

# Stalin's Russia 1924 - 1953

## Struggle for Power

Issue over the NEP split the party into right and left.

Trotsky wanted the NEP gone because it created Kulaks and led to a lack of government control in the countryside.

Bukharin wanted to keep it because it created alliances between workers and peasants  
Stalin didn't get involved so could keep supporters of both Trotsky and Bukharin.

## Trotsky vs. Stalin

Trotsky thought the party was becoming too bureaucratic, with a hierarchy. He wanted permanent world revolution

Stalin wanted a government totally dominated by communist party and socialism in one country

## The Triumvirate

Stalin, Kamenev and Zinoviev. They promoted the Cult of Lenin and criticised Trotsky

## The Duumvirate

Kamenev and Zinoviev realised the threat of Stalin and left the Triumvirate to join Trotsky, but were then disgraced as traitors to the communist party!

Stalin then formed duumvirate with Bukharin.

But Stalin became increasingly critical of the NEP in 1927 and blamed it for the grain procurement crisis, so dropped the NEP in favour of collectivisation, agriculture and rapid growth in industry.

## Early Stages in Stalin's Rise

### Role of personalities

**Trotsky** - had many enemies. He was described as arrogant by Lenin and had become isolated after his death. He was ill and had a lack of ambition to lead, as seen when he was offered a government position and rejected it. He underestimated Stalin!

**Kamenev and Zinoviev** - were politically naïve. They were too intellectual and engrossed in political debate, causing them to fail to see Stalin building up support.

**Bukharin** - described as the "party sweetheart" as he was so nice. He was loyal to Stalin and during Stalin's left turn he just gave up and resigned.

**Stalin** - cunning, manipulative, ruthless, underestimated. This is seen in his exploitation of positions, such as GENSEK. He tapped phones, abused the ban on factions and controlled who sat in meetings, building himself support.

## Agriculture

USSR was 50-100 years behind and had to catch up in 10 years or be crushed.

Stalin wanted agriculture and industry to work together

## Reasons for Collectivisation

### Economic reasons for Collectivisation

Modernising farming to make it more efficient

Produce more grain with fewer workers - sharing equipment, living on collectives etc

To cheaply feed industrial workers to aid the 5 year plans

To create more grain for exports in return for machinery for both farming and industry

### Ideological Reasons for Collectivisation

End capitalism and private ownership and end NEP

To end the Kulaks who aided capitalism

### Political Reasons for Collectivisation

To strengthen communism through greater control over collectives

To increase the number of industrial workers through surplus farmers

To teach peasants about communism in larger, united units.

### Personal Reasons for Collectivisation

Helped Stalin outmanoeuvre his rivals

Peasants were traditional and not all of them had support for communism or Stalin. It was easier for Stalin to brainwash peasants on united collectives

Kulaks were made into scapegoats for peasant opposition = dekulakisation

But farming suffered from their removal

Collectivisation of Agriculture

Grain procurement crisis 1928 - food shortages so people hoarded it! Secret Police and soldiers requisitioned grain

People had to give up their land, homes and animals and get moved to collectives

Private ownership abolished

## Consequences of Collectivisation

People began to destroy things like animals and grain, rather than hand it over to the state

Stalin blamed local officials!

Many left collective farms

Stalin's left turn

Stalin re-introduced Collectivisation and by 1934, 70% of all farms were collectives

1930 Dizzy with Success speech - "shouldn't have forced collectivisation on you! You can plant more crops and get some profit!" But this was a lie and he requisitioned all the grain through his re-launch of collectivisation

This renewed peasant opposition and led to more famine 1932 and disappointing agricultural output

Private plots allowed 1932 and model charter 1935 allowed a compromise with peasants - neo NEP - peasants could sell surplus from private kitchen plots

This helped 5 Year Plans by providing A steady output of grain to the cities, as well as increasing exports

Collectives didn't need as many farmers so many went to work in cities and boost industry

Party Control

Churches converted into barns or clubs, minimising the influence of the Orthodox Church

Lots of control over the countryside! "Socialism in the countryside"

Stalin's hold on the party increased, getting rid of anyone who wasn't loyal!

