grain (million tons)	84	70	70	68
Cattle (millions)	53	48	41	38
Pigs (millions)	13	14	12	12

The Party officials knew nothing of running farms and the peasants were alienated and disorientated to such a degree that their productivity fell. The best workers and farmers had often been killed or deported - their agricultural knowledge went with them to the grave or to the work camps of Siberia. Food consumption throughout Russia was reduced – in terms of range and quantity the people had to make do with much reduced diet.

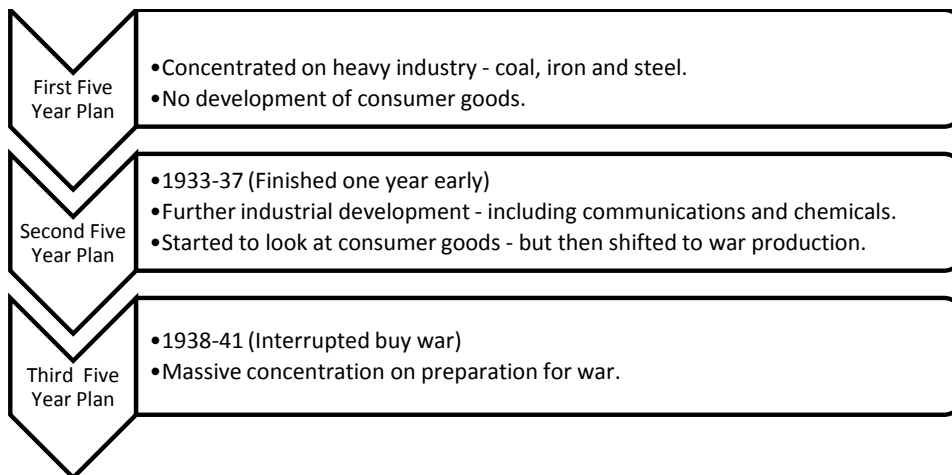
Urban Areas

The urban workers also suffered from this reduced diet. What made matters worse was that after 1931, surplus peasant workers were encouraged into the towns to find jobs in the factories. The urban population rose from 18% in 1928 to 50% in 1940. This put an even greater strain on the already overstretched facilities in the towns. This was especially true of housing.

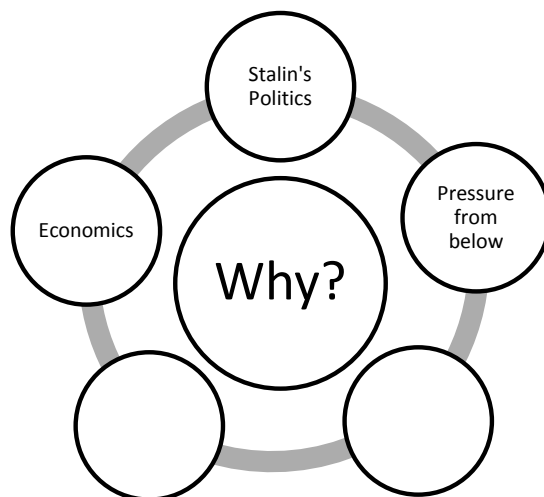
Section B: Industrialisation and the Five Year Plans

What were the Five-Year Plans?

In the 1920s Russia was a land rich in resources, but it was probably around 100 years behind most other powerful nations in terms of industrial development. The three Five-Year plans were Russia's attempt to modernise their industry.



Why were they introduced?



The Economy Needed Developing

Even before the First World War, Russia was an economically backward country. It has been estimated that it was 100 years behind the large economies of Western Europe and the USA. The First World War and the Civil War had both further damaged the economy by diverting resources and causing damage to production facilities. By 1928, the Russian economy was only at the level it had been in 1914.

Russia therefore needed economic development and Stalin believed that a planned economy was the only way to achieve this. He believed that the NEP and progress at a “snail’s pace” were no longer acceptable if Russia was to make the economic advances its people wanted and deserved. The job was so huge that if the people were to be supplied with food and consumer goods, there would need to be massive state intervention to modernise the economy. In Stalin’s mind, the Five Year Plans were a logical way forward.

The Role of Ideology

Ideology was also a driver behind the Five Year Plans. The communist view of History dictates that socialism cannot exist unless there is first industrialisation. As Russia was not fully industrialised, the communists did not think pure socialism was possible. Industrialisation was therefore vital to the survival and progress of the Revolution. The Five Year Plans, were therefore, a way of rapidly moving Russia not only towards industrialisation, but also towards socialism and then communism.

Also crucial to the future of the Revolution were the urban working class. This group had been neglected so far and although they had grown in number, they were still much smaller than the peasant class. The NEP had neglected the urban population and had favoured the countryside and some communists (including Stalin) believed that it was time to develop this section of society in order to drive on the Revolution.

The scrapping of the NEP would also rid society of the Nepmen, who had flourished under the NEP, and replace them with a more revolutionary-minded group of industrial workers who would be at the vanguard of change.

The Role of Stalin’s Political Agenda

Introducing the Five Year Plans also served Stalin’s political aims. He was keen to consolidate his power and push his rivals aside. Pointing out the failings of the gradual approach of the NEP and replacing it with the Five Year plans would discredit Bukharin, Tomsky and Rykov on the Right. Moving to the rapid industrialisation of the Five Year Plans would steal Trotsky’s ideas and make Stalin the hero of the left – especially with the industrial workers.

The Five Year Plans helped Stalin to develop his own power and at the same time discredit the right and steal the ideological ground of the left.

Stalin also wanted to develop his image as a leader. This involved portraying himself as a leader who could even eclipse Lenin. From 1929 Stalin started to attack Lenin's gradual approach to industrial development. He was especially critical of the NEP. Stalin then hoped to use the Five Year Plans to transform the Russian economy and eclipse Lenin as the great communist leader of Russia.

Pressures from below

The push to industrialisation was not totally driven from the top of the Communist party. Ordinary Party members amongst the working class were also keen for action. The working class in the urban areas resented the special position of the peasants under the NEP and wanted their own living standards to improve. They wanted a modern economy that would provide a better standard of living. Most of all they wanted to be at the vanguard of transforming Russia. Many of these industrial workers wanted a return to the rigour and discipline of War Communism.

This feeling amongst the working class made many of the party leadership more willing to move towards rapid industrialisation. Stalin spotted the opportunity to harness this enthusiasm for his plans and at the same time win support amongst the Party rank and file.

Fear of Invasion

The late 1920s saw a number of international developments that made the communist government in Russia become concerned for the country's security. In 1926 Poland broke off diplomatic relations and China started to persecute communists. In 1927 Britain's relationship with Russia entered a frosty period and Japan banned its communist party. Russia's neighbours in Finland, Romania and Iran all had anti-communist governments. 1927 witnessed rumours that Germany was about to declare war. Stalin felt it was time to start industrialising in order to build up the armed forces. "Either we do it – or they crush us" he told a party meeting.

Military thinking within the Red Army was also changing. Prior to the late 1920s, the Russians had always depended on the sheer size of their country to fend off an invasion. However, the Generals started to argue that it was time to think about a proper line of defence and maybe even using pre-emptive strikes. All this would need a modern army; something that would need a modern industrial economy.

