

A regime of terror russia under stalin's rule



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It is undeniable that Joseph Stalin was one of the most feared, but revered dictators in world history, and during his lifetime, ruled Russia with an iron fist. This essay will examine the ideologies, effects and legacy of Stalin's rule over Communist Russia; to prove that during Stalin's rule over the USSR, he accomplished much for his country, but his course of action was not justified by the results. The background to Stalin's actions and policies, his ideologies, the effects of his rule upon his country and the different groups within it, and his legacy to world history will be used to analyse Stalin's rule over the USSR.

Stalin's actions and policies during his rule of the USSR were backed by the aims of the Communists in Russia. Stalin introduced the Five-Year Plans – economic, agricultural and industrial planning to modernise Russia and increase production and export, with aims to make Russia self-sufficient. The five-year plans included collectivisation of farms, and preparation for war. As Stalin proclaimed during a speech in 1931:

“ Do you want our socialist Fatherland to be beaten and lose its independence?

If you do not want this, you must put an end to its backwardness.

This is why Lenin said during the October Revolution:

“ Either perish, or overtake and outstrip the advanced capitalist countries.”

We are fifty or one hundred years behind the advanced countries.

We must make good this distance in ten years.

Either we do it, or they crush us.”

(The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopaedia, 2009).

Stalin believed that the USSR had to unite against the powers of the capitalist countries, and to achieve this, he believed that he had to eliminate all opposition of the Communist ideologies in Russia. This belief resulted in an era of his rule known as the “ Great Terror”, from 1934-39 (Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopaedia, 2009). During this period, Stalin oversaw the arrests and murders of millions of innocent people, accused of being traitors, blamed for industrial problems, or the families of the accused, and these people were arrested by the secret police (the NKVD) and killed, or sent to concentration camps, known as the Gulags. concluding and linking sentence

Stalin’s rule over the USSR was different and more violent than that of his predecessor, Vladimir Lenin, who adopted his communism principles from the works of Karl Marx. Stalin’s ruling ideology was defined as Stalinism; a term first used by Lazar Kaganovich, and is defined as: “ Mixing together key elements of Marxism, especially a planned economy, a super-powerful State, and the elimination of private property and the bourgeoisie (middle class), plus Russian patriotism.” (Citizendium, 2010).

As well as using terror to control his country, Stalin also established himself a cult of personality, as well as employing extensive propaganda and censorship to promote his image to a status of supreme importance and greatness, a fountain of political wisdom, and eliminate any bad publicity (History Channel, 2008). Stalin knew the power of the media, and he “ wanted everyone to recognise him as a god, as a leader”, according to <https://assignbuster.com/a-regime-of-terror-russia-under-stalins-rule/>

Stepan Mikoyan, the son of Stalin's confidant (History Channel, 2008). To achieve this goal of becoming a god to his people, Stalin demolished churches, destroyed citizens' religious icons and dismantled the Russian Orthodox religion, building Stalin museums, and issuing every household with a Stalin portrait. Stalin also named many cities after himself – including Stalingrad, Stalinabad, Stalino, Stalinogorsk and Stalinsk (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1968, p. 107), but his vanity did not end there. He had movies made of his life, and even the portraits he issued to the citizens of his country were an idealised representation of him. Although Stalin never showed his true self to his people, he accomplished many good things for them during his regime.

During Stalin's rule over Russia, there was a lot of modernisation and industrialisation happening. Stalin's economic planning had created more jobs and infrastructure for the future of the USSR. Stalin approved the Moscow metro train system, and improvements to health, schools and education. Stalin was considered a friend to the people, especially the children, and started the Communist Youth Organisation, for young people from 10 to 25 (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1968, p. 106). The Communist Youth Organisation was such a success because Stalin disbanded all other youth organisations, including church groups and the boy scouts (History Channel, 2008). Stalin's rule also benefitted the State, with collectivisation plans, and significant investments in the military and police forces, creating jobs and preparing the USSR for war, if it was needed. The actions of Stalin during his rule were in some aspects good for the future of the Russian

people, but some of the short-term consequences of his actions left a lasting negative mark on Russian society.

Stalin was determined to lead the USSR to overtake the capitalist countries and industrialise, and he did not care what it took. Human lives became expendable, and he used his secret police force, the NKVD to arrest all people opposed to his regime. These “ traitors” were killed, or sent to concentration camps ‘ for the good of the State’. “ There was not a single execution in Russia that Stalin did not know about”, according to Lenoid Zamiatin, a former bureaucrat; and Stalin, during his time as ruler of the USSR sent at least 20 million people to their deaths, through arrests, famine and war (History Channel, 2008). The rural communities of Russia especially suffered during Stalin’s forced famine of 1932-33 – where produce was seized from the peasants working on farms, and given to the factory workers living in the cities. Approximately 7 million people died as a direct result of this famine (World History Place, 2000). Linking and concluding sentence

Joseph Stalin was one of the most feared dictators of modern civilisation, and his actions have changed the world’s attitudes towards communism and Russia. Even after his death, his presence could still be felt in Russia, as his successors worked to replicate his methods. The ideologies of Stalinism did not truly fade until the collapse of the Soviet Union during the 1990’s.

Although he was not alive at the time, his actions shaped the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, ultimately leading to the Cold War after World War II (Evans, 2005). In 1956, Milovan Djilas, a Yugoslavian Communist said that Stalin “ has the glory of being the greatest criminal in history, and let us hope, for all time to come.” In this sentence,

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Djilas sums up the opinions of many people regarding Stalin's place in world history.