## Results of Collectivisation

Agriculture began to recover, but was limited

The Rural population fell

Stalin was arguably more interested in removing political enemies (kulaks)

Neo NEP as a result of peasant opposition = compromise with capitalism

### Social results

Food Production disrupted, so was initially less grain

Peasants could benefit from kitchen plots

State procurement of grain increased, regardless of the harvest

Contributed to rural famine

### Economic Results

More efficient farming, arguably

Extra farmers involved in the city

Urban population doubled

**But** many agricultural workers still unskilled and using backward methods

Shortage of peasant produce such as nails and bricks

Still dependant on man power

### Political results

Socialism in the countryside had to be forced

Had more control over the Peasants

Easier to control collectives **BUT still passive opposition!**

# Industrialisation and the Five Year Plans

Reasons for the Plans/economic problems

The economy was backward and the NEP was too slow. With Russia only just reaching 1913 levels of production in major industries

"We are 100 years behind and have 10 years to catch up or be crushed!"

Limited machinery - relied heavily on man power

Production was very limited

Unemployment

Shortage of grain which was needed for industrialisation (food and exports)

NEP unpopular with left due **to ideology** and trying to achieve socialism in one country

**Stalins personal ambition** - left turn - outmanoeuvre Bukharin and end the triumvirate

**Political reasons** as would strengthen the communist party as they would control all of industry

Need to develop industry before agriculture - machinery for modern farming

## The Plans

### The First Five Year Plan 1928-1932

Created and administered by Gosplan

Concentrated on steel, iron, machines, tools, electricity and transport

Targets = 115% coal, 200% Steel, 335% electricity

Workers who did not reach their targets were publically humiliated and could even be sent to the dreaded Gulag!

Those who succeeded targets were rewarded - motorbikes and wage differentials!

Created specialist workers - stahanovites

### The Second Five Year Plan

Focused on new industries such as fancy chemicals!

Concentrated also on heavy industry and steel production

Also focused on communications

More consumer goods were promised

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Five Year Plan 1933 - 1937**

Aimed to improve agriculture with machines/tractors

Transport links were improved

SOME attempts at increasing consumer goods, but still a low priority

Show pieces for propaganda e.g Moscow metro

System of wages introduced

Some industries fell short of goals - oil fell short by 20 million tons , but output overall increased

Diverted into amunitions

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Five-year plan: (1938-1941)**

Different priorities as war with Germany was increasingly likely

More consumer goods such as radios and cars

Produced things to help the war- aircrafts, tanks weapons and by 1940 1 third of the budget on military

Output grew little due to purges which imprisoned or executed many workers

Had a stable workforce - internal passports - prevent SOME flitting

## **Successes of the Plans**

Created new industries from scratch focusing on coal iron and steel

Created MAGNITOGORSK in the Urals, which started off as a small village and ended up as one of the biggest industrial centre in the world