Industrialisation suddenly became patriotic. To oppose it, or even to fail to support it, was seen as to be against defending Russia from the foreign invader. As the 1930s went on Hitler became an even greater threat, this motive grew in importance.

The First Five Year Plan

Target Setting

Under the Five Year Plans a central government agency, known as **Gosplan**, set targets. 500,000 bureaucrats set these targets for every mine, mill, factory and workshop in Russia. These targets were set without any real understanding and most Gosplan employees knew nothing about the practicalities of working in industry. Gosplan was under pressure to achieve great things and they set high targets. Stalin then increased targets to totally unrealistic levels.

What were the Plan's aims?

Basically, a complete focus on the basics of an industrial economy. The development of coal, iron and steel. Heavy industry was all that mattered and textiles and food production were ignored. Consumer goods were not a consideration during the plan as all resources were needed to produce the raw materials of industrial growth.

Did the economy improve?

The Russian economy grew by an astounding 14 per year. Individual industries grew at an enormous rate. However, the targets set by Gosplan were not met.

	1913	1928	1932	1932 Target
Iron (millions of tons)	4.2	3.3	6.2	8
Steel (millions of tons)	4.0	4.0	5.9	8.3
Coal (millions of tons)	29.1	35.4	64.3	68
Oil (millions of tons)	9.2	11.7	21.4	19

Local managers were often so afraid of being sacked, arrested and sent to a labour camp that they lied about their output. They also hoarded resources so they would not run out and miss a day's production. The quality of what was made was often so poor that it was either unusable or completely unreliable. The whole system became chaotic.

Electricity and engineering did grow dramatically and Russia developed a system of industrial centres specialising in various aspects of the economy. For example, Stalingrad and Kharkov became the centre of tractor production in Russia.

However, consumer goods, food, the chemical industry and textiles all suffered and failed to grow. The standard of living for ordinary Russians was not fantastic and even the better off workers lagged behind their counterparts in the west.

The transport system was inadequate and could not cope with the demands of the rapid expansion in industry. The trains could not move the products around and raw materials and finished goods sat idle waiting for transport.

The wrong things were made – finished steel sat around as too much was produced. The wrong spare parts and machines were produced as factories simply made enough of something to meet a target. Spare parts were generally hard to come by.

Overall, the first Five Year Plan lacked a real “plan”. Russia was not a ***planned economy***, it was too chaotic. Rather it was a ***command economy*** – the centre gave out commands and the various parts of industry tried to meet these orders in a rather random way.

Impact on Society?

- There was significant social mobility. Peasants moved from the countryside to the town. The urban working class became managers and the peasants their workers as the urban population trebled.
- There was a better education system to train the managers and engineers needed for the Plan.
- Workers had a seven day working week.
- Factories were unsafe and deaths and injuries were common. The peasants had no idea what to do in a factory and they made mistakes that were costly in human life.
- Lateness was criminalised. Accidentally breaking a machine was described “wrecking” and resulted in long sentences in labour camps or even death.
- Political prisoners were used as virtual slave labour. The guards described them as “white coal” because they were little more than a commodity that could be used and disposed of.
- There was no unemployment.
- Women played a big role in the workforce. In Leningrad, 44% of factory workers were women. However, they did receive less pay and were limited to the less important unskilled jobs.
- Bribery, corruption and the black market flourished.
- The communist party became much stronger and impinged on more aspects of life.

Magnitogorsk

The building of the city of Magnitogorsk represents the best and worst of the First Five Year Plan. The aim was to build an enormous steelworks and city in an uninhabited area of Russia that was rich in iron ore. Over 250,000 workers were transported to meet labour needs on the new project. Thousands of “shock workers” volunteered to be part of this ambitious project.

In 1929, a German architect designed a model city for the workers to live in and it was envisaged that the working and living conditions would be exemplary. However, progress

on housing was slow and by 1932 most workers were still living in mud huts, tents and shacks. Work was so hard that on average a worker only stayed for three months.

However, a core of committed volunteers and 40,000 prisoners worked hard to transform the area. In the end the city and steel works were constructed – but it was done by prisoners acting as slave labour.

The Second Five Year Plan

This was more realistic and rounded than the first plan. It concentrated on new industries (like chemicals and communications) and consumer goods.

The plan evolved over time, it was better planned and was aimed at consolidating what had been done. It was clear that if the growth was going to be sustainable then it would have to be more realistic in its pace.

The plan still led to shortages and rationing, but it did include more rewards for those who worked hard.

Why change?

- Moderates in the Politburo, especially Kirov, wanted the change and Stalin was keen to follow their demands to keep them on side.
- Equally, Stalin was aware of some of problems associated with the first plan and he was keen to avoid them in the second. He particularly wanted to improve transport and keep the workers happy.
- Stalin was aware that war was coming and he needed to have a people who would fight for him. Rewards and more consumer goods would win the people over.
- After 1936 the policy was shifted again though. Stalin killed off the moderates that had supported Kirov and so he faced fewer calls for moderation. He also started to prepare for war – something that was looking much more likely.

Achievements

- The growth was much more modest.
- Production did expand.
- The Moscow metro and the Volga-Moscow Canal were massive achievements.
- 1934 saw the end of bread rationing.
- Wages rose.
- Defence spending increased.

Problems

- There was still little coordination between industries.
- There was still a scarcity of resources – hoarding of raw materials continued.
- Spare parts were in short supply.
- Fear ran through the system – failure was heavily punished.
- There were huge shortages of basic items. 6000 people queued for a whole day in Leningrad just because they had heard a rumour that there was a new supply of shoes.
- The rapid growth in Moscow's population had an enormous impact. In one area housing was provided for 650,000 people – however, there was not one single bath.

The Stakhanovite Movement

The government's solution to the problems of low productivity and poor workers discipline was a combination of propaganda to appeal to the workers patriotism and a system of rewards to provide incentives.

In doing this the government created a media hero – Alexi Stakhanov. According to media reports the hero coal miner cut 102 tonnes of coal in six hours. He was rewarded with a new apartment, a telephone and a months wages as a bonus. Most importantly, he was used as an example for all Russian workers.

Compulsory meetings were held to urge workers to copy his commitment and hard work. The workers who met their targets were rewarded.

The Third Five Year Plan

This one focussed on the preparation for war and resembled the first plan. Investment was focussed on the armed forces and consumer goods suffered once again. New aircraft factories were built and heavy industry grew. The plan was still quite chaotic and production was damaged by the constant arrests that were associated with the purges.

