

Stalins russia, 1924- 53 revision guide essay sample



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* Lenin was very ill for many months before his death in January 1924.

During this time the Party elite continued running the country. There was no mechanism for replacing Lenin.

* Stalin was given responsibility for supervising Lenin's treatment by the Central Committee. No one visited Lenin as much as Stalin. However, Stalin offended Lenin by being rude to his wife.

* Lenin and Stalin also disagreed about foreign trade, which Lenin wanted to keep in the hands of the government, but Stalin wanted to relax. Lenin also disagreed with Stalin's treatment of the independence movement in Georgia, which had been suppressed.

* Lenin died January 1924. The Politburo - Rykov, Tomsky, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Trotsky and Stalin announced their intention of ruling as a collective leadership.

* Stalin put Trotsky at a disadvantage by appearing at Lenin's funeral as chief mourner and delivering the oration. Trotsky later claimed that Stalin had given him the wrong date, so he did not attend the funeral.

* This was the beginning of Stalin's successful promotion of the 'cult of Lenin' and 'Leninism'. Stalin successfully associated himself with the authority and philosophy of Lenin. He portrayed himself as Lenin's disciple.

* May 1924 Thirteenth Party Congress. The content of Lenin's Political Testament was revealed secretly to representatives of the party at a closed meeting.

* The Political Testament was very critical of Stalin and recommended that he be removed from his position as General Secretary of the Party. Stalin offered to resign but was defended by Zinoviev and Kamenev.

* Zinoviev and Kamenev backed Stalin not because they supported him, but because they were afraid of Trotsky; Stalin was not seen as a threat in the way Trotsky was. This Triumvirate of these three leaders came together to keep Trotsky out of power.

Why was Trotsky unpopular?

* Trotsky had a power base in the Red Army; many Bolsheviks were afraid that he would become a military dictator.

* Trotsky was also personally unpopular; he was highly intellectual and had a reputation for arrogance. He did not make alliances with his colleagues.

* Trotsky had been a Menshevik and his late conversion to Bolshevism counted against him.

* He was violently opposed to the growth of the Party bureaucracy, which Stalin headed and gave many people comfortable jobs.

* He also had ideas that appeared dangerous; he believed that the USSR should try to ferment revolution in other states because Russia could only be successful if supported by proletarian revolutions in the West.

* He also advocated a radical solution to economic problems, opposed NEP and believed that the peasants should be treated more vigorously and forced to produce more.

* Lenin's political Testament was 'shelved'; it was not made public and quietly ignored.

Why had Stalin amassed such power by 1924?

* People's Commissar for Nationalities 1917. This put Stalin in control of the regions of the former Russian Empire that contained minority national groups, half the population of the USSR.

* Liaison Officer between Politburo and Orgburo 1919 This made Stalin the key connection between the 'cabinet' of the government (Politburo) and the highest organisation of the Party (Orgburo).

* Head of Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate 1919. This was set up to supervise the civil service and expose inefficiency, corruption, red tape and abuses of power. It gave Stalin the right to intervene in any and every area of government.

* General Secretary of the Communist Party 1922. This was the most important office he held and possibly the key to Stalin's success in the power struggle. In spite of the 'boring' nature of this administrative post, its responsibilities were very wide.

1. Responsibility for membership of the Party: membership grew rapidly, particularly after Lenin's death with the 'Lenin enrolment'. The new members at the end of the 1920s were mostly poorly educated but they were loyal to the leadership who had given them membership; i. e. Stalin. This explains Stalin's success in getting the support of Party Conferences.

2. The Secretariat prepared the agenda of the meeting and supplied documentation. It also transmitted the decisions to the lower parts of the Party. Potentially this gave Stalin considerable power as agendas and documentation could be used to shape decisions and those decisions had to be interpreted to the Party.

Why did Trotsky become more unpopular from 1924?

* In 1924 Trotsky launched an attack on the lack of Party democracy. Centralisation had occurred during the Civil War, so Trotsky's attack appeared to be an attack on something Lenin had sanctioned.

* The central bureaucracy also provided jobs for many members, so Trotsky's attack was not likely to be popular.

* October 1924 Trotsky attacked Zinoviev and Kamenev in an essay, Lessons of October. It drew attention to the fact these two had opposed Lenin when the decision to launch the October Revolution was made.

* This led to a war of words Kamenev pointed to Trotsky's Menshevik past. Stalin remained aloof and watched his opponents destroying each other. Stalin appeared to be a moderate who was 'above' Party warfare.

The Ideological Struggle and the Defeat of the Left 1925

* There was a great need to promote economic growth and industrialisation - no one disagreed about that. The USSR had to invest in industry and the only place this investment could come from was by a transfer of resources from agriculture to industry.

- * The Left Communists were against NEP. They argued that the peasants benefited at the expense of the proletariat. They were in favour of ending NEP immediately.
- * The Right accepted NEP as a pragmatic policy to be tolerated as long as it produced sufficient food supplies.
- * In December 1924 Stalin adopted the policy of ' Socialism in One Country' He argued that Russia could achieve socialism without the aid of revolution in other countries.
- * Trotsky saw industrialisation as less important than spreading the revolution. He wanted ' Permanent Revolution'.
- * 1925 Party Congress: Stalin had many supporters at the congress as a result of his position as General Secretary. Kamenev was the Chairman of the Moscow branch of the Party, and Zinoviev of the Leningrad branch. All votes went against Trotsky. He lost his position as Commissar for War.
- * Zinoviev and Kamenev did agree with Trotsky about economic matters. He wanted an end to NEP, and end to the food supplies being controlled by the peasants and moves to collectivisation.
- * Zinoviev and Kamenev thought rapid industrialisation could be achieved if the production of food was more efficient. They thought the USSR would have difficulty surviving indefinitely without revolutions in other countries. These were the views of the political ' Left' within the Party.

