

Were the five-year  
plans a success  
essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Whether or not the Five-Year Plans were a success is debatable. Although it wasn't and still isn't hard to be critical of the Five-Year Plans, by 1937 the USSR was a modern state and this saved it from being defeated by Hitler when he invaded in 1941.

It was only when Stalin came into power that the idea of modernising the USSR was put into action. Many areas of USSR hadn't changed much if at all since a hundred years before, they were still far from being modern like many other countries, who already had achieved modernisation years before and were years ahead of the USSR. It was Stalin who was determined to modernise the USSR and that he would succeed.

It wasn't even as if it was just the military or just the industry that was "backwards" but all of them, military, industrial and agriculture too, this made the USSR weak and at the risk of being defeated and/or enslaved. Stalin was a very determined man and was adamant that the USSR could improve dramatically. And they would have to develop considerably as they were 50 to 100 years behind the leading, advanced countries and Stalin wanted to catch up with them in 10 years!

Stalin wanted his own ideas, the Five-Year Plans, to be put into action as soon as possible so he ended Lenin's NEP and started to try and modernise the USSR his way. His Five-Year Plans may have been his idea but they were drawn up by GOSPLAN (the state planning organisation). Even though the plans were complex and had ambitious targets, they were efficient. For the reason that they were set out in such a way that by 1929 every worker knew what he or she had to achieve.

The first Five-Year Plan focused on the major industries and was started straight away in 1929. Achievements were staggering even despite the fact that most of the targets set weren't met. The second Five-Year Plan was from 1933 till 1937, and was built on the achievements of the first plan. Heavy industry was still a priority, but other areas were also developed. Mining was intensified, and transport and communication, was improved due to new railways and canals being built.

The third and last Five-Year Plan begun in 1938. In this plan some factories were to switch to the production of consumer goods. However, unfortunately the Second World War disrupted this plan.

As I have made reference to before there was a lot that could be criticised in the Five-Year Plans. Although the plans were efficient at letting everyone know what their targets were at first there was a great deal of inefficiency, repetition of effort and waste. However looking at the evidence the Soviets did learn from their mistakes and this was shown in the result from the second and third Five-Year Plans. The human cost grew to be massive too. But as I said before the USSR was modernised a great deal and became a modern state.

Also although the Five-Year Plans could be criticised, the Russian people in the USSR seemed happy, and enthusiastic about these plans. Miners wore their overalls with pride and were eager to meet their targets. People weren't afraid of or worried about not having enough money, being unemployed, fees for education and health, being under or over worked or even wage reduction.

Nearly no one was unemployed and women were allowed to work, and most of them took up this opportunity and did so. Four in five new workers recruited between 1932 and 1937 were women. This shows women were pleased to be given the opportunity to work. It didn't seem to matter that conditions for workers improved the discipline was harsh, although some workers did try to escape these poor conditions and harsh discipline but were soon stopped.

Propaganda also played a part in this, as without it the Russian people would most likely be less pleased with Stalin's Five-Year Plans. As with all propaganda, it only showed the people in the USSR what Stalin wanted them to see, like how well they were doing etc. and not the bad points like how far behind they still were.

In conclusion I think that despite all the criticism the Five-Year Plans could have and probably did get, the USSR did benefit from them. It caught up dramatically with other leading and advanced countries and improved quite quickly, it also pleased the people of the country. So although changes could have been made to make the Five-Year Plans better they did work in some ways, like making Russia a modern state. They may have improved the USSR even more if the Second World War hadn't interrupted the third Five-Year Plan. After weighing up all the points I feel that the fact Russia did actually become a modern state persuaded me to think that they were a success in some ways.