Key Indicators

	1913	1928	1932	1936	1937	1940
Iron (millions of tons)	4.2	3.3	6.2	14	14	15
Steel (millions of tons)	4.0	4.0	5.9	12	13	13
Coal (millions of tons)	29.1	35.4	64.3	126	128	166
Oil (millions of tons)	9.2	11.7	21.4	27	29	31
Locomotives	265	478	828	1566	1582	1220
Lorries (thousands)	0	0.7	24	132	180	136
Sugar (million tons)	1.3	1.2	0.8	2	2.4	2.1
Cigarettes (billions)	22	49	58	86	89	100
Vodka (million decalitres)	119	56	72	90	93	44

Section C:

Changes in Society

Women and Family In the 1920s

Lenin had stated that the traditional model of family life and the old roles taken up by women were nothing short of slavery. He believed that the capitalist institution of marriage needed to be swept aside and a new enlightened pattern of relationships be established. Free love and an end to formal marriage became the official policy of the new Bolshevik state and the traditional model of the family became less common. Divorce and abortion were made easier to access. Lenin and the leadership of the early 1920s wanted to “take the old family by storm”. This liberalisation of society went on into the early years of Stalin’s rule. In 1930, incest, adultery, bigamy and homosexuality were all legalised.

However, by the late 1920s and early 1930s the Bolshevik ideal of family life was starting to fall apart:

- The cost of this “freedom” was huge. Lenin’s idea of providing crèches and canteens so women could operate freely within society was an enormous one and would have led to a doubling of government spending. It was impossible to fund and so the support for the new concept of the family was simply not there.
- Some men were listed as having up to 15 short-lived marriages over the course of the 1920s.
- Divorce was mainly initiated by men – 70% of divorces were carried out at the request of men.
- Housing shortages meant that after a divorce, ex-partners had to stay living together. This led to rapes and other forms of abuse.
- Fathers abandoned mothers with great regularity and then mothers had to abandon children to orphanages.
- Industrialisation under the Five Year Plans led to men leaving their families in the countryside to take up work in the towns.
- Abandoned women found life hard, and for some, prostitution was the only way to support themselves.
- Juvenile delinquency was very common and gangs of abandoned children roamed major cities begging and committing crime.
- Child prostitution was common.
- For every pregnancy that led to a child being born, three ended in abortion.
- Birth rates were falling as a result of the social and economic problems facing the Russian people.
- In Muslim areas, progress was very slow.

What is more, women made very little progress in terms of their position in society. During the First World War, women had been drafted into the workforce to such a degree that their numbers doubled. However, when the NEP was introduced, urban unemployment rose and women were out of work again. By 1929, the number of women in work was back to its 1913 level. Those women who were in work did an 8 hour day, followed by a further five hours at home. Men did nothing in terms of housework. Women’s pay was paid at a rate equal to 65% of a man’s.

Within politics women made equally-slow progress. In 1917 10% of party members were women; a proportion that only grew to 12.8% by 1928. The party elite was dominated by traditional Russian chauvinists and women were kept out of the top posts.

Amazingly, the organisation that was supposed to promote the position of women, the Zhenotdel, was closed down in 1930 because its job was complete. However, even if the position of women was far from equal to men by the late 1920s, on the whole it was better than the position before 1917.

Women At Work Under Stalin

The Five Year Plans led to a massive increase in the number of women working in the industry. At the beginning of the Five Year Plans there were 3 million women working in Russian industry. By 1940, this figure had risen to 13 million. By that year, 41% of all workers in heavy industry were women.

The contribution of women to the workforce was recognised in terms of education and training. In 1929, 20% of all places in technical and higher education had been reserved for women, by 1940 that figure had risen to 40%. However, women's wages were only 65% of the rate paid to men in the same job.

In the countryside women played a huge role in the agricultural economy. 80% of collective farm workers were women. Women also enjoyed high rates of employment in the education and health sectors; but here again, pay rates were lower than men's.

Women and Family Under Stalin

The "Family Code" and the "Great Retreat"

Although Stalin initially maintained the concept of the Bolshevik family, by the mid 1930s he was shifting his view on this issue. Stalin was aware of the problems listed above and by the mid-1930s he was making his "Great Retreat" on family policy and was moving back towards "traditional family values". The Family Code of 1936 said:

- Abortion was outlawed except for where a woman's life was in danger. Abortion rates fell and doctors found breaking the law were imprisoned for up to two years.
- Divorce became harder. The cost of a first divorce was 50 roubles¹, 150 for the second and 500 for the third and subsequent divorce. Divorce declined.
- Child support payments were introduced for men. A man with three children would have to pay 60% of his income to the mother.
- Cash payments were introduced to women who had larger families. Women with 7 children received 2000 roubles for five years and women with 11 children got 5000 roubles. In Moscow there were over 1000 families with in excess of 10 children. Birth rates did rise significantly between 1935 and 1940.

Also in 1936, incest, bigamy and homosexuality were banned.

¹ Average earnings in 1937 were around 3000 roubles per year. In the countryside the average was around 2000 roubles.

A sexual abstinence campaign was launched to discourage pre-marital sex and the police could arrest women of an “immoral appearance”. On collective farms “medical virginity checks” could be carried out. Contraception was discouraged and by 1936 no artificial contraception was being produced or sold.

Reinventing Marriage:

Marriage was made glamorous again. Wedding rings had been banned in the late 1920s, but were reintroduced in 1936. High quality marriage certificates were issued to give them a sense of longevity. Married Party members were rewarded with better housing and adultery was punished with expulsion from the Party.

Marriage rates were high. By 1937 91% of men and 82% of women aged between 30 and 39 were married.

However, marriage for women still meant household chores and childcare. This was often accompanied by paid factory work as well. It was far from enlightened.

Propaganda:

Women were encouraged to be the perfect mother and wife. Propaganda was used to encourage this image and even the wives of the party elite were used in this campaign. Stalin ordered that they become “mistresses of the Soviet home” by providing comfort to their husbands and children while at the same time they needed to do voluntary and charitable works. These “wife activists” were to set up homes that were “examples of order, warmth and comfort”.

Propaganda also showed Stalin as the “Father of the Soviet People” and pictures of him playing with his obedient children were published. The same propaganda attacked fathers who abandoned their children and women were shown as being noble and sacrificing.

Children Under Stalin

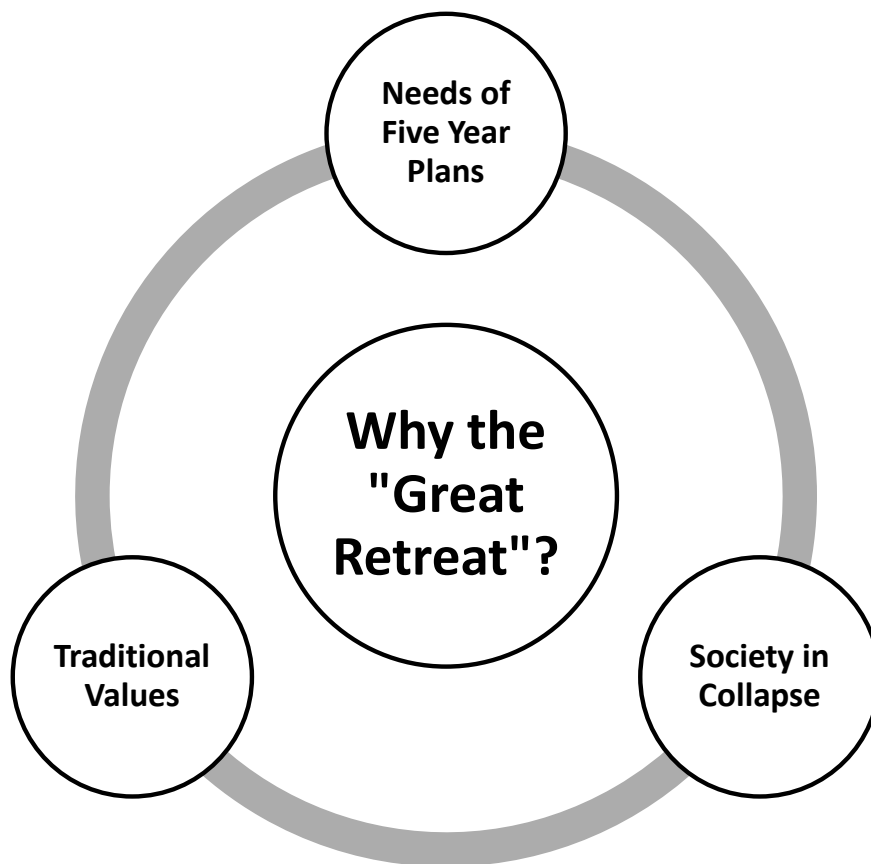
Lenin wanted a much more free and radical educational approach and as a result schools were made into democratic institutions where children had a great deal of influence. As a result teachers lost all control and educational standards fell.