- * On the ' Right' Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky said that NEP should be allowed to continue for another 20 years.
- * At the 1925 Party Congress all the Left resolutions were defeated and the Party backed the Right. Even Kamenev and Zinoviev's own supporters did not vote for them. Stalin sided with the Right.
- * 1926 Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotsky failed to get their view supported at the Party Congress. Kamenev and Zinoviev were dismissed from their positions as Party Chairmen. Stalin was able to place two of his men at the head of the Party organisations in Moscow and Leningrad.
- * 1927 The Left tried to make their case again at the Party Congress. They were denied the right to speak. Attempts to publicise their views failed - their presses were found and destroyed.
- * The fact that they were opposing so openly meant that the charge of factionalism could be brought against them. The Left had been defeated. Kamenev and Zinoviev and Trotsky were expelled from the Party.

The defeat of the Right

- * Stalin had appeared to take the side of the Right in the struggle with the Left, but this was a tactical manoeuvre and did not necessarily reflect his ideological position.
- * 1927 poor harvest. January 1928 Stalin visited western Siberia. He was convinced that the kulaks were keeping grain from the market to keep up

prices. Stalin had police officials with him and he ordered the confiscation of grain; he was abandoning NEP.

* 1928 Party Congress; the Right argued against Stalin's actions. They thought that the peasants would produce more if NEP continued and they had the opportunity to become prosperous.

* There was a 'war-scare' in the USSR in 1927/8. The Right's policies offered only gradual industrialisation, but military strength has to be built on industrial strength. A more vigorous policy that would lead to rapid industrialisation therefore looked attractive

* Stalin used his control of the Party organisation so the Right resolutions were defeated at the Party Congress. Tomsy, Bukharin and Rykov were removed from their positions by Stalin.

Why did Stalin win?

* Stalin had luck on his side. Had Lenin not died Stalin would probably have been sent to the provinces to work for the Party.

* Dzerzhinsky, the head of the Cheka, from its inception to his death in 1926 was never one of Stalin's fans.

* The centralised nature of the Party made it relatively easy for Stalin as General secretary to control it through the Secretariat. This had begun under Lenin.

* Stalin possessed the organisational skill to develop the Party secretariat into a major power base.

- * Stalin was the only member of the Politburo, as well as the Orgburo.
- * Stalin listened in to the private Kremlin telephone network and thus was well informed about what his colleagues thought.
- * Stalin was based in Moscow from 1921 onwards so he knew about everything that was that was going on.
- * Stalin always liked to play the role of mediator in the early phase of the revolution. He would listen to their arguments and then propose a compromise solution. In this way he came to be seen as a moderate, so not a threat.
- * Through his position as General Secretary, Stalin had the ability to recruit persons who wanted a career and preferred working in the Party apparatus to working in a factory. They owed the advantages of party membership to him and supported him.
- * Poorly educated new Party members were easy to dominate.
- * Stalin's control over personnel through the Party secretariat permitted him to sack those who sided with the opposition. Every time a leading politician lost, this would be followed by a purge of his supporters.
- * The central influence over local Party affairs resulted in delegates who supported Stalin's line being elected to Party Congresses and the Central Committee. Stalin was consistently able to win votes against his opposition at Party Congresses.

- * Lenin, at the 10th Party Congress (1921), had forced through the ban on factionalism. It was also agreed that if two-thirds of the Central Committee agreed a comrade could be expelled from the CC. Stalin was able to use this and claim that he was carrying out Lenin's will.
- * The low level of culture in Russia, especially among Bolshevik supporters, made it easier to misrepresent opponents' points of view.
- * Stalin presented himself as the leading disciple of Lenin and in this way was able to present his analysis of Lenin's thought to the masses.
- * Stalin, although a Georgian by nationality, understood the advantage of promoting Russian nationalism.
- * Stalin never took on all his opponents at the same time: he preferred to challenge them one by one or in small groups.
- * Stalin was never totally committed to any policy. He was on the right against Trotsky and the left against Bukharin. This reveals that he was playing a tactical game.
- * Stalin was very skilled in spotting the weaknesses of his opponents and in devising tactics to outmanoeuvre them.
- * Stalin was aware that the successful mobilisation of the state during the Civil War provided many lessons for the future.
- * Many Party members desired radical change, it was easy to attack Bukharin and the NEP.

* Stalin's opponents made a major error in failing to publish Lenin's Testament. Full revelation of Lenin's condemnation of Stalin would probably have brought him down.

* The other leaders underestimated Stalin and exaggerated the danger presented by Trotsky. Stalin did not look threatening; he was an administrator who did the boring work. He was not a good speaker.

* Trotsky's failure to turn up at Lenin's funeral weakened his position from the beginning.

* Trotsky's personality was a handicap; he was highly intellectual and impatient of people of lesser ability. He was arrogant and as a result he was not liked.

* Trotsky did not at first see the need to make alliances. When he did form the Left Opposition with Zinoviev and Kamenev they were charged with factionalism.

* Trotsky had a power base in the army, but failed to use it. His slogan of 'Permanent Revolution' was not attractive.

Stalin was now dominant in the Party.

* He had outmanoeuvred all potential leadership rivals. He controlled the Party apparatus, and had done so since 1922, so many people in the Party owed their positions to him.

* The economy had been recovering well under the NEP, although there had been a major crisis over grain procurement in 1927-8.

- * The peasants were growing plenty of grain, but they were not selling it to the State at the low prices on offer.

- * The main reason was that there were few goods available for the peasants to buy with their roubles. They preferred to stockpile their crops in case of a future poor harvest.

- * So-called Nepmen were making a lot of money and this was creating further disquiet in the ranks of the Party.

- * Electrification and investment in state-owned heavy industry was growing, but not as fast as many would like.

- * All Bolsheviks agreed on the need for an economy based on industry to ensure the maintenance of the world's first socialist state.

- * The question that taxed the Party was how to maximise investment income.

- * Borrowing from the West was out - when they came to power the Bolsheviks repudiated all the loans the Tsar had taken from the Capitalist powers, and all the war debts.

- * No one was likely to lend money to the Soviet Union.

- * The only way open to Stalin was to generate the income internally, and that meant from the countryside, where 80% of the population lived.

- * If cash could be raised by selling agricultural produce abroad, the Soviet Union would be able to buy the technology necessary to modernise industry.