Doubles heavy industry output

Seemed to transform economy as they claimed they finished in 4 years

2<sup>nd</sup> plan introduced new industries such as chemicals

More communications that helped move resources around the country

SOME more consumer goods e.g bread

Stakanovites = exceeding of targets and created specialisation

Show pieces such as the Moscow Underground - shows what Russia was capable of

3<sup>rd</sup> plan had a huge scale of ammunitions

Urban Population doubled! = huge increase in workers

Growth in use of electricity and hydroelectric power

New towns created from scratch! Stalinos

More tractors in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Plan

## Failures of the Plans

Poor quality! E.g Gigantomania - big, but crap quality

Fraud - people exaggerated their targets

Machines often broke down and people weren't trained

Inefficiency - duplication and waste

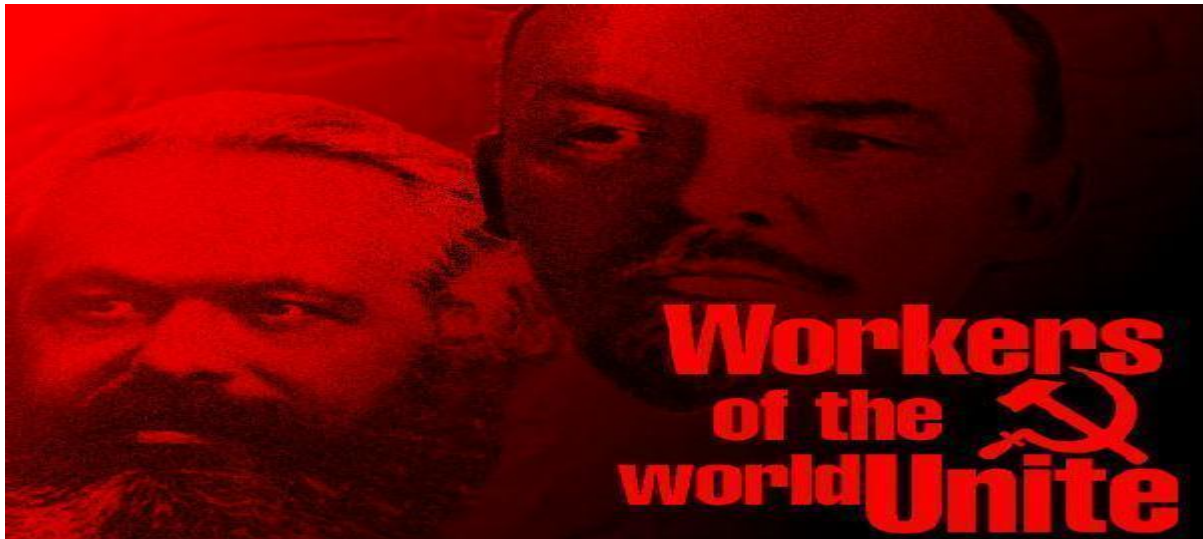
Poor planning by people who didn't understand the economy

"Flitting" occurred where workers went from job to job to find better conditions. This was illegal!

Shortage of nails and bricks after collectivisation disrupted the peasant's lives

Emphasis on show!

Still largely relied on man power



## Terror and Purges

### The First Purges, 1930–33

Including anybody who opposed industrialisation, and the kulaks who opposed collectivisation.

### The Great Purges, 1934–39

#### Political Opponents

1934: Kirov, a rival to Stalin, was murdered. Although he probably ordered the assassination, Stalin used it as a chance to arrest thousands of his opponents.

1934–1939, Stalin's political opponents were put on 'Show trials', where they pleaded guilty to impossible charges of treason (e.g. Zinoviev and Kamenev 1936/ Bukharin, Tomsky & Rykov 1938).

### Purges of Party

Ryutin challenged Stalin, and called for a 'fresh start' calling Stalin the "gravedigger of the revolution". Stalin called for his immediate execution- the party successfully argued against him and he was instead imprisoned for 10 years. He was eventually executed, but the **Ryutin affair** showed that Stalin didn't have full control- maybe explaining why earlier purges concentrated on the party itself.

Kirov (leader of Lennigrad Communist Party) was murdered, probably on prders of Stalin cause he got more votes. Stalin used this to his advantage and anyone suspected of disloyalty was murdered, sent to prison/work camps or put onto public trials.

Communist leadership purged – 93 out Of 139 members killed

Communist party was purged – millions of its member killed out of 3 million



All those who played a role in Lenin's government were purged

Stalin was the only one left from the original politburo

Trotsky exiled, then executed 1940

### **Purges of the Army**

Claimed they had/supported Nazis

1 third of army officers purged

Removed 3 of 5 officials, and 13 of 15 commanders

Showed Stalin was losing touch with reality as he needed them for the expected war!!

### **Mass Murder**

NKVD orderd to remove anti soviet elements

Produced a list of 250000 people to be executed

1.5 million executed overall

### **The purges – Why?**

Some argue Stalin set up the terror to tighten control and strengthen his position

Others argue the terror was a logical consequence of communism

Revisionists argue the terror resulted from competing members of the communist party

### **The purges – how?**

Murder of kirov, Yagoda

Run first by NKVD bosses - Yagoda, then Yezhov, then Beria

Hundreds of thousands of party officials, army officers, and ordinary citizens were arrested, imprisoned, or shot

Leading counter revolutionaries were publically tried in show trials

All old Bolsheviks were removed

### **The Purges – Results**

Climate of fear created in the Soviet Union

People lived in constant fear of being denounced

Disruption to industry and economy

Red Army greatly weakened

Stalins grip on soviet state stronger than ever

## The Show Trials

### Show trials Occurrences

**First Trial 1936** - first trial (Trial of the Sixteen) was of the Trotskyist-Zinoviev Terrorist centre (Kamenev and Zinoviev etc)

The accused were forced to sign false confessions and were coached on what to say

They were told their families would be spared if they "confessed"