By the late 1920s the government were keen to see this situation change and adopted a more traditional approach to education:

- Traditional school with old-fashioned structures returned.
- Discipline was stressed - well-behaved students would become obedient workers under the Five Year Plans.
- Uniform and basic expectations were enforced – girls had to wear pigtails.
- The Komsomol, the Soviet youth movement was told to “respect your parents, even if they are old fashioned”. However, they were also given the role of exposing class traitors and wreckers .
- Children were encouraged to be good citizens.

- Numeracy, literacy, science and History were taught alongside Communist ideology. The idea was to teach children to be good Communist workers.
- Homework and strict examinations were reintroduced.
- Stakhanovite spirit was introduced into schools –high performing teachers were rewarded and celebrated.
- Targets were set for teachers – they had to be met.
- However, all of this was expensive and fees were introduced.

Beyond the school system a great deal of effort was put into stamping out juvenile crime. In 1935, the old policy of mild rehabilitation was scrapped and the NKVD was ordered to clear the streets. Children over 12 were subjected to adult laws and children were rounded up and put into institutions. Parents of “hooligan children” were fined or risked losing their children to orphanages. Parents who had their children taken away were made to pay for their maintenance.



AS History: Unit 1 Stalin's "Personal Dictatorship"



(3) Persecution and control: the origins and course of the purges; culture and the arts in the service of a totalitarian regime.

Totalitarian Aspects of Stalin's regime:

- the ferocity of repression under Yagoda, Yezhov and Beria.
- the reasons for the extraordinary extent of the repressions between 1936 and 1938.
- its impact on both politics and society.

The 'cult of personality' and its development in the 1930s and during Stalin's last years.

The development of "Social Realism" in art and culture.

Possible exam questions could include:

To what extent did Stalin establish a personal dictatorship in the years 1929–39?

To what extent did Soviet Culture perform a political role in the USSR in the years 1924–53?

Section A: The Great Terror

Background

Terror was not new to Russia. The Tsar had used violence and repression before the Great War and the Communists under Lenin had continued the tradition in the early 1920s. Lenin had established the secret police, or Cheka, to combat counter revolutionaries. This morphed into the OGPU by the 1920s and was used to root out enemies within the Party. However, the OGPU did not use physical methods against these enemies and instead operated a system of surveillance and house arrest. In the late 1920s, after Stalin's rise to power was complete the OGPU helped organize the Dekulakisation and expansion of the Gulags. They also spied on workers and ran the show trials of the wreckers and saboteurs.

Clearly then, there was a tradition of political violence by the state. However, the 1930s saw this expand massively.

Kirov's Murder and the Show Trials

Yagoda and the NKVD:

The NKVD was formed in 1934 and absorbed the OGPU. Yagoda became head of the NKVD. He had been a member of the Red Army and the then the Cheka. He was a gambler and womaniser who loved the luxurious lifestyle he was able to carve out for himself. He had a huge collection of pornography and sex toys in his apartment and kept a collection of women's underwear for his sexual conquests (both willing and unwilling) to wear.

Murder of Kirov:

The event which triggered the Great Purges was the murder of Kirov in 1934. Opposition to Stalin's policies had started to grow with the launch of the first Five-Year Plan and collectivisation in 1928. Although the leaders of the Right of the party had been demoted or dismissed in 1929, their view that confrontation with the peasantry should be avoided came to the surface again in 1932 when collectivisation was leading to so much unrest in the countryside. The call for a more conciliatory approach was put forward in the Politburo, possibly by Kirov, and this posed a threat to Stalin's economic policies.

Kirov also managed to gain more support in the election for the 1934 Central Committee. Stalin mistrusted Kirov because of his popularity in the party and because, as the party leader in Leningrad, Kirov's power base was the former centre of opposition to Stalin.

For these reasons it has been suggested that the murder of Kirov was carried out on Stalin's order. Certainly the NKVD did all they could to help the assassin kill Kirov. The official explanation was that Kirov's assassin was a member of an opposition group led by Zinoviev and Kamenev under the direction of Trotsky, and, in a pattern which was to become familiar, one arrest led to the implication and arrest of others usually on trumped-up charges.

Stalin ordered the rounding up of those behind the murder of Kirov – a wave of terror was unleashed upon Russia as Trotskyite elements were rounded up.

The Trial of the Sixteen (1936):

Massive **show trials** were held in Moscow between 1926 and 1938. These were aimed at exposing the people behind crimes against the Soviet State. The first such trial was held in 1936 and involved the leaders of the Left Opposition, Kamenev and Zinoviev and fourteen comrades.

The Sixteen spent a year in prison before their trial and were charged with Kirov's murder and the attempted sabotage of the Five Year plans in order to overthrow the government. Torture and promises of leniency led Kamenev and Zinoviev confessing. The death sentence was passed and carried out. Forty three of their allies in the upper ranks of the Communist Party then disappeared without a trace.

Trial of the Seventeen (1937):

This dealt with Trotsky's former supporters and followed confessions extracted via torture. Of the seventeen defendants, thirteen were executed and four sent to gulags. The confessions were nonsense – one admitted murdering Kirov at a time when he was already under arrest.

By this point some senior Party figures were becoming worried about the use of arrests and show trials. They felt that the next victim would be Bukharin and this was felt to be a step too far. Stalin countered this by calling for a "**sharpening of class struggle**" in order to speed the Revolution. He made an ideological plea to the Party that as Socialism moved on a greater attack on its enemies was needed. In the Spring of 1937, the Central Committee supported this demand. Within three months Stalin had executed 70% of those present at the meeting.

Trial of the Twenty-One (1938):

The last of the great Moscow Show Trials was held in 1938 and were centered on Bukharin and Rykov. They were once again accused of Kirov's murder and of trying to overthrow the government. Stalin also had Bukharin charged with attempting the murder of Lenin.