The state of the NEP economy in 1928

- * 80% of Russia's population were peasants. Since 1921 they had farmed their own plots and many had become increasingly wealthy. They had achieved their age-old aim. Change in agriculture was fundamental to economic growth.
- * Under the NEP food production rapidly returned to pre-World War One levels, with the emergence of some richer peasants, or Kulaks as they were known, who employed others.
- * But most agriculture was still small scale, old-fashioned and not very productive.
- * Lenin had set up the first collective farms, hoping that this example would lead peasants to voluntarily join together. This was not very successful - by 1928 less than 3% of peasants had joined.
- * The debate inside the Communist Party was about how to squeeze capital from the peasants - all were agreed on the policy of industrialisation.
- * As well as capital from the countryside, the workers needed in the new towns and industries would have to come from the countryside, so it was imperative to grow more food with fewer workers.
- * Some items needed for Industrialisation needed to be imported from the West, and could only be paid for in the short term by food exports, again increasing the need to raise productivity in the countryside.
- * Of course the peasants were happy to produce more food.

* But as the famine of 1927-28 shows, if there were no goods in the towns for them to buy, or prices for their grain were too low, then they would hold on to their surplus.

* They would use it either to feed their animals or to improve their own standard of living. Anyway, it was essential to have some grain stored in case there was a bad harvest the next year.

* Most peasants were basically conservative. They had supported the Bolsheviks in order to get rid of their landlords and to get their hands on land. They had no loyalty to communism, unlike many industrial workers.

B: Transforming the Soviet Union

The debate about agricultural change

* Some argued that the peasants should be encouraged to grow more and sell more grain by giving them fairer prices.

* This might take longer to create capital for investment and industry would have to make the goods peasants wanted to buy, but that way a sound economy would develop.

* The peasants would gradually be won over by the benefits of Socialism and a new, fair society would emerge.

* Others argued that this would take too long. The Soviet Union could not wait.

* Somehow the peasants had to be forced into growing more, handing over more of their produce, and providing the labour force for industry. They had repeatedly shown they were not reliable political supporters of the Bolsheviks.

* Industry needed a clear plan. This could only be done on the basis of guaranteed food supplies for the cities, and guaranteed income from food exports.

* Collectivisation, it was argued, would make it easier to control the peasants - they had always been a conservative force and a limiting factor in Russian economic growth.

* They would always remain selfish and put their own interests first, so the Communist Party needed to bring them into line.

* It would be easier to control collective farms or state farms than millions of individual landholdings.

The collectivisation of agriculture and its economic and social impact

* In the winter of 1927-28, the peasants did not deliver enough food for the cities. Food Requisitioning was used by the Party to make up the shortfall.

* This brought the issue of agriculture to the fore. It had been hoped that collectivisation could occur voluntarily, but this was not working. Party members were sent to the countryside to help with the harvest.

* Stalin's original intention was to produce Sovkhozes, or State Farms, where all the land was owned by the state, all the produce went to the state and workers were paid wages.

* The wages were paid whether the workers worked well or badly. These farms proved very expensive and few were set up.

* Instead Kolkhozes, or Collective Farms, were introduced. Here workers kept plots of land for them selves and had to supply fixed amounts of food to the state at fixed prices.

* The workers kept what was left for themselves. If there was nothing left they starved. 240, 000 of these farms were set up by 1940.

* Poor peasants were encouraged to denounce hoarding, and rewarded with 25% of any grain discovered.

* After the harvest of 1929 there was a great campaign to collectivise. Peasants were supposed to vote on collectivisation, but in most cases it was forced through by party officials.

What were the effects of Collectivisation?

* Between November 1929 and March 1930 60% of all farms were collectivised. Opponents were labelled Kulaks and were transported to the Gulags or arrested and shot.

* At no time was a definition of who was a Kulak actually stated. So ' de-Kulakisation' was hit and miss and encouraged random accusations and violence.

- * Each area was given a target of Kulak families to arrest and deport. An almost arbitrary terror descended on the villages.
- * Nevertheless there was huge opposition from the peasants, especially when the Churches were ransacked or turned into barns or meeting places and personal property was confiscated too in some areas.
- * Warehouses were often broken open and personal goods restored to their owners. Faced with such widespread opposition the Party had to back down.
- * Stalin made a speech in early 1930 ('dizzy with success') accusing local party officials of being over-zealous and allowing peasants to leave the collective farms. Many did.
- * Once the 1930 harvest had been safely collected collectivisation began again. By 1931 over 50% of peasant families were collectivised.
- * The consequences of opposition were dreadful. Tractor Stations were linked to collectives, in an attempt to mechanise production.
- * Of course there were not enough tractors, and peasants didn't know how to look after them, so many quickly became unserviceable.
- * 50 per cent of tractors were soon out of action.
- * Because grain procurements were so high, income for peasants on the collectives was very low, reducing the incentive to work. This encouraged the setting up of Kolkhozes.

* Many peasants began to spend more time on their private plots - by the end of the 1930s these were producing most of the country's eggs, milk and meat - than on their official duties.

Why did famine break out in 1932?

* Grain production fell because peasants saw no reason to produce for the state. Kulaks destroyed their grain rather than hand it over.

* What grain that was produced was collected for the towns and export. In the Ukraine especially - the main grain producing area of the Soviet Union - there was a great famine in 1932-34.

* The Famine was officially denied. Western visitors were shown successful Collective Farms full of happy, well-fed villagers.

* The reality was that somewhere between 3 and 4 million people starved to death, in order to fuel industrialisation.

* The harvest of 1935 was better. Private plots were allowed, so peasants could keep one cow, some chickens and grow some vegetables.

* This was an attempt to stop peasants killing off all their livestock rather than hand it over to the collective farm.

* Yields from collective farms remained low - a problem right through to the demise of the Soviet Union - but Stalin had managed to browbeat the peasants into doing what he wanted.

* Agriculture had paid for industrialisation, whatever the price.

The impact of Collectivisation: Agricultural Production 1928-1935 (Soviet figures)

1928 1929 1930 1931 1932 1933 1934 1935

Grain (million tons) 73. 3 71. 7 83. 5 69. 5 69. 6 68. 6 67. 6 75. 0

Cattle (millions) 70. 5 67. 1 52. 5 47. 9 40. 7 38. 4 42. 4 49. 3

Pigs (millions) 26. 0 20. 4 13. 6 14. 4 11. 6 12. 1 17. 4 22. 6

Sheep and goats (millions) 146. 7 147. 0 108. 8 77. 7 52. 1 50. 2 51. 9 61. 1

What were the aims of the Five Year Plans?

