

Were the five-year  
plans successful?



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Were the five-year plans successful? When Joseph Stalin took control of Russia in 1928, he saw that Russia was very industrially behind and with the World War II looming, the Soviet Union had no choice but to industrialise at the speed of light. Quoting from a speech he gave in 1931, he said: " The history of old Russia has consisted being beaten again and again because of our backwardness. It is our duty to the working class to increase the pace of production. We are 50 to 100 years behind the advanced countries. We must make up this in ten years. Either they do it or they crush us". As a result, he introduced the three five year plans. One from 1928 to 1933 and a second one from 1932 to 1937 and there was a third five year plan from 1937 to 1942. However, in 1941 it stopped because the Germans started the invasion of Russia but was it successful or unsuccessful? From 1928 to 1933 the first five year plan started it was aimed to rapidly increase productivity in heavy industry like coal, steel, railways, electricity and machinery. However, the Gosplan set the workers very ambitious targets. For example, the target for oil and coal was to double moreover the targets for electricity, iron and steel was to triple. However, the amount of industrial workers did double. Despite all the targets, remarkable amounts were achieved. However, the atmosphere and feeling in the factories was chaotic, in addition, there was an enormous amount of waste being produced and many of the products were unusable. As the collectivisation happened in the countryside, many of the workers came to work in the industry they were very clumsy because they were unskilled in what they were doing and did damage to some very important, expensive, imported machinery. As a result, productivity decreased as there were broken down machinery. While on the other hand the rapid rate during the first five-year pan with high targets was good

because there was a drive in the people also there was positive nationalist mood within the USSR, it was the first time that in Russia people felt proud of their country for a long time. In addition, there was a group of people who were called the Stankanovites who worked for long hours. Moreover, it also gave job opportunities to women. In addition, complete towns were built and remarkable figures were achieved. Coal nearly doubled and the same for oil. Steel output only went up slightly however, electricity tripled. As the government set the workers very high targets of output. There were punishments and incentives and these had an effect, there were good effects and bad effects. For example, every worker in the industry was given a labour book to record the conduct. If you had a bad conduct, you could be put on a show trial or be sent to a labour camp or have the CHEKA spy on you and be very suspicious of you and your actions were closely monitored. In addition, if you were absent or constantly late, you could be sent to prison or be fined or have or rations book taken away from you. Also, there was a very strict discipline and there was also that you were not allowed to travel around the largest country in the world, which is Russia. On the other hand, the Russian government used propaganda well because it encouraged workers to produce more and more. In addition, they used propaganda to show to the world how successful industrialisation was. Moreover, Stalin had incentives. For example, managers who met their targets were richly rewarded. In addition, workers who worked well, exceeded their targets, and worked for long hours were given education, better pay, better housing, medical help and holidays that were inside Russia, not outside Russia and extra payments. Moreover, groups of especially selected workers became heroes and heroes and they were used as examples for motivation of other

workers. The most famous worker used for propaganda was Stakhanov who mined 102 tonnes of coal in one shift apparently. The central planning was very inefficient, and they planned the three five year plans and the organization given that job was called the GOSPLAN. However, they gave the managers and the factories had some very ambitious targets. In addition, each factory had its own target to contribute to the mammoth project happening at the time. The state planning agency, the GOSPLAN, was based in Moscow and employed 500, 000 people. In addition they set targets how much each industry, heavy industry in the first and second five year plan's, would produce then these targets would be sent locally. However, the state planning agency required a very strict discipline from the workers and they made no allowance for local conditions and often had no direct knowledge of the industries and the type of people they were dealing with. The planning was not very efficient, in some areas there was an under achievement and in some there was an over achievement. In addition, in some instances essential parts did not arrive also the system was sometimes very chaotic. Failures to meet targets of poor quality goods were simply always blame don innocent workers that had done nothing wrong. The party said that some wreckers, who tried to sabotage the industrial progress. For example in 1928, workers in the Donbass region fell behind the targets. 53 engineers were accused of wrecking in the famous Shantky trial and he did that to disguise some very poor planning. As a result of the woeful planning by the GOSPLAN there was also some very disappointing results through in efficiency, waste, duplication of effort, wages fell, targets unsurprisingly in a dictatorship had to be met with threats as the main motivation and Russia sold much needed grain to pay for essential goods which resulted in the

1932 famine which killed thirteen million peasants. It was important for the Russian government to have both quantity and quality that can be used because if the product cannot be used there would be no point of creating them in creating them. But unfortunately, this was not what Stalin's Russia this was not the case because they had quantity not quality. By the end of the 1930's the Soviet Union was second in the world in industrial production behind the United States of America who had quantity and quality. In addition, in the world's biggest country, USSR, unemployment was almost non-existent while unemployment in the USA was at 15 million people. But the quality of the products the Russians were producing was awful; the ex-peasants that had come from the countryside had no real idea what they were actually doing. Everyone had a target, so people were bothered about how much they produce and not about the quality of the product which they have produced. And some people from the countryside whom were fed up with collectivisation were not suited to work in the industry. Moreover, some even got bored with the repetitiveness at what they were doing on a daily basis. And they were clumsy, untrained and poorly educated. In addition, some of the goods were unusable. For example, half of the tractors produced did not even work. During the five year plans there were some spectacular building projects. These building projects inspired ordinary Russians working and they believed that they were building a different Russia to the one before. One of these buildings was the Moscow metro, during its time it was a miracle, the metro spanned across nearly the whole of Moscow. It is also well known for the socialist realism art inside the stations. The metro has 177 stations and the average daily traffic during the year now is 6.8 million people per day. Also one of the spectacular building

projects was the industrial town of Magnitogorsk before it was a small village near the Ural Mountains. However, during the industrialization all that changed