Bukharin desperately pleaded with Stalin and pledged his support. Stalin responded by telling Bukharin that unless he confessed, his wife and newborn baby would be shot.

Bukharin made his confession, but refused to admit to the attempt on Lenin's life. He once again pleaded with Stalin for his life. This came to nothing. The judge at the trial described Bukharin as a "foul smelling heap of human garbage" and a "damnable cross between a fox and a swine". Bukharin and his co-defendants were shot.

Yezhov takes over

Stalin wanted a more radical head for the NKVD in order to ensure the terror was intensified. Stalin believed that Yagoda was too soft and that he had not persecuted the enemies of the Soviet Union

with enough vigour. Stalin was also aware that Yagoda had supported Bukharin in the later part of the 1920s.

In 1936 Yezhov replaced Yagoda as head of the NKVD. Yezhov was a small man, always drunk and very violent. His nickname “The Bloody Dwarf” was very appropriate.

With Yezhov at the head of the NKVD, Stalin set about speeding things up. He set targets for arrests, execution and exiles. The Terror grew and became almost indiscriminate as targets were set and the administrators and NKVD set out to meet them.

Purges of the NKVD:

With the purges, the amount of work generated for the secret police also grew and with it so did their influence. To ensure that the secret police posed no threat to Stalin, the purgers were themselves purged. In 1938 Yagoda, the former head of the NKVD, was shot after a show trial. His replacement Yezhov, oversaw the most excessive phase of the purges from 1936 to 1938. In the first six months as head of the secret police Yezhov purged over 3000 of its own personnel. The ‘*Yezhovschina*’ came to an end when Yezhov was himself dismissed in 1938; his arrest in early 1939 was partly due to Stalin’s need for a scapegoat for the excesses of the purges which were coming to an end.

Purges of the Red Army:

It was not only the party leadership that suffered during the Great Terror; in 1937 and 1938 the Red Army also saw an extensive purge of personnel. Three out of the five marshals were purged, fourteen out of sixteen army commanders and 37,000 officers were either shot or imprisoned. The navy lost every one of its admirals during the purge. The usual accusation leveled against members of the armed forces was of links with foreign countries. There may well be some truth in this as a few army leaders did have contacts with the German army dating back to secret agreements, such as the Rapallo Treaty, signed between the two governments in the 1920s.

More likely than involvement in foreign conspiracies was the threat posed by the army’s criticism of collectivisation. The peasantry, which provided a large percentage of rank and file soldiers, was demoralised by the hardships resulting from collectivisation and this was having a detrimental effect on army morale. For Stalin, the danger of these criticisms was made worse by the growth in the army’s importance with the increase in defence resources in the 1930s. The power of the army leaders had to be cut down and this thorough purge would achieve this.

Stalin was also afraid that in the event of a war with Germany, the Army could seize power and do a deal with Hitler in order to save the country from complete invasion.

Purges of wider society:

Although the higher levels of the party suffered the most, there were sweeping purges at local level too. Denunciations of communist officials were partly driven by a sense of justice. The old enemies: the kulaks, ‘bourgeois experts’ and Nepmen were rooted out as class enemies. Children were encouraged to inform on their parents if they suspected them of ‘capitalist tendencies’, and many

did. Having contact with an accused person was dangerous, as was not doing your duty by informing on people you suspected. Hence the Soviet joke about two Russians talking in a park:

FIRST MAN: What do you think of our great leader Stalin?

SECOND MAN: Exactly the same as you, comrade.

FIRST MAN: In that case I must arrest you.

Malice was responsible for some of the accusations, especially those against collective administrators. What also drove people to accuse others was the realisation that job opportunities were opened up by the removal of 'unworthy' comrades. The purges developed a dynamic of their own.

It is only since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent opening up of archives that the true scale of the purges can be assessed. NKVD archives reveal a rise in Gulag, or labour camp, inmates of half a million between 1937 and 1939. Two-thirds of the 1.3 million inmates in 1939 were labelled as either 'political criminals' or 'socially harmful'. In addition to this, nearly three-quarters of a million people were executed rather than imprisoned.

Stalin's enemies saw the purges as evidence of his paranoid tendencies. Stalin seems to have mistrusted everyone, including members of his own family. To Trotsky, the purges were evidence of Stalin's betrayal of the revolution and his creation of a personal dictatorship. The sheer scale of the purges does, however, point to a degree of support for Stalin's actions and purges at local level, often driven by the pressure of rank and file communists to rid the USSR of its class enemies in all their disguises. In the atmosphere of terror, which existed in the 1930s, no one seemed safe. The fear of family members being taken away in the middle of the night was real for many citizens and had a lasting impact on life in the Soviet Union.

Terror During the War

Beria replaced Yezhov in 1938 and remained at the head of the NKVD until he was executed after Stalin's death in 1953. His work was focussed on using terror to prepare for, and then win the war.

The Red Army:

In the early days of the war, military intelligence were purged for failing to spot the signs of the Nazi invasion. Then Beria was tasked with executing poorly-performing generals. However, Stalin was so short of military talent that he had to stop killing top officers and even released some who had been tortured and were awaiting execution so they could be sent to command at the front.

The enemy within:

Political prisoners were executed to prevent them from falling into the hands of the advancing Nazis. Some villages and whole ethnic groups were exiled to Siberia to prevent them from welcoming the

Nazis. Stalin ordered the exile of 460,000 Chechens. This was not possible because of the harsh weather. Beria's answer was to burn alive the ones that could not be moved within seven days.

Prisoners of War:

At the end of the war, POWs were rounded up and imprisoned in harsh conditions. Stalin said they had betrayed the motherland by surrendering to the Nazis. He also feared the west had planted spies in their ranks and were therefore not to be trusted.

The Final Purges

After the war, Stalin turned his attention the Jews in Russian society. He said they were too bourgeois and open to foreign influence. They were removed from top jobs and routinely victimised.

Stalin then set about attacking the heroic city of Leningrad. Stalin argued they were too independent and needed to be brought into line. Torture was used to extract confessions of treason from party officials.

On his final years Stalin turned his attention to his doctors. He believed they were trying to kill him. He had thirty of his doctors arrested and imprisoned for the so called "Doctors' Plot".

Why did it all happen?

Stalin at the Centre:

Stalin as dictator caused the Purges:

Stalin sat at the top of a totalitarian system that he dominated. He had all of the power, he gave all of the orders – he must have caused the Purges. Stalin had created a system of fear. Anyone within the system questioning him faced swift retribution. The Politburo met infrequently – in the 1920s it had met weekly.

The purges have been seen as evidence of Stalin's paranoia; as evidence of the personality defects of a dictator establishing his own ruthless power on the Soviet population. Psychological evidence of mental instability is difficult to prove but it is true that Stalin's behaviour became increasingly erratic as he got older. After the suicide of his second wife in 1932, Stalin became more and more reclusive, cut off from the world in his offices in the Kremlin and his dacha, a country villa outside Moscow. In these circumstances it would not be surprising if he became mentally unbalanced. Stalin saw opposition everywhere. He told Khrushchev: 'I trust nobody, not even myself'.