* Stalin believed that the Soviet Union was 100 years behind the West. He was afraid that the West would attack and that the Soviet Union would be unable to defend itself.

* The main aim was to turn Russia into a major industrial power, like the West. To do this the emphasis was to be firmly on heavy industry – coal, iron, steel, electricity, and the infrastructure needed to move such bulky goods.

* A second emphasis was to build these new industries in the East – beyond the Urals – away from the threat of Western invasion.

* Much of the infrastructure was missing, so railways, power lines, and roads all had to be built from scratch in many areas; all without a skilled labour force and with a severe shortage of capital.

Industrialisation and its economic and social impact

* The First Five Year Plan 1928-1932 declared reached nine months early!

The Second Five Year Plan 1933-1937

The Third Five Year Plan 1938-1941 aborted by the German invasion of Russia in 1941

* The NEP had been built on centralised state planning – the chief industries were state owned and controlled. Lenin famously said ‘ Socialism was state power plus electrification’.

* Gosplan produced figures and targets for industrial production from 1924 onwards. It was in 1928 that the first Five Year Plan was announced.

* An army of state planners, about 500, 000 in Moscow, tried to plan increases down to the last detail. No attention was paid to local conditions.

* Emphasis was to be on heavy industry and infrastructure, with consumer goods and living standards a long way down the list of priorities.

* In the First Plan very ambitious targets were set: coal production to increase by 100%, iron by 200%, electricity by 400%. In most cases the targets were impossible to achieve.

* Such was the response that new improved targets were set in 1929, and these again revised upwards in 1930. It became crucial to meet your planned target. Never mind the quality, meet the target!

* Workers would move from job to job to get higher wages, managers would do anything to ensure they met the target, and of course public

announcements showed that targets had not only been met, but had been exceeded.

* The Second and Third Five Year Plans had more realistic targets, which were usually met.

* But statistics from this time are notoriously unreliable.

* What the Five Year Plans do show is that political fervour took over from rational thought. It was almost a Civil War-type crusade to build socialism overnight.

* There was great enthusiasm amongst many Party members who made huge sacrifices to build new towns and factories. There were great achievements.

* But there was also muddle, confusion and waste. It is sometimes hard to separate the rhetoric from the reality when we consider the issue.

How were these aims achieved?

* Forced labour from the Gulags played a large part in many projects. Most of Russia's gold was mined by convict labour, for example.

* The most famous account of this type of labour is Solzhenitsyn's 'One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch'.

* By 1939 there were over 3 million people in Gulags, a vast and constantly replenished source of cheap labour! And totally expendable!

* Much of the work was done by Komsomol volunteers, keen to make their contribution to Russia's ' Second Revolution.' Many suffered severe hardship in ' open-field' sites, in winter, building new factories.

* There were even volunteers, and recruited specialists, from the West. (Remember the West was suffering from mass unemployment due to the Great Depression)

* These were partly attracted by the clever use of propaganda by the Soviet state, portraying Russia as a socialist paradise completely different from the West.

* It wasn't just the peasants who suffered a drop in their standard of living - wages were kept low to create as much capital as possible.

* In 1931 Stalin introduced pay differentials - completely counter to Marx's view of each according to his needs.

* These allowing skilled workers and managers to earn up to four times as much as ordinary workers. This was justified by the need to industrialise quickly.

* Stakhanovites - shock workers who exceeded daily norms - helped raise output. In 1935 Alexei Stakhanov had cut 102 tons of coal in one single shift - 14 times the norm. If you exceeded your daily norm you got extra privileges and pay.

* Stakhanov's record was soon broken by a worker who produced more than 300 tonnes.

* By mid 1936 20% of workers were classified as Stakhanovites. Of course managers then used this to increase the norms for everybody!

* There were a series of 'wreckers' trials throughout the period of the Five Year Plans. Managers who failed to reach their norms were accused of sabotage and sent to the Gulags. This was a powerful incentive to reach targets!

* There was a great increase in technical education in this period. There was an insatiable appetite for skilled, literate workers and managers.

* Peasants from the countryside often found themselves operating quite sophisticated machinery with little or no tuition, and few instructions. Of course if the machine broke down they were accused of sabotage!

How successful were the Five Year Plans?

* There is no doubt, despite the exaggerated figures, that the Five Year Plans completely transformed the Soviet Union.

* New industrial centres - like Magnitogorsk - were built from nothing. By 1938 it was producing 5, 000 tons of steel a day. There were many other examples like this.

* The fact that Russia was able to resist German invasion in 1941 - just - and then go on and capture Berlin is ample evidence of the success of the Five Year Plans.

* There were problems - meeting the target became the priority so quantity became more important than quality.

* There were projects that were wrong - the Belomor Canal was built at huge human cost but once opened was too shallow for the Navy ships it had been designed to handle - and there were projects that took much longer than expected to complete.

* The successes were achieved at great cost in human suffering - living conditions lagged well behind developments in industry. Millions died, especially in the countryside.

* A key debate amongst historians is whether the advances could have been achieved in a more humane way, or was Stalin right that the only way to modernise the Soviet Union was by force and terror?

Soviet production compared (figures from Culpin/Henig: Modern Europe 1870-1945 and other sources)

1927 1932 1939

coal (millions of tons) 35 64 145

oil (millions of tons) 12 21. 4 40

iron ore(millions of tons) 6 12. 1 32

Changing social policies

How did the standard of living change?

* There is no doubt that the standard of living fell for most ordinary Russians during the 1930s. After 1931 most people were paid by piecework, yet average income was probably about 50% of that in 1928.

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- * There were severe shortages, so queuing was a way of life. Fresh foods were often not available.
- * Most people ate meals in the communal canteens at their place of work rather than cook at home.
- * Luxury goods were just not available, or were only available in special shops for Party bureaucrats or managers.
- * Housing was in short supply, because it was low on the Party's priorities, and overcrowding common.
- * Clothes, shoes boots, materials to repair things, were also difficult to get hold of, so the quality of life deteriorated too.
- * Things were particularly hard in rural areas, especially for Kulaks or better off farmers affected by collectivisation.
- * It was towards the end of the 1930s before there were enough tractors to begin to affect their productivity. Once private plots were allowed then the standard of living began to improve.
- * In the cities there were opportunities for people to improve their prospects if they had the skills or good fortune to get one of the millions of new managerial, technical or even supervisory posts created by industrialisation.
- * With luck a new flat, better rations or access to some of the new, scarce, consumer goods would go with the job.

