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

The Duumvirate

Kaminev and Zinoviev realised the threat of Stalin and left the Trimvirate 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% if 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 dependent 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 administrated 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 - stahanoites

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

2nd 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 ammunitions

3rd 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
2nd plan introduced new industries such as chemicals
More communications that helped move resources around the country
SOME more consumer goods e.g bread

Stakhanovites = exceeding of targets and created specialisation

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

3rd 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 2nd 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 orders 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 members 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 ordered to remove anti-soviet elements.

Produced a list of 250,000 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, Yogoda.

Run first by NKVD bosses – Yogoda, then Yeshov, then Beria.

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

Leading counter-revolutionaries were publicly 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-Zinoviette Terrorist centre (Kaminev 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 the "confessed"
Accused of conspiring to murder Kirov - when this was most likely Stalin
Accused of undermining the 5 year plans

**2nd 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

**3rd Show trial** - Yogoda, 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 Stalins 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 Stalins 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 populatin 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. CWomen 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 were 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 in to 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 - duel 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. Yogoda

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 ever 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 Stalins paranoia undermind 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 - LAND LEASE - USA supported Russia in war my providing SPAM!!