But can one man do all of this? Even if he had wished to, Stalin would not have been able to decide and control every issue. Stalin may have read long into the night but it was impossible for him to survey all the material necessary to keep on top of events in a country as large as the Soviet Union.

This situation required prioritising to enable Stalin to focus on those issues of direct concern to himself.

Stalin carried out the Purges to keep the industrial economy going:

- Between 1928 and 1931 many industrial specialists were arrested and executed for sabotage and espionage. Confessions were obtained following torture and interrogation.
- Stalin claimed that there was widespread sabotage and evidence does suggest that machines did break down and production targets were missed. However, the quality of the machines and the lack of training probably explained this.
- Also many of the “victims” were forced into their confessions.
- Stalin may have carried out the purges to ensure that those who were left would work hard.
- Stalin needed labour for the more inhospitable areas of Russia. The building of canals and mineral extraction needed forced labour that was expendable. The terror provided this.

Stalin carried out the Purges as he feared Fascist invasion:

It was obvious that Hitler hated the Communist system and wanted to destroy it. In 1936 Hitler re-occupied the Rhineland and the West did nothing so Stalin assumed (perhaps quite rightly) that the west was not going to stand up to Hitler and was keen to see a strong Germany in central Europe to act as an anti-communist force.

Stalin knew that his own country lagged behind the west in terms of economic and military power and this made Stalin fear the coming of war. Stalin had to make sure the Soviet system was free of spies and he felt he had to strip the army of anyone who may have questioned his conduct of any future war – therefore he purged the army and got rid of alternative leaders.

Equally, he had to force through economic reforms to provide the materials for war – opponents had to be purged.

- During 1938 Stalin approved at least 383 lists, containing 40,000 names. 39,000 of the people on those lists were executed. However, additional lists were signed by others – Molotov did 373 and Zhdanov did a further 177.
- Stalin would often annotate lists with comments about individual victims – “beat again and again” being one such comment.
- Even the NKVD was not safe from the terror. But was it simply inevitable that it would eat itself alive.

Stalin needed to regain control of a disobedient system:

- Stalin was at the peak of a complicated system.
- He dominated the system and gave it direction.
- However, locally the system was much more independent. The local officials tolerated corruption and deviation from the party line. Production often fell. Stalin needed to bring the system back into line so he purged it to control it.

- The secret police was divided and factional. Stalin had to keep the factions fighting against each other to stop them from attacking him.
- What is striking is that the Great Terror was launched in 1934 when the party's position seemed more secure. This would seem to indicate that Stalin was working to his own agenda, trying to secure his own personal position, rather than that of the party. In this sense, Stalin's use of terror differed from that of Lenin.
- The Left and Right Oppositions had attacked the economic policies of Stalin. The Left had criticised the concentration of power in Stalin's hands; the Right had expressed doubts about the forcible collectivisation of agriculture. Party officials such as Radek and Pyatakov had criticised the targets of the Five-Year Plans as unrealistic. The Red Army officers had been concerned about the impact of collectivisation on peasant morale in the armed forces. They had also established links with foreign countries under the secret treaties signed by the Soviet government with Germany. It was, perhaps, not surprising that suspicions regarding these links grew when Hitler started to adopt a more active foreign policy.

Stalin needed to get rid of his old enemies:

- In order to maintain his power Stalin needed to purge Kamenev, Zinoviev, Bukharin etc.
- Their power may have been diminished from 1929, but they posed a threat to Stalin.

Stalin on the Fringes:

The Soviet system caused the Purges:

- Stalin delegated his power to the wider party system. Internal security was delegated to NKVD who took things too far.
- Below this many minor local officials drove the purges on.
- Collectivising agencies were particularly keen to carry out their work and resorted to terror.
- Political rivalries were also important – party officials and local politicians saw the terror as a way of getting rid of opponents.

Terror was natural in Russia:

- The Tsarist system had used terror – the secret police, trial without arrest, executions, harsh prisons etc. The new regime after 1917 carried this on.
- Lenin had formed the Cheka and from 1921 banned all opposition within the party. There was precedent for purging the party.

The Purges were driven on by the people:

- Genuine mistakes were made, but the educated middle-class engineers were so mistrusted by the ordinary workers and they were not given the benefit of the doubt. The whole Communist Ideology said that the workers should not trust the educated middle classes. Stalin may not have intended this to happen. The climate of mistrust took on a life of its own.

- The Stakhanovite Movement whipped up fervour among the young. When their superiors were unable to provide the goods, the young zealots were keen to point the finger and have them purged.
- The people had become followers of the system. They believed in the idea of enemies of the state and they wanted to stop them. They keenly sought out the “criminals”.
- People betrayed rivals for housing and jobs – betraying a superior would clear the way for your own promotion.
- Recent evidence from social historians making use of sources that have become available since the collapse of the Soviet Union, has focused on the pressures exerted on Stalin and the leadership from rank and file party members. Party members were concerned about the continuing threat from enemies at home and abroad, and pushed for policies that would strengthen socialism in the USSR. Thus, Stalin was merely following the wishes of rank and file party members in bringing about the rapid industrialisation of the country.
- There is also evidence of the purges at local level resulting from conflict between local party members and regional authorities. Stalin may have directed the purges at the top but their scale at local level was determined by local pressures over which Stalin found it difficult to exercise control. Local studies have shown the situation on the ground, away from Moscow, to be far more chaotic than the traditional view of a dictatorship has indicated.

Yezhov and the NKVD created the momentum:

- In 1936 Yezhov became the head of the NKVD. He soon became known as the “Bloody Dwarf”. In the first six months in office he killed 3000 of his own officers who were suspected of crimes against the state.
- He fabricated evidence and set targets for arrests. If officers failed to find enough suspects, they in turn became suspects. This led to more arrests.
- Stalin had ordered the avoidance of witchhunts, but the NKVD ignored this. Stalin later blamed Yezhov for the excesses of the purges and had him executed in 1940. Stalin reigned in the NKVD when he realized it was getting out of hand and damaging the system itself.
- The NKVD created a climate of paranoia and fear. “Wreckers” and “saboteurs” were seen everywhere. Simple mistakes were seen as deliberate acts against the state.
- When people were arrested by the NKVD they were “encouraged” to betray others – this led to more victims who would implicate others.
- The NKVD rewarded informers with the property of those they had betrayed.

Impact of the Purges

Social Impact:

- During 1935/36 Yagoda convicted half a million people. 2,300 were shot and 405,000 sent to camps.
- In 1936/36 the **Yezhovschina** saw around 10% of the adult male population killed or sent to gulags. The urban managers and professionals were the main victims. Women were the least

likely victim, making up only 5% of arrests. 1.5 million were arrested, with 680,000 being shot by the NKVD.

- Families were destroyed by the arrests and the children of the “criminals” were expelled from school or humiliated by classmates and teachers.
- The Party leaders were swept away and replaced by a new generation.
- Some just invented a new identity to escape persecution.
- The fear of falling victim to the terror was ever-present.

Economic Impact:

- Economic chaos followed the arrest of key workers and managers.
- Production fell.
- The Five Year Plans were disrupted.

Political and Military Impact:

- The old guard were swept out.
- The army and navy was weaker in the short term –especially in 1941.
- Stalin’s grip on power was stronger.