* Officially unemployment disappeared in 1932. This fiction was maintained through the communist era. In fact often two or three people did a job that could have been done by one.

* During the Five Year Plans a seven day week was introduced and absence from work became a crime. Skilled workers were not allowed to leave their jobs. An internal passport was introduced to control movement.

Family life, education and the role of women

* At first, the Bolsheviks frowned on marriage, saying it exploited women. They made it easier for women to get a divorce, they made abortion easier, and encouraged people to live together.

* Not much of this affected life in the countryside, where people remained very traditional.

* There were lots of orphans and widows because of the First World War and the Civil War. In the chaos of the time families were often split and had to manage the best they could.

* In the towns single workers often lived in barracks, crowded in together. Families - usually three generations - often had to live in one room due to a severe shortage of living accommodation.

* Women found themselves increasingly required to work, but also having to look after the family too - queue for food, cook, clean, etc. In Leningrad by 1937 women made up 50% of the workforce.

* By 1936 new laws were introduced to try to strengthen family ties. Divorce was made much more difficult - and expensive - and abortion illegal.

* Crèches were introduced at most work places to make it easier for women to work.

* Financial inducements were made to encourage larger families. Indeed the birth rate did increase in the later 1930s.

How did life change for the peoples of the Soviet Union

* On the face the results were impressive. Industrial production rose by about 400% in the 1930s.

* Education and housing improved literacy increased rapidly.

* Women were given equality for the first time. By 1940, 40% of workers were women. Crèches were set up in factories to allow women to work.

* The number of doctors increased and medical treatment improved.

* The new constitution that was introduced in 1936 also looked very impressive. It guaranteed democracy, equality, freedom of worship and political freedom, amongst other things.

* But it did not amount to anything in reality. The needs of the Communist Party could override all other considerations.

The real facts of life in the Soviet Union were very different.

- * The Five Year Plans increased production, but not quality. 50% of tractors broke down. Managers of plants cheated in any way they could, because if they did not reach the target figures they might be shot.
- * A seven day week was introduced. Absence from work became a crime. Skilled workers were not allowed to leave their jobs. An internal passport was introduced.
- * Industrial workers were given higher pay and rewarded with medals. Some social security benefits were provided.
- * As more people crowded into the cities to work in industry, living standards fell. Pay did not keep up with rises in prices. Stalin used the secret police to force people to accept his changes.
- * Agricultural production suffered as Kulaks destroyed their crops and animals, rather than hand them over. In 1932 to 1934 there was a massive famine which killed 5, 000, 000 people.
- * People who objected found themselves in slave labour camps, called Gulags. These were often in Siberia or in Northern Russia, where the weather in winter was very cold.
- * Here they worked with little food for ten years or more. Many died from exhaustion. Altogether at least 7, 000, 000 people disappeared in the Purges, perhaps twice or even three times that number.
- * Stalin forced some ethnic groups to move from their homelands to Siberia. Whole populations were transported from southern Russia to the east.

C: Persecution and Control

The Origins and Course of the Purges

Totalitarianism

- * Historians talk about Stalin's Russia being a totalitarian state, where the Party set out to control every aspect of life.
- * There is increasing evidence that however much it might have liked to give the impression of being totalitarian, that Stalin's government did not quite succeed.
- * People did hold counter opinions, even if they largely kept them to themselves, or grumbled in a crowd where it was hard to be picked out.

How did Stalin establish control over the Soviet Union?

- * First of all, Stalin had to establish control over the Party. He did this by a combination of terror - see below - and delivering what party members wanted.
- * Much the same can be said about Stalin's control over the country: control over dissenters was mostly by force, but propaganda and the cult of the individual played a key part in sustaining Stalin's popularity in the country.
- * Even prisoners in the Gulags were reported to cry when Stalin's death was announced.
- * It is important to note that some recent historians question just how much control Stalin had over the country.

* They argue he was certainly at the centre of events, but that often the Centre was trying desperately to get local parties and members to follow the Party line.

* Perhaps Totalitarianism isn't an appropriate term to describe Stalin's Russia after all.

The Terror

* The Terror is used to describe a whole series of events in Russia from 1928 to 1938.

* No one knows quite how many people died in the Purges; but Stalin once told Churchill that collectivisation alone cost 10 million lives.

* Millions were either deprived of Party membership, arrested with or without trial, sent to the Gulags or shot.

* The usual figure given is 7,000,000, but this has been revised upwards in recent years as mass graves have been discovered in Kolyma. The true figure may be as high as 20,000,000.

* The most high profile cases were the Old Bolsheviks who were accused at the Show Trials.

* Were these all enemies of Stalin that needed to be removed? Some confessed to the most unlikely of crimes - killing Lenin, working for the Nazis, and so on. Others maintained their innocence throughout.

* One technique was to guarantee that the accused family would be left alone after a guilty plea.

* Another was to have a women weeping in the next cell mimicking the accused's wife.

A Chronology of the main events of the Terror 1930-1938

1930-1

At first the purges concentrated upon technical experts, who Stalin blamed for the failures of the First Five Year Plan. They were accused of sabotage and there was a series of trials. These were the so called ' Wreckers Trials'.

1932

More than 800, 000 members of the Party were expelled. Stalin was trying to ensure his control of the Party machinery.

But the real Purges began in 1934.

1934

Some Party members try to persuade Kirov to take over Stalin's post of General Secretary. Kirov refuses

1934

In the elections for the Central Committee at the Party Congress some delegates do not vote for Stalin - it is rumoured Kirov gets more votes. The ballots are destroyed.

1934

Dec 1 - Kirov is assassinated by Nikolaev - a party member. His bodyguard was mysteriously absent. Stalin passes a decree giving the NKVD great powers to arrest and detain suspects. Stalin is implicated in the removal of Kirov, a potential rival.

1935

The Society of Old Bolsheviks is abolished.

1935

All members required to exchange their membership cards for new ones - an attempt to improve membership records. Another 9% of members were removed from the Party.

