

Name:

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Joseph Stalin: Industrialization, Communism, and Totalitarianism

Joseph Stalin (1878-1953) was the dictator of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) from 1928 to 1953. Under Stalin, the Soviet Union was transformed from a peasant society into an industrial and military super-power. However, he ruled by terror, and millions of his own citizens died during his brutal reign. Born into poverty, Stalin became involved in revolutionary politics, as well as criminal activities, as a young man. After Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) died, Stalin outmaneuvered his rivals for control of the party. Once in power, he collectivized farming and had potential enemies executed or sent to forced labor camps. Stalin aligned with the United States and Britain in World War II (1939-1945) but afterward engaged in an increasingly tense relationship with the West known as the Cold War (1946-1991).

Define Totalitarianism:

Why would the Soviet Union use the hammer and sickle as their symbol?



Joseph Stalin

Born on December 18, 1879, in Gori, Georgia, Joseph Stalin rose to power as General Secretary of the Communist Party, becoming a Soviet dictator upon Vladimir Lenin's death. Stalin forced rapid industrialization and the collectivization of agricultural land, resulting in millions dying from famine while others were sent to camps.

The fledgling Soviet government went through a violent period after the revolution as various individuals vied for position and control. In 1922, Stalin was appointed to the newly created office of general secretary of the Communist Party. Though not a significant post at the time, it gave Stalin control over all party member appointments, which allowed him to build his base. He made shrewd appointments and consolidated his power so that eventually nearly all members of the central command owed their position to him. By the time anyone realized what he had done, it was too late. Even Lenin, who was gravely ill, was helpless to regain control from Stalin.

After Lenin's death, in 1924, Stalin set out to destroy the old party leadership and take total control. At first, he had people removed from power through bureaucratic shuffling and denunciations. Many were exiled abroad to Europe and the Americas, including presumed Lenin successor Leon Trotsky. However, further paranoia set in and Stalin soon conducted a vast **reign of terror**, having people arrested in the night and put before spectacular show trials. Potential rivals were accused of aligning with capitalist nations, convicted of being "enemies of the people" and summarily executed. The purges eventually extended beyond the party elite to local officials suspected of counterrevolutionary activities.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Stalin reversed the Bolshevik agrarian policy by seizing land given earlier to the peasants and organizing collective farms. This essentially reduced the peasants back to serfs, as they had been during the monarchy. Stalin believed that **collectivism** would accelerate food production, but the peasants resented losing their land and working for the state. Millions were killed in forced labor or starved during the ensuing famine. Stalin also set in motion rapid industrialization that initially achieved huge successes, but over time cost millions of lives and vast damage to the environment. Any resistance was met with swift and lethal response; millions of people were exiled to the labor camps of the Gulag or were executed.

Summarize Stalin's rise to power, and his methods of controlling the Soviet Union and the Russian people-

The Soviet Command Economy

The Soviet Union developed a **Command Economy**. A command economy is a system that requires government officials to make all basic economic decisions. By contrast, in a capitalist system, the free market determines most economic decisions. Privately owned businesses compete to win the consumer's choice. Competition regulates the price and quality of goods.

Explain the differences between a command economy and a capitalist economy.

Results of Russian Industry.

Stalin's Five Year Plans is a program of **rapid industrialization**, with high production goals for **heavy industry** and **transportation**. The government pushed workers and managers to meet these goals by giving bonuses to those who succeeded— and by punishing those who did not. Between 1928 and 1939, large factories, hydroelectric power stations, and huge industrial complexes rose throughout the Soviet Union. Oil, coal, and steel production grew. Mining expanded, and new railroads were built.

Despite impressive progress in some areas, Soviet workers had little to show for their efforts. Some former peasants did become skilled factory workers or managers. Overall, though, the standard of living remained low. Central planning was inefficient, causing shortages in some areas and surplus in others. Low quality goods were turned out to meet production quotas. Consumer products such as clothing, cars, and refrigerators were scarce. Wages remained low, and workers were forbidden to strike. Stalin and his party restricted workers' movements. Exile, execution, and imprisonment came as a result of worker strikes.

Magnitogorsk: Stalin's Ideal Industrial Town

Magnitogorsk means “city by the magnetic mountain”, in reference to Magnitaya, a mountain made entirely of iron. **Magnitogorsk** was to be modeled after two of the most advanced steel producing cities in the US at that time: Gary, IN and Pittsburgh, PA. Hundreds of foreign experts arrived to implement and direct the work. An entire city called Magnitogorsk was constructed in the Ural Mountains, with a steel mill (in a process that involved great hardship for the people involved). One great achievement was the Dnieper dam, built between 1927-32 to provide hydro-electricity. The standards of living here were incredibly poor.

This rapid industrialization meant that many peasants left the land to work in towns or industrial centers. These workers had to be fed, so agricultural production also had to increase. Stalin ordered the collectivization of farming, a policy pursued intensely between 1929-33. Collectivization meant that peasants would work together on larger, supposedly more productive farms. Almost all the crops they produced **would be given to the government at low prices to feed the industrial workers**. Fewer workers were needed on these collective farms, so more peasants could become factory workers. By 1936, nearly all peasants had been moved into the collective farms.

In the drive to industrialize Stalin often adopted harsh methods. These methods included forced labor, punishments for those who failed to reach quotas and the elimination of those who didn't fit into his plans. Stalin was able to enforce his power in the countryside through dekulakzation, and he got hold of the resources he needed to turn the Soviet Union into an industrial power.

What is contradictory about the construction of Magnitogorsk?



How did Stalin ensure that industrial laborers were constantly fed?

How did Stalin enforce his policies of industrialization?

How was Magnitogorsk a result of Stalin's Five Year Plan?

Based on your knowledge of Russian collectivization and industrialization under Stalin, discuss the good, the bad, and the ugly. What worked well? (The Good) What did not work well? (The Bad) What serious problems did collectivization and industrialization cause? (The Ugly)

	The Good	The Bad	The Ugly
Agricultural			
Industrial			

Stalinist Russia: Industrialization

Five Year Plans

The first Five Year Plan was launched in 1928, the second in 1932 and the third in 1937. Each plan laid out targets for industrial production. Targets were set for each factory in the USSR, every shift of workers and even for every individual worker.

The plans aimed at producing a surplus. Production targets were set very high to give the workers something to aim for. If workers did not achieve their targets, they were punished. Desperate factory managers fiddled the books or committed suicide as the pressure to produce more and more became too great. If the workers succeeded in reaching targets, they might be rewarded with increased wages. But usually their targets were increased as well.

Each year Stalin's government produced a report on progress. These reports were made available for foreign governments to see how successful communism was. Stalin was careful not to publicize any failures to the rest of the world. The picture that emerged from the USSR during the 1930s was one of success.

It is clear that production greatly increased and new factories, dams, railways and roads were built. However, there were problems with wastage and inefficiency in the plans. Official figures were exaggerated or gave only a partial picture of the targets met, so it is difficult to know the extent to which production increased.