Did Stalin achieve complete power?

Yes:

- Stalin made sure he had a hand in every aspect of the Party structure. His influence was felt on every committee and in every state institution.
- He squeezed any hint of democracy from the Party. He operated with an increasing influence over the Politburo and appointed his own supporters to key posts.
- Enemies were wiped out.
- The NKVD did Stalin’s bidding and attacked his opponents.

No:

- Stalin was unable to get his decisions out to the wider country and Party. They could be told what to do, but did not always do it.
- One man could not control everything – some decisions were beyond his control and the interpretation and implementation of orders could not be controlled by one man.
- Stalin seemed to have little idea as to what was going on in some areas.
- The Purges got out of control and took on a life of their own in some localities.
- Stalin reacted to events rather than shaping them.
- Local Party officials often ran their own areas without interference or much reference to central orders.

Section B:

Culture and the Arts

The Cultural Revolution

In the early Soviet period art and culture were experimental and very different to traditional art. Abstract art and unstructured cinema without plot or characters were encouraged. Modern industrial technology and the struggle of the workers were common themes.

After 1924 there was a much more concerted effort to use culture to further the aims of the government. This move was strengthened between 1928 and 1932 in what became known as the **Cultural Revolution**. It aimed to:

- Remove all traces of “bourgeois” culture.
- Instil socialist values into the people of the Soviet Union.
- Celebrate the achievements of the Soviet Union.
- Support government policy.

As the 1930s went on it also aimed to:

- Promote the “cult of personality” that grew up around Stalin.
- Encourage patriotism in the face of the threat of war.

This was all achieved in a number of ways:

- Sweeping out old bourgeois writers, artists, sculptors, film makers and actors.
- Placing greater emphasis on celebrating the worker as a hero in art and culture. This aspect was influenced by the “Constructivists” in the party who wanted to develop a new working class committed to the revolution.
- The Komsomol were used to root out inappropriate material and disrupt plays and shows that did not fit with the values of the Cultural Revolution.
- New writers groups such as the “Russian Association of Proletariat Writers” were formed to produce new literature that celebrated the achievements and experience of ordinary Russian - the “little man”.

Socialist Realism

In 1930, Stalin expressed his discontent at the state of art and culture in the Soviet Union. He wrote in an article in *The Bolshevik* saying that art should promote the state and be more accessible to the peasants and workers who had no understanding of the abstract art that had grown up since the revolution.

In 1932 the Cultural Revolution was effectively brought to an end. Stalin adopted a policy known as **Socialist Realism** – a vague term that was meant to encompass a wide range of ideas but was aimed at culture rooted in the people and be realistic in its outlook.

The “little man” was abandoned and replaced by the heroes of the Party who guided the country to greatness. This theme was common in many books and films of the 1930s. Heroes of Russian

History were also used and plotlines about secret agents thwarting foreign spies and plots littered popular literature and the cinema.

Writers and composers such as Boris Pasternak and Dmitri Shostakovich were strictly controlled by the state and their work was heavily censored. Similarly the official newspapers, Pravda and Isvestiya were used to spread Communist ideas.

Architecture was dominated by the new style of “Stalinist Baroque” – elaborate building with huge murals celebrating the achievements of the workers. Artists were encouraged to paint in the realist style.

Artists as Workers:

Artists were set targets and encouraged to promote the values of the state. The subject matter was set by central organisations. Artists were forced to do work on collective farms and construction sites to give them experience of life as a worker.

Artists who were unable or unwilling to meet these targets and demands were sent to gulags.

Inspirational Art:

Artists created sculptures to inspire workers and celebrate the achievements of the economy. Sculptures of new power stations, dams and even giant ball bearings were all created. The Five Year Plans were celebrated in art and posters. Collectivisation was also idealised and promoted. Famines and unrest were not part of the new art.

Building Up Stalin

All forms of art and popular culture were used to promote and celebrate Stalin. Film, sculpture, music, paintings and posters were all media used to promote the Vozhd.

The “Myth of Two Leaders”:

Stalin used art to rewrite history and place himself at Lenin’s side at key moments in the Revolution. This was usually completely inaccurate, but aimed to make Stalin appear to be “the Lenin of today”.

Trotsky and other rivals were removed from art and literature. Histories were written that totally ignored Trotsky’s role in the Revolution – Stalin’s role, was of course played up. Paintings were also retouched as Stalin’s old allies were killed and written out of history.

The Cult of Personality:

Officially, two cults existed – Lenin and Stalin. Stalin said he was to be portrayed as Lenin’s pupil. Lenin was given almost a religious image as the saviour of Russia. Songs, poems, paintings and films were all used to achieve this.

Stalin was also portrayed in art as a leader following Lenin’s path. Artists showed Lenin as a figure behind Stalin – a sort of ghostly guide watching over Stalin.

Threat of War

As the 1930s came to a close the threat of war was on the mind of the Party elite. Culture started to promote Russian Nationalism and old heroes were resurrected – this was especially true if these historical characters were famed for defeating invaders.

AS History: Unit 1

The Great Patriotic War



(4) The making of a superpower: the Great Patriotic War; devastation; war production; victory.

The USSR's survival and triumph in the Second World War:

- the cost and damage inflicted
- the reasons for ultimate Soviet victory
- the significance of this for the USSR's status as a superpower
- the staggering success of maintaining and increasing war production
- the importance of lend-lease.

Possible exam questions could include:

- How far was the dramatic development of a war economy responsible for the USSR's victory in the Second World War?
- To what extent was the support of the USA the main reason for Russia's victory in the Second World War?
- To what extent was the USSR becoming a superpower the main consequence of its involvement in the Second World War?

The Coming of War:

Since the 1920s, Stalin had been convinced that Russia would have to fight a war against the western powers. He particularly believed that Germany was preparing for a war aimed at crushing the Soviet Union. When Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933, this possibility became almost a certainty in Stalin's mind. His paranoia was heightened by the formation of the Axis between Italy, Germany and Japan and compounded by the policy of Appeasement followed by Britain and France.

In 1939 Stalin aimed to delay the war and buy time to prepare by signing the Nazi-Soviet Pact with Hitler and in doing so he won a buffer zone in the form of eastern Poland.

The truce with Hitler came to an end in June 1941 when Operation Barbarossa saw the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union.

The Course of The War:

In June 1941 Operation Barbarossa saw a blitzkrieg attack on Russia that led to a near defeat for the Red Army. Hitler's troops swept into western Russia and headed towards Moscow. Stalin was far from ready for war. He had purged the armed forces and so weakened their leadership. When the invasion came, Stalin was slow to react and seemed to undergo some form of breakdown. Planning was chaotic and decisions were slow. Defeat was a possibility.

Operation Typhoon was launched by the Nazis in September 1941 with the aim of capturing Moscow. General Zhukov counter attacked and pushed the Nazis back.

Stalin issues his "not a step back" order and showed his determination not to lose any of his major cities. Leningrad, Stalingrad and Moscow all held out.

Hitler shifted his attention to the southern city of Stalingrad. Operation Blue aimed to capture the city in June 1942, but a long and bloody battle cost 1.9 million lives and broke the German forces.