1936

A new democratic constitution is announced, guaranteeing freedom of speech, etc., etc.

1936

The First Show Trial, Zinoviev and Kamenev and others, begins in Moscow.

1937

A Second Show Trial, Radek and others, begins.

1937

The purge of the Army begins.

1937

Torture is legalised

1938

The Third Show Trial begins in Moscow. Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsky and Yagoda are the star names.

* The period 1936-1938 is known as the Ezhovschina -after Ezhov, the Head of the NKVD. It was this period that was the ' high point' of the Terror.

* Target figures of arrests and executions were set for each district.

* Kulaks and returning political prisoners were to be the main category, but priests, former members of political parties, nationalists, ex-Whites were all added to the list.

* In all, nearly 2 million people were arrested at this time, with about 700,000 being executed.

Was there serious opposition to Stalin within the Party?

Were the Purges planned?

* One explanation is that the events of the Terror largely targeted at the Party and bureaucracy seemed to coincide with changes in policy or with problems with industrialisation.

* This is certainly true of the early Purges in 1930 to 1932. They were excuses for the failures of the First Five Year Plan.

* Another explanation is that events were tied in with Stalin's personal battle over leadership.

* All his opponents in the struggle for power figure in the Show Trials and confess to all manner of heinous crimes.

* The purge of the army seems to be linked with Trotsky - he had been Head of the Red Army and the army was really the only other possible source of power.

* Many of the leading generals must have been confidants of Trotsky, and there is evidence that still, in the 1930s, some leading Communists were maintaining links with Trotsky.

Were the Purges simply random?

* However, some historians argue that the Terror was really quite arbitrary, that the frightening thing about the Terror was that it could strike anyone, anywhere, at any time.

* The victims never really knew why they were enmeshed in the system. Often they had been implicated by previous victims under torture, in an effort to save themselves.

How much was Stalin involved in the Terror?

- * There is no doubt that Stalin was closely involved in setting the Terror in progress, or in key decisions about the Show Trials. He personally signed the death warrants for thousands of the victims.
- * He also made the key speech in March 1939 at the Party Congress that brought the full force of the Terror to an end.
- * What is open to debate is how much of the Terror was directed from the Centre, and how much a result of local forces getting out of control.
- * Were some of the worst acts of terror either settling of old scores or examples of enthusiasm for building socialism?

The Terror in context

- * We must not forget that these were extraordinary times in Russia, with great economic and social changes taking place.
- * There is no defending the scale of terror, but it needs to be put into the context of the time.
- * Recent work suggests we should not view the Terror as a whole, carefully planned series of events, but as a series of unconnected events, as responses to specific problems as they arose.
- * It shows not the strength of Stalin's government but its weakness - i. e. its inability to control its own followers, its own party members; its inability to carry them with it and the need to resort to force to get its way.

- * Was the Terror the result of Stalin's fevered imagination, his paranoid personality, seeing opposition behind every move?
- * Or was it a result of Party bureaucrats trying hard to protect their own skins?
- * Or the justifiable removal of those Trotsky called 'radishes'? (Red on the outside but White in the middle.)
- * Whatever the reason, it is an area of great debate. After all historians can't even agree on the numbers killed or arrested, let alone why the Terror happened!
- * There is no doubt that Stalin, along with all Bolsheviks, wanted to use every means in his power to turn Russia into a strong industrial power. This was seen as essential to the survival of Socialism in a hostile world.

Summary

Who was purged?

- * Bolshevik leaders who Stalin had forced out in 1925 to 1927.
- * Poets, writers, artists, musicians, anyone creative who might have ideas which Stalin did not like.
- * Managers of industries who did not meet their targets for production.
- * Scientists, engineers, experts of any kind who Stalin did not trust or understand. Only loyal party officials, who accepted Stalin's decision without question, were safe.

- * Army and Navy officers; every Admiral of the Soviet fleet, three of the five Marshals of the Red Army, 90% of the generals and more than half of the officers of the Red Army

- * Millions of ordinary Soviet citizens, who often did not know what they had done to anger Stalin.

What effects did the Purges have?

- * The Red Army lost almost all its experienced officers. In 1941 it stood no chance against the German army.

- * Science and technology suffered as new inventions were stopped. Stalin actually prevented development in some areas by clinging to outdated ideas.

- * Industry suffered because managers were unwilling to try anything new.

- * Literature art and music were all stifled. Only Stalin's favourite form of art, Socialist Realism was accepted. This showed workers striving to create the Soviet Union.

- * By eliminating older figures, Stalin was able to promote younger men who owed their success to him. This made them completely loyal.

- * Lavrenti Beria became the head of the NKVD, and Georgi Malenkov, who was expected to be Stalin's successor.

What effects did the Terror have on family life?

- * The Terror had a huge impact on families. Whole families might be arrested and deported, or children left behind with friends and family.

- * Men might be sent to work many miles away from their wives and children and not return for years. You often did not know if your spouse was alive or dead.
- * Many children had to live on their wits. At first juvenile crime was treated leniently, being blamed on society and social disruption.
- * Education and care were regarded as appropriate 'punishments'. This changed in 1935 when a new law classed offenders aged 12 or above as adults, liable even to the death penalty.
- * Parents were made responsible for behaviour, and had to pay their children's fines. Difficult young people could be taken away from parents and put into state orphanages, where the parents had to pay the cost of keeping them there!

Culture and the Arts in the service of a totalitarian regime

The Purges became part of the Revision of History. What was the Revision of History?

- * In the 1930s, Stalin began to rewrite the history of Russia and the Soviet Union in the twentieth century. He made out that he was much more important than he really had been before he came to power.
- * Textbooks and encyclopaedias were destroyed or altered. Children in school had to paste over pages in their books with the new versions of what had happened.

Why did Stalin do this?

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- * He wanted to destroy the reputations of the other Bolshevik leaders. This would explain why he had put them on trial and had them executed.
- * He picked on Trotsky in particular, because Lenin had chosen him as his successor. He accused him of treason and said that if he had done nothing to help Russia.
- * Stalin claimed that he had had been responsible for the successes in the Civil War in 1918 to 1920.
- * He wanted to make out that he and Lenin had been very close friends and that only he knew what Lenin had intended to do in Russia.
- * This would explain why Stalin had become the leader and would make Russians accept him. He had made sure that Lenin's body was preserved in a huge mausoleum in Red Square and encouraged Soviet citizens to visit it.
- * He wanted to build himself up to be all-powerful and stop anyone opposing his ideas. This became known as the 'Cult of Personality'. Stalin made out that he was a superman who never made any mistakes.

