

To what extent did  
stalin successfully  
socialise russian  
society



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During the period after the collapse of the Tsarist regime of Nicholas II, and the rise of the Bolshevik party headed by Lenin and then Stalin, Russia underwent serious, complex and far reaching reforms both physically through industrial revolution and economic planning but also as a society, particularly under Stalin. Under Stalin Russian Society underwent a major change as Stalin's administration attempted to switch Russia's originally religious centred society to that of a Secular Socialist demographic, schooling, the arts, literature, cinema and religion all underwent massive change, alongside a viscous attack upon religion within the USSR which was seen as a mistake by Lenin and Marx, and absolutely despised by Stalin. These changes were achieved through the " Cultural Revolution" and later " The Great Retreat. The Cultural Revolution involved Stalin and his administration encouraging the Russian people to endeavour to find a proletariat approach in all things particularly in art, literature and design it was mainly carried out by the Soviet Youth Leagues such as the Komsomol. The Great Retreat involved the relaxing of Stalin's drive towards certain aspects of socialism whereby Stalin slowed down the rate of social change and de-radicalised the methodology. During the Cultural Revolution Stalin made great strides in socialising Russian art and music, during the Cultural Revolution he succeeded in creating a hatred of respected artist's works due to their " bourgeois nature" and many museums began to organise art displays by the social origins of artists, the more the proletariat the better. Through new stricter control of artistic license by the state through " The Association of Artists of the Revolution" enabled the state to spread a proletariat image through art. In 1934 the concept of " Socialist Realism"

was adopted by the USSR. Socialist Realism is a style of realistic art developed in the USSR.

Socialist realism has the purpose of the furtherance of the goals of socialism and Communism. It is a type of art that realistically depicts subjects of social concern and often glorifies the roles of the meek and working class. By the introduction of Socialist Realism Stalin was in theory able to inspire the common Russian people to adopt the Socialist and Communist ideals highlighted in this art form and thereby move towards Marx's ideals of what a Socialist society would and should look like. Stalin also hoped to promote his ideal of "Homo Sovieticus" or the "Soviet Man". Furthermore art was used by the state for propaganda to highlight the glorious achievements of the USSR. However whilst these images of prosperity and the successes of socialism were being portrayed in art they did not in fact match with the reality of collectivisation and working conditions for the common Russian people, further downsides to Stalin's adoption of this ideal were that certain high profile Russian artists stopped producing work and so the pool of artists available to Stalin was reduced, additionally artists who refused to follow the states ideals were persecuted, purged or simply murdered.

Therefore whilst art was wholly reborn as a Soviet Socialist form of media it did not spark tremendous social change or belief in Socialism or Communism. However Stalin was able to change artist form and thinking to a highly Socialist demographic but he was unable to use this as a base to change Russian social thinking as a whole to his own Socialist ideals. This was because too few Russian people were able to accept these ideas of the grandeur of Socialism when all of the promised benefits put forward by Stalin

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and his new Socialist Government were not in fact being delivered. Under Stalin education and the role of youth within Russian society were subject to massive change, education was free and compulsory being closely regulated by the state and monitored by the secret police who ensured communist ideology was taught. Education was at the heart of Stalin's goal of creating a new society.

Stalin wanted all children to have an education and under Stalin girls were given the same opportunity to attend school as boys for the first time. Stalin also gave priority to children from the working classes in the new educational system and although the initial child centred system was flawed and failed, Stalin returned the system to more traditional learning in 1932 this being a return to a disciplined and expectation-driven education system rather than the more lax practical skills based education which saw children trained to fulfil specific task and roles in factories that they were taught within. This system, while again stressing the importance of education to the children of the masses, was strongly technological and scientific in its nature with a ban on religious teaching with a drive towards spreading the ideals of atheism through lessons designed to promote loathing of priests ion the youth and the evils of religion as a method of control in Marxist Stage Theory. The study of Marxism-Leninism remained in the curriculum, technological education reined paramount, although accompanied by the state's overwhelming urge to indoctrinate the students into the benefits of Socialism / Communism. Under Stalin's the educational system was marked by an emphasis on engineering and related topics and a concerted drive to eliminate illiteracy.

By doing this Russian society was demonstrating further elements of changes towards a more Socialist/ Communist society with equal opportunity for all regardless of gender or background as well as producing a generation of almost fanatically Socialist people ready to advance the cause of Socialist and Communist progression and more importantly the goals of the state. Under Stalin the Russian youth were given purpose, they were used to carry out socially useful tasks such as spreading anti religious propaganda. This was usually achieved through the encouragement of children to join Communist Youth Leagues and in particular the “ Komsomol” (All-Union Leninist Young Communist League), the “ Pioneers” (All-Union Lenin Pioneer Organization) and the “ Little Octobrists”. The ideology of the Komsomol was to encourage young Russians to live their lives in line with the Communist Party doctrine. Members were aged between 14 years and 28 years were given a variety of tasks to undertake such as imposing labour discipline, routing out bourgeois intellectuals and reporting on the mood of the general Russian public.