Accused of conspiring to murder Kirov - when this was most likely Stalin

Accused of undermining the 5 year plans

**2<sup>nd</sup> Trial 1937**- "Trial of the Seventeen" - Red Army Chief accused of spying, arrested and shot along with thousands of officers and admirals

Accused close friends of Lenin of spying for Nazis

**3<sup>rd</sup> Show trial** - Yagoda, Bukharin, and Rykov. And eventually Trotsky in 1940

Bukharin accused of plotting to kill Lenin

### Purpose of the trials

Eliminate Stalin's enemies- real AND imagined to secure his position, perhaps because of Stalin's paranoia

To demonstrate Stalin's power and strength

Stalin wanted revenge on those who had earlier underestimated him and criticised him and his policies

Act as a warning to others to not oppose Stalin

Create a climate of fear so people obey Stalin

Justify the NKVD terror

Provide scapegoats for failures in industry

Confirm Stalin's role as saviour for uncovering plots - cult of personality

### **Results of the Show Trials**

Confirmed Stalin's leadership and his Policies - removing Old Bolsheviks

Stalin was surrounded by "yes men"

Rival authorities eg NKVD bosses, were controlled, strengthening Stalin's hold over party and state

Contributed to a climate of fear in which people denounced others to show their loyalty  
- increased use of terror in the Gulag

People mostly cooperated, or at least pretended, with Stalin's policies but were passively resistant

Did not get to the bottom of the problems

Disrupted industry by loss of experts to the show trials.

## **Life in Stalin's Russia**

### **Women in Stalin's Russia**

#### **Women in Industry**

Women already encouraged to work by Lenin, though most men did not help at home

Women encouraged to help work on the 5 year plans

Between 1922 and 1937 2 of new factory workers were women

Lenin had already created nurseries for the children, which helped indoctrinate children from an early age!

#### **Collectivisation**

Women had traditionally played a large role in farming

Stalin wanted to make sure they were a large part of the collective work force

## **Stalin's attitude to Women**

He had traditional views

He was prudish

Wanted women to work, but didn't approve of things like free love!

Because of this, he was against many of Lenins ideas regarding family

## **"The Great Change"**

After the communist revolution, family life was under great strain

Industrialisation, collectivisation, and famine caused thousands of families to break up

Huge increase in the amount of abandoned children and juvenile crime became a massive issue

## **Stalin Policies and Views - Great Retreat**

Stalin enforced a series of laws curbing lenins reforms on the family

Homosexuality and Prostitution were made illegal

Need to increase population so introduced the "Family Code" 1936, whereby abortion was outlawed

Family code reflected Pravda 1935, which told children to love and respect parents

The Great Retreat - Divorce became more difficult and expensive. Women were told they had no right to deny the joys of motherhood, and women with more than 6 children were rewarded!

Stalin regarded the family as an ideal unit of discipline

## Did women have it better under Stalin?

### Yes

Many women had greater access to education and to a professional career

Could be rewarded for having a big family

Greater educational opportunities for women

Women represented the stakhanovite movement in the countryside

Wives of party officials could be involved in politics - but were still pretty much ignored in the communist party and expected to stay and look after the house and involvement in politics was frowned upon

### No

Many argue that life became harder because their rights decreased as well as increased pressure to work AND bring up children at the same time

Harsh living conditions - often shared and overcrowded housing

Women bore the brunt of everyday problems e.g. Bread queues

Could not have an abortion - almost forced into having children

Women who had illegitimate children were badly stigmatised

Few married women had time to join the communist party

Often had lower positions at work

Got paid less than men

Women still expected to look after the home as well as work - dual burden and triple shift



## Education under Stalin - great retreat

Nursery, primary, secondary schools and Universities were increased

Education was very strict

Range of subjects, but always taught hard work, obedience and loyalty, indoctrinating children into ideologies of communism

Communist policies became the most important subject

Went back to traditional teaching methods

Young people were encouraged to go into higher education and adults encouraged to go into adult teaching programs

Stalin encouraged people to take up mathematics, science and technology. Women could even get university places - 60% undergraduates were women

Education geared towards creating the new, super, soviet man!

## Religion under Stalin

Communists wanted to eradicate religion

Illegal to hold religious ceremonies

Churches closed and priests accused of spying

Religious people taxed more and their children not allowed to go to school

Wearing Wedding rings was banned

## Culture and Arts

### **Art before Stalin**

Incomprehensible to Russian masses

Painting was very experimental e.g "Here is a black dot on a canvas"

Russian art celebrated modern technology in the form of modern art

Reconstructing the Arts

Stalin hated soviet art!