What was the Cult of Personality?

- * Stalin created the impression that he was a genius at everything. He was described as the 'wisest man of the twentieth century', the 'genius of the age'. The Soviet people were told that he was never wrong. This protected Stalin from any further challenges.

* He expected love and worship, not respect and obedience. Stalin made sure that everyone knew about his successes. Huge rallies were held in his honour.

* He used many forms of propaganda to pass on the news, but his favourite form was paintings and sculptures. These appeared all over Russia. They showed Stalin meeting smiling people, opening factories and dams, and he always looked rather taller and fitter than he actually was.

* The high point of the Cult was after the Second World War, from 1945 to 1952, when Stalin began to plan further Purges.

How did education change during the 1930s?

* There was a huge expansion of education both to meet the needs of the Five Year Plans and to help create new communist citizens.

* The Revolutionary educational theories and ideas introduced after the Revolution were quietly put to one side as discipline, exams, uniforms and such like were reintroduced. Preference to students of a proletarian background was dropped in 1936.

* In 1930 primary education for all for four years was introduced. This was later extended to seven years. There was a heavy emphasis on vocational training, and on science, technology and medicine.

* In 1940 fees were introduced for Higher Education. Thousands of new places for students were created - again with a strong focus on technical and vocational studies.

- * Great emphasis was made on eliminating adult illiteracy, and on evening/after work classes for adults.
- * Cheap books - the Russian classics as well as Soviet propaganda - were published in their millions, and communist newspapers like Pravda were sold very cheaply. Every factory would have its own library.
- * School textbooks were constantly rewritten as the Purges and Show Trials took place. In 1938 one standard history textbook, apparently written by Stalin himself, had to be used.

Culture and the Arts

- * Everything, even the Arts, was supposed to play its part in Stalin's ' Second Revolution'.
- * Under Lenin, there was great artistic freedom, and the 1920s are regarded as a high spot in Russian cultural life.
- * Under Stalin art had to inspire greater productivity, be a propaganda vehicle for creating the new Communist society
- * Only approved writing could get published, music played, art displayed. What was acceptable wasn't always easy to discern, as Shostakovitch discovered when Stalin went to see his opera Lady Macbeth of Mtsenk.
- * The opera had been playing for two years to rave reviews before Stalin went to see it. He walked out. Following that it was denounced as ' cacophonous' and ' pornographic'.

* Shostakovitch suddenly found himself cast as villain rather than hero. Eventually, with the premiere of his Fifth Symphony, Shostakovitch was rehabilitated in the public eye.

* Like elsewhere in the world the cinema became a favourite place of entertainment in the 1930s.

* There were propaganda trains that included travelling cinemas to take film to the rural areas, and cities and towns would have huge new cinemas.

* All films were state-made, so fully reflected the views and wishes of the Party, plying a vital role in propaganda as well as entertainment.

* The press and the radio were given great emphasis by the party. Most towns and cities had loudspeakers set up in prominent places so people could hear Government pronouncements.

* Even some villages were connected to the electricity supply so they too could receive radio broadcasts and be kept in touch with what the Party wanted them to do and think. All media was totally controlled by the State.

* Great efforts were put into controlling what people could read and see, to ensure it conformed to the wishes of the Party. Of course, when the wishes of the Party changed, then this caused some problems.

* From 1935 onwards a great effort was made to portray Stalin as close to the people. Images of him were everywhere.

* His birthday was a national celebration. Cities were renamed after him.

When he spoke applause lasted for many, many minutes - no one wanted to be the first to stop applauding!

The strengths and weaknesses of the USSR on the eve of war in 1941

Strengths

* The USSR was the second most powerful industrial country in the world, only the economy of the USA was greater.

* Production overall had risen by 400% since 1928.

* Industry had been relocated east of the Urals and would be out of reach of German forces.

* Agriculture had been largely reorganised into collective farms. Production was up by one-third.

* Stalin was untouchable; he had complete control of the USSR: contrary advice was not welcomed and could be very unwise.

* The Soviet population was much greater than that of Germany.

* The land mass of the USSR made invasion very risky.

* Generals 'January' and 'February' were very important factors.

Weaknesses

* Stalin had allowed himself to be lulled into a state of false security by the Nazi-Soviet Pact.

- * He had ignored warnings from his spy Richard Sorge that Germany was about to invade.
- * In June 1941, Stalin was taken completely by surprise by Operation Barbarossa. He appears to have taken a week to recover from the shock
- * Although Stalin was all-powerful, many of the peoples of the USSR hated him and were ready to welcome the Germans.
- * He was aware, as his first speech showed, that appealing to people to fight for him personally would be a waste of time.
- * The Purges had made him many enemies and had devastated the Soviet armed forces. Most experienced officers had been removed or executed.
- * Industrial and agricultural changes had yet to take full effect; production would not reach full capacity for several years.

Stalinism

- * Stalinism was Stalin's version of Lenin's Marxist philosophy. Some historians argue that Stalinism differed little from Lenin. They point to War Communism as an earlier version of total state control.
- * Others believe that Stalin adapted Lenin's policies and was less concerned with ideology and more with the struggle for and retention of power.
- * Stalinism was, therefore, not a coherent philosophy, but rather a means of putting policies into practice.

- * It included an extensive use of propaganda to establish a personality cult around an absolute dictator, as well as extensive use of the secret police to maintain social submission and silence political dissent.
- * Stalinism resulted in the USSR becoming one vast labour camp, where the sole aim of its citizens was to work for the greater good of the state; the 'state' being the leadership of Joseph Stalin.
- * Whilst this meant that industrial and agricultural resources could all be used for a single purpose, it also meant that individuality was suppressed and new ideas strangled.
- * ' Socialist Realism', the only acceptable form of art, resulted in mundane, figurative structures and paintings.
- * Music, as Prokofiev and Shostakovich found to their cost, had to be morally uplifting and reflect the coming transcendence of the proletariat.
- * Self-expression was stifled and history was re-written to fit Stalin's version of the recent past. Trotsky became the villain and Stalin himself the hero of the Revolution and the Civil War.
- * The Cult of Personality created a plethora of streets, buildings and even cities and towns being renamed in the honour of the ' wisest man of the twentieth century'.
- * Eventually, the term ' Stalinism' was created by one of Stalin's toadies, Lazar Kaganovich, although his leader never used the term, as far as we know, he always referred to himself as a Marxist-Leninist.