The Russian counter-offensive, Operation Uranus, was launched in September 1942 and the German forces were pushed into a retreat.

Over the next three years the Red Army fought long and bitter battles and managed to recapture all land lost and then sweep towards Germany. In January 1945, the Red Army entered Germany. Their treatment of the German people was brutal.

By April, the Red Army was in Berlin and in early May the Germans surrendered.

The Cost of The War:

The Human Cost:

- The exact cost in lives lost is unknown and hotly disputed. However, around 10% of Russia's population (over 20 million people) was killed.
- 85 million Russians (45% of the population) lived under Nazi control for some part of the war.
- Huge numbers of minority groups who Stalin thought would support the Nazis were forcibly moved. Well over half of these people died in the harsh conditions they encountered in Siberia.
- Production in factories was increased and the working day followed suit. A working day of 12-18 hours was common and holidays were unheard of. Agricultural workers were expected to pull ploughs by hand as tractor factories were switched to tank production.
- Discipline in factories was strict – lateness was not tolerated and was seen as an offence punishable with a five year prison term.
- Women were forced into backbreaking work. In some regions women made up 75% of the workforce. This hard labour was on top of having to deal with family life and shortages.
- Family life was disrupted and teenagers were drafted into work.
- Food shortages were common and in many cities people were reduced to eating rats and birds.

The Economic Cost:

- Russia lost a great deal of agricultural and industrial production to the Nazis when they captured western Russia. This was compounded by the drafting of workers into the armed forces.
- By 1942, industry was running at 59% of its 1940 level. Grain output fell to 36% of its 1940 level.
- Stalin gave orders that a "scorched earth policy" was to be followed. This meant destroying all factories and infrastructure that was in danger of falling into Nazi hands. This tore the heart out of the Soviet economy. When the Germans were forced to retreat, they destroyed anything that was left in order to prevent it falling into Russian hands. Overall Russia lost 70,000 villages, 32,000 factories and 65,000km of railway line.

Why did the Soviet Union Win:

The War Economy:

Stalin's preparation for war was patchy. He had geared the later Five Year Plans to prepare for war and this led to a massive rise in military production. However, the production was not enough to meet the targets Stalin had set and therefore the military was not that well equipped in 1941.

This does hide the fact that in 1941 Russia was still able to out-produce the Nazi economy. This out-production was to become more marked once Russia recovered from the initial shock of the invasion. Stalin moved all production to the east to avoid capture by the Nazis. Whole factories

were shifted and production disruption was minimised. By November 1941, 1523 factories had been moved east and had resumed production. Military production doubled between 1941 and 1944.

Stalin simplified the chaotic administrative system. He and his close advisors dominated decision making and ensured that information was gathered and used to ensure that production was efficient and focussed. As the war went on Stalin relaxed these controls and allowed local managers to make what was most suited to the resources and workers that were available at any given time.

In contrast the Nazi war economy was disorganised and unfocussed. Too much was spent on consumer goods and over-complicated weapons were produced in small numbers at a time when the Soviet economy spent nothing on consumer goods and mass produced simple weapons.

German Tactical Mistakes:

Hitler's over-confidence and failing judgement led to tactical mistakes:

- Fighting a war on two fronts – Russia in the east and Britain in the west – split his forces and put too much of a strain on his troops and resources. Invading Russia was a mistake.
- Operation Barbarossa was launched too late in the year and Hitler ran into Stalin's greatest ally "General Winter". The Russian winter weakened the German army. It was ill-equipped and unable to fight a winter war against a Red Army used to the sub-zero conditions.
- Hitler split his forces in Russia. He went for Moscow in the middle, Leningrad in the North and Stalingrad in the south. His supply lines could not cope and his troops were thinly spread.
- Hitler refused to follow the advice of his generals and he became increasingly out of touch.
- Some of the Russian people had welcomed the invading forces as liberators from Stalin's terror. However, the Nazis treated the Russian people harshly – they turned against the Nazis and made occupation of the west very difficult for the Germans.

Military Strength:

Marshall Zhukov ran a good campaign and ensured his forces were not worn out. He did not launch an immediate counter attack against the Nazi forces. Instead, he let the Nazis overstretch themselves and become tired and worn down. When this was achieved he used his reserves to smash into the Nazis and send them into retreat. He coordinated attacks and used partisans as well as regular soldiers to harass the retreating Nazis. Stalin trusted his Generals much more than Hitler trusted his. Stalin's Generals showed initiative and were allowed to fight the war with little interference provided they managed to win battles.

The Russian People:

Stalin knew the Russian people were not going to fight to defend the communist system. They had not really enjoyed prosperity under Stalin and the Terror had alienated many of the Russian people. He therefore had to rally them in some way. He did this using propaganda. He called for the Russian people to defend the "Motherland" in the "Great Patriotic War". He urged the people to fight the foreign invaders – it was a patriotic plea, not an ideological one. Stalin invoked the image of Napoleon who had been defeated in Russia in 1812. History and patriotism were used to rally the Russian people. Stalin also allowed religion to be revived – God was portrayed as being on Stalin's side against the Nazi invaders.

This worked and the people of Russia fought hard and worked hard to defeat the Nazis. In Leningrad the Russian people held out against a German siege for 900 days. Food ran out. Families ate the wallpaper in their houses to stay alive and lived without fuel in the bitter winter. People were willing to fight and die and work long hours.

Support From the Allies:

The Russians were in part victorious because they were in an alliance with the British and Americans. The combined effort of these three great powers drained the Nazi regime and made defeat inevitable. Although Stalin constantly, and justifiably, complained that the British and Americans would not open up a second front in the west to help relieve the pressure on the Russian people, they did provide some real support for the Russians.

President Roosevelt trusted Stalin and was willing to provide him with aid under **Lend Lease**. From November 1941 extensive military aid was shipped to Russia via convoys. However, the aid was limited in terms of the proportion of weapons used by the Russians. Only 2% of artillery, 10% of tanks and 12% of planes came from the allies. The rest were produced inside Russia. Lend lease did not even provide a basis for this production. Only 4% of Russia's raw material and engineering needs came from the USA.

However, in terms of food and transport the story is quite different. 17% of the Red Army's diet was supplied by the USA. Of the 2000 trains operated by Russia during the war, 1900 were American. In addition to this thousands of jeeps and trucks were supplied by the USA.

Perhaps the greatest support provided by the Allies was in terms of men. While the Allies did not actually fight in Russia, they tied up German troops, ships and aircraft all over Europe and North Africa.

New World Order:

When the war ended, Russia found itself as one of the two Superpowers:

- Russia controlled a huge part of Eastern Europe including Eastern Germany, Poland, Hungary, Romania and Czechoslovakia. These nations were forced to adopt the communist model and be allies of the Soviets. They were also exploited economically.
- A new Five Year Plan and massive defence spending boosted the Russian economy.
- Slave labour, terror and a near complete neglect of consumer goods allowed more growth.
- The Red Army remained a great force and by 1949 Russia was a nuclear power. By 1953 Russia had the hydrogen bomb.