Believed art should help promote government views, not individual creativity

### **Social Realism-Artists for workers and leaders**

Art reflected party spirit, national spirit and representing new thinking

Also sold economic and social policy to the Russia people

Artists were set targets for the number of works they had to produce

Socialist Realist art was designed to inspire the workers

The five year plans were the main focus of the paintings

Artists also tried to glorify Collectivisation, showing plenty of food and machinery in the countryside, even though there was famine

Stalin wanted to give the impression he was Lenin's right hand man, and wipe other important figures from Russia, particularly Trotsky

Erased Trotsky from the party history

Stalin had people removed from paintings and pictures e.g Yagoda

Emphasis on Russian heroes and stakhanovites

## The Cult of Personality

Stalin wanted idolisation of Lenin to strengthen his regime and give people something to replace the symbol of Christianity

Paintings of Stalin often hinted that the ghost of Lenin was always with him - painting "long live the Stalinist order of heroes and stakhanovites

Good things in life associated with Stalin

Represented Stalin as a war leader, world leader, an intellectual, lover of children, demi god.

Not just about Stalin, but also about successes in the regime

### Conclusion

Stalin's regime was built on fear, but also visions of a better society to inspire people to continue through the hardships of industry and farming

Stalin's art allowed people to escape From everyday life, tying them more closely to the regime

Socialist Realism as well as terror can be seen as a form of social control



## The Making of a Superpower

The Great Patriotic War To what extent was the USSR ready for War 1941?



## **Was Prepared/Strengths**

Had prepared for the invasion of Normandy for two years

Trained huge forces

Discipline in the Red Army was tightened with the reintroduction of divisions between army officers and men

Started directing economy into aiding war

Industry helped the war, with armaments being produced and people working much longer hours - 10 hours, 7 days a week. Anyone who was late for work was put in prison!

Russia had a huge advantage over its foreign powers as it had extensive network of spies

Russian war production compared favourably with that of the Germans, Germany spent more money on preparation from 1935-40, but by the eve of war Russia overtook German military spending, as the Russian economy was more powerful.

By 1941 putting out 230 tanks and 700 aircraft per month

Milit-experts consider Soviet T-34 tank was most effective tank of WWII

## **GERMAN MISTAKES**

Assuming USSR was weak and collapse imminent, based on supposed weakness of post-purge army

Assuming Blitzkrieg tactics would lead quick Germans to surround slow Red Army

## **Was Not Prepared/weaknesses**

However Stalin's paranoia undermined his efforts - no decent commanders

During 1937 -8 the Red Army was purged meaning lots of experience was lost

Did not plan for a specific type of war - Jack of all trades, master of none

Not planned for a specific type of war, built forces to cope with all scenarios, kept changing priorities

## **How was the USSR able to win the war?**

Outnumbered Axis forces

Russian winter - repeatedly upset Nazi plans (1941 - 42, 1942 - 43)

Resilience & determination of the Russian people (over 17 million killed, but they still fought on!) -

'Borodino spirit' - fostered by Stalin's successful propaganda campaigns to raise morale, inc. not persecuting the Church (prepared to use any means to give the Russians the will to fight on)

Strong leadership - Stalin (civil) & Zhukov (military) - Zhukov was largely given a free hand by Stalin in conducting the war, unlike Hitler who constantly meddled in military plans - Red Army reorganised effectively into modern fighting force with specialist units - 'Tank Armies'; 'Shock Armies'; partisans behind enemy lines; massed artillery formations - after damage of the Purges, Winter War & initial disaster of 1941.

Terror among civilians and soldiers enforced by the NKVD & Death to Spies - ultimately the Soviet peoples had to fight even if they did not want to.

Hatred of Nazis (sworn enemies of Communism) - especially after the atrocities committed against Soviet civilians.

T34 tank - a decisive weapon - mass-produced - best tank of the war

Industrial production continued in the east - 1300 factories moved from the war zone to the new industrial areas beyond the Urals e.g. Magnitogorsk.

Aid from the western allies - intelligence reports from UK, (code-breaking carried out by ULTRA) and industrial products from USA - LEND LEASE - USA supported Russia in war by providing SPAM!!