D: The Making of a Superpower

The Great Patriotic War

* In August 1939 Stalin made a pact with Hitler, the Nazi-Soviet Pact; this put off war between the two countries until June 1941.

* But when the war began Stalin was taken by surprise. The Germans advanced deep into the Soviet Union in a massive three-pronged attack, Operation Barbarossa.

* Stalin had not taken notice of warnings that Germany was about to attack. The Red Army had been crippled by the Purges.

* To win the war, Stalin ordered the countryside to be destroyed as the Red Army retreated, he also appealed to Soviet citizens to defend their motherland.

* He called the war the ' Great Patriotic War. A great deal of propaganda was produced to urge the Soviet peoples to fight.

* Whole factories, even towns were moved further east out of the reach of the German armies. The key turning-point was the battle of Stalingrad.

* Stalin left military matters to his generals, in particular Marshal Zhukov. Unlike Hitler he did not constantly interfere. He also stayed in the Kremlin to convince the Soviet people that he believed that the Soviet Union would win.

War production

* Nikolai Voznesensky, who had been head of Gosplan since 1938, was put in charge of war production in July 1941.

* Military needs were given first priority and civilian materials fell from two-thirds to one third of national production.

* Defence expenditure rose from 17% in 1940 to 60% in 1943. Retail trade fell by over 60% during the war.

* Evacuation of industry east of the Urals began on 24 June 1941. Altogether, 50, 000 workshops and 2, 500 large factories were moved.

* Production of coal, aluminium and steel never reached German levels; only oil production exceeded that of Germany.

* By 1943, 52% of industrial workers were women.

* Agriculture was hit much harder than industry, because production could not be shifted eastwards.

* Horses were confiscated and tractors were not replaced, consequently, much work had to be done by manual labour, mostly women.

* By 1945, women made up 80% of the agricultural workforce and worked largely by hand.

* Many peasants were not paid and the volume of grain provided for planting fell by 75% from 1940 to 1942.

* The state was still suspicious that peasants were hoarding and deliberately creating shortages.

What effects did the war have on the Soviet Union?

* 1, 710 towns, 70, 000 villages and 84, 000 schools were destroyed and 28, 000, 000 people died.

* Rationing was introduced (with four categories of calories), holidays were abolished and the average working week was 77 hours.

* 5. 9 million allotments were created to allow people to grow their own food.

* From February 1942, all men 16-55 and women 16-45 could be conscripted for labour service.

* By the end of the war, 25 million Russians were homeless and for several years many people lived in tents, mud huts or trenches in the ground.

* Most of European Russia was destroyed. Most of the advances of the 1930s were wiped out.

What effects did the war have on Stalin?

* During the war the Soviet people suffered terribly. This made Stalin determined that this should never happen again.

* He remembered that the Western Allies had intervened in the Civil War in 1918-9 and he suspected that they had encouraged Hitler in the 1930s.

* Britain and France had turned down an offer of an alliance with the Soviet Union in 1938.

* The Allies had delayed invading France until 1944.

- * This made Stalin very suspicious of the West. He believed that they had wanted the Soviet Union to destroy itself fighting Germany on its own.
- * Stalin was also suspicious of Soviet soldiers who had surrendered. Many were murdered and new purges were carried out in the late 1940s.
- * The Soviet Union was a victor in the Second World War but suffered devastating damage, around 27 million Soviet citizens dying in the conflict.
- * However the war had seen a loosening of social attitudes. After the war Stalinist rule in the Soviet Union was re-established.
- * Although he rarely appeared in public (only twice in 1946 and 1952), Stalin continued to rule through the use of purging.
- * The threat from the west and the intensification of the Cold War further heightened Stalin's sense of political paranoia.

Agrarian policy 1945-53

- * Despite the huge sacrifices of the agricultural sector during the Second World War the post-war period saw a return to the strict regulation by central authority of the pre war years.
- * Post-war, the agricultural sector had huge demands placed upon it but without any opposition. The system of collective farms allowed the state to take what it wished.
- * In September 1946, the state passed a decree demanding the return to the collective farm of all land the system had previously owned.

- * The 1946 decree took back into collective farm ownership some 140, 000 head of cattle and returned around 450, 000 collective farm administrators back into productive work.
- * The state continued to collectivise in its newly acquired territories, in 1947 the Baltic States saw the introduction of the collective farm with the inevitable deportations of those who opposed such a move.
- * The burden of taxation was again placed on the collective farms and procurement levels of grain and livestock were increased by 50%.
- * Strict state control over agricultural affairs can be seen in Stalin's ' plan for the transformation of nature' introduced by decree in October 1948.
- * Based on the ideas of the dubious character Trofim Lysenko, it resulted in the planting of 1. 5 million hectares of trees in by 1951.
- * Many of the trees died as they were planted in unsuitably dry areas. The planting of trees did not help to increase crop yields as intended; its main consequence was to divert scarce collective farm resources from where they were needed most..
- * In 1950, a drive to amalgamate smaller collective farms into larger ones was undertaken by Nikita Khrushchev and a proposal made to set up large agro-towns.
- * The former proposals resulted in a decline in the number of collective farms, the latter came to nothing.

* In some ways this was a further attempt to reduce the dependence of the peasant on his/her private plot.

* Until the death of Stalin in 1953, there were no measures introduced which improved the life of the collective farmer. State prices paid for goods in 1952 were lower than in 1940 and greater taxes on the private plot led to a decline in output.

* Despite the fact that the private plots were the lifelines for the collective farmer (they also accounted for between 40-50% of all agricultural production in 1950), the state persisted in its attacks on private production.

* The post war years saw a re-establishment of the repressive Stalinist regime and the planned economy. There is