

Assess the impact  
stalin had on russia  
and on the russian  
people



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Stalin came into power very controversially when Lenin died. Before Lenin had died he wrote a letter saying that he had serious worries that if Stalin came into power he would let the power go to his head. Stalin still managed to become head of the communist party after a big struggle for power with another person high up in the communist party called Trotsky. Stalin managed however to persuade the rest of the communist party that he was the rightful leader after Lenin.

After he won he expelled Trotsky from the party. Trotsky was later assassinated by one of Stalin's agents. Stalin main aim was to transform Russia into a completely industrial country that could compete with the rest of Europe. When Stalin took over Russia, Lenin had completed a few of his ideas but it was nowhere near where he had wanted it to be.

Most of the country's produce was agricultural. Stalin wanted Russia to be a leading industrialized country. In Russia then there were three classes of people: the very rich, the better off peasants (Kulaks) and peasants. In order to complete this plan he had to kill all of the Kulaks because he knew that they would never get used to being at the same level as the really poor peasants and as there were so many of them he couldn't find any other way. There were the very rich but they were such a small number that they didn't pose any threat. But there were many Kulaks.

He could only think of three ways of dealing with them. These were: firing squads, moving them to Siberia, or downgrade them to peasant level. So Stalin did this. It was estimated that he killed 14 million or more of the kulaks which wiped out their class in society. Stalin was willing to invest most of the

countries money into getting it industrialized. He wanted to do this in five years.

He called it the five year plan. This was an almost impossible task as most countries have gradually become industrialized after about 50 years. The plan worked but at the great cost of human lives. Anyone that thought the plan wouldn't work and thought that it was a waste of money was dealt with by the police.

People that had moved to the cities that Stalin had just built often lived in inhuman conditions putting up with problems such as not having a toilet and the house being tiny often with far too many people living in it. People that had been farmers all their lives didn't want to move because someone told them to. So Stalin used brute force to move them to factories where they helped build railways or help in the production of coal, iron and steel.

Starvation occurred in many parts of the Soviet Union because there was not enough food being produced. Up to 7 million people died because of starvation.

Disease was very widespread as there weren't many sewers. Many of the things that people had enjoyed before communism had been stopped, such as religion. Stalin had really cracked down on anyone who was involved in religion. People were being persecuted for what they believed in. The secret police were usually the people that found out if any one was having secret masses. They usually dealt with it by exile or even death.

Stalin was so strongly anti-religion because of his Marxist beliefs. Also

because the Russian Orthodox Church had links with the tsars. Stalin  
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changed so much about the way people worked. It must have come as a great shock to the people of Russia. For example if you wanted to change job in 1926 you needed the permission of your boss.

He however was likely to say no unless you were a bad worker. Then he would tell the police and you could be prosecuted because you didn't like your job. If you wanted to join an association it had to be approved by the government otherwise you could be arrested. You could not set up your own business otherwise again you would be arrested or killed.

If you were clever and you had a degree then you would be sent to work in an awful job in a place like Siberia or Kazakhstan, which required no intelligence because Stalin was scared that you might start an organization or a group against him. If you were able to work but did not want to work then you would be condemned as a social parasite. This means that you live off other people. You would be moved away from the city and into the country where if you did not work you would starve. When Hitler came to power in Germany, Stalin was scared of what might happen especially when Hitler looked towards the Sudeten land to recapture it. So Stalin turned to England and France.

He was very annoyed though that they gave in to Hitler without a fight as long as he didn't take over any more countries. Stalin secretly was in negotiations with Germany whilst also speaking with England and France as well. On August 23, 1939 Russia signed a non-aggression pact with the Nazis. Stalin did this because he wanted to expand communism and he thought that as the Nazis were planning to take over a lot of countries then

he could spread communism in those countries. When Germany invaded Poland this was the start of the 2nd world war.

The soviet union was also expelled from The League of Nations because it was starting war with Finland. Russia won the little war which gave them a little bit of Finland. By now The Soviet Union was very big and communism was spreading along with Germany. Stalin was becoming a little bit weary of Hitler now and was scared that he might invade Russia.

So Russia signed a pact with Japan. Stalin was right about feeling cautious with Hitler because in 1941 Hitler invaded Russia. Stalin was not expecting it at all and his army was already weak after taking over countries. The German assault seemed at first successful but was eventually stopped about 20 miles from Moscow.

Stalin had been very paranoid all through his life and towards the end he became extremely paranoid. He started executing members of the opposing governmental parties as he thought they were plotting to assassinate him. He executed between 1.5 and 7 million of his opponents in this 2-year period from 1936 to 1938. This was called the great purge. Stalin was one of the most brutal dictators in all of history but ignoring all the bad things he did there were some big changes made in Russia when he was leader.

Amy Knight is a Research specialist on The Soviet Union and this is what she said, " Stalin's historical legacy is overwhelmingly negative. Although his policies transformed the USSR from an agrarian-based society into an industrialized nation with a powerful military arsenal, the transformation was accomplished at the cost of millions of lives. Stalin's militant distrust of the  
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West and his assertion of Soviet dominance in Eastern Europe gave rise to the Cold War. His purges of society through violent police terror left a permanent scar on the collective memory of the people under his rule.

Although admired by some Russians, most would agree with the assessment in the West that Stalin was one of the cruelest dictators in history.”