The Pioneers and The Little Octobrists were organisations for children younger than 14 years. Both were feeder organisations for the Komsomol and provided politically directed education and recreational activities to the children whose ultimate destiny would be membership of the Komsomol. Overall Stalin was able to socialise the role of children and education a great deal, by introducing compulsory free education and indoctrinating the youth into communist ideals Stalin had laid the base for a progression towards a communist utopia, with equal opportunity for all as well as beginning the slow drive towards rooting out the “ religious mistake” and thereby creating

a secular society another feature of Communist/ Socialist Society. During Stalin's time in power as Premier of the USSR, Religion suffered greatly.

Marxist stage Theory saw religion as a mistake and not a feature of a modern socialist/ communist society, therefore to move towards a socialist Russia Stalin had to eliminate religion and replace it with a faith in communist and Socialist Ideals, anti religious propaganda was spread, particularly aimed at linking religion to " Bourgeois Culture" such as linking church activity to helping the Kulak class enemy during collectivisation. Places of worship within all religions were heavily taxed and targeted however in particular the Russian Orthodox Church and Islam were particularly ravaged with only 1/40 churches active by end of 1930's, Only roughly 200 Parishes active by 1939 (originally 54, 000 in 1917) and 10, 000 out of 12, 000 were Mosques closed. By the 1930's Islam was on the verge of collapse in Russia; however in a census taken 57% of people claimed to still have a religion. However despite this Religion was certainly on the decline, even if the majority of the public particularly peasants opposed it, the destruction of places of worship and the law banning religious activity outside of places of worship in 1929, meant that religion was becoming difficult to practise, and therefore over time if given the opportunity would eventually fizzle out due to it being unable to support itself. However due to the beginning of World War II, and the disparity of the population, Stalin reintroduced religion particularly the Russian Orthodox Church as a nationalist organisation, to bring the people together and draw criticism away from his administration. Therefore Stalin was reasonably successful in socialising Russian society by eliminating religion pre World War II as most

religions were on the verge of collapse or in decline in Russia, if this rate of destruction had continued religion would certainly have been replaced by Atheism in the foreseeable future, however Stalin's U-turn on policy towards religion ultimately showed that he had failed at Socialising this aspect of Russian society due to the return of religion as a unifying factor during World War II and the firm resistance to the closure of religious centres particularly in the rural areas of Russia.

One aspect of Russian society that Stalin did not attempt to socialise was its style of government and leadership. In Marxist stage theory a socialist/ communist country is lead by the proletariat with equal representation for all. In Russia this was not the case particularly under Stalin, Russia was still lead by a relatively small elite group " The Central Committee" with Stalin as its ultimate Head of State. Stalin ruled Russia in a manner very similar to that of Tsar Nicholas II, even being referred to as " The Red Tsar.

Stalin was adored through a cult of personality bordering on quasi religion in its later stage; he was raised to a similar level of godlike potential to that which the Tsars entertained during their rule. Stalin was quoted to saying it was a fundamental instinctive need of the Russian people to need a subject of worship and leadership and he intended to deliver this, therefore Stalin is stating that Russian society was not ready for the transition to true socialism/communism and. These features were all classic of a feudalistic society, with the proletariat lead by a small contingent of elite people lead by one supreme autocrat. Because of this Stalin had failed to socialise a key part of Russia to reflect the aims of the socialist utopia ideal set out by himself and earlier Lenin, with Russia still stuck in a backwards style of <https://assignbuster.com/to-what-extent-did-stalin-successfully-socialise-russian-society/>

leadership, furthermore this cult of personality, was in direct conflict with socialism due to it glorifying one man's achievements and producing almost a new religion again directly conflicting with Marxism and Leninism which states that socialist society should be secular. In conclusion Stalin ultimately had made considerable steps towards socialising Russian society, particularly in the youth and education and to an extent the arts, however he had also set aspects of society back, Russia was still run in a structure more imperialist/ feudalistic in its nature, with both a cult personality bordering on deity worship and a strong religious population despite the best efforts of the state to eliminate religion. These things therefore show that Russia had progressed marginally towards a more socialist viewpoint, but still had a long way to go.

Ultimately then Stalin was somewhat successful at socialising Russian society.