

To what extent was
collectivisation an
economic and
political disaster



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Whether or not Stalin's collectivisation was a complete disaster or not is a difficult question to answer. There are many issues and factors that come into play and further the causes of some of the downfalls are unclear. It is important to look at the consequences for the peasants, the workers, Russia itself and for Stalin. There may have been successes drawn from collectivisation but the question remains as to whether the failures of collectivisation outweigh the successes or if in fact it is the other way around.

Stalin's main aims were to modernise the country and to increase the power and wealth of the nation. His policy of collectivisation aimed to do just this. However the implications that arose from the harsh agricultural policy left much doubt over whether Stalin really had the best interests of the Nation and in particular its people in mind. What is certain is that it shows a clear move by Stalin to instigate a strong communist theme in Russia by replacing the capitalist sympathising NEP. The system was very typical of Stalin indeed.

Stalin flipped Marx's theory of society and the economy around, where Marx believed that society was influenced by the state of the economy, Stalin believed that he could change the face of the Economy by changing the very nature of society. In doing this Stalin was able to implement Socialism into the countryside and keep them under control. The system was harsh, however some may have seen this as some form of revenge on the peasantry as they had been the cause of many a political problem in Russia over the recent times and Stalin most probably saw them as a nuisance and a hassle.

<https://assignbuster.com/to-what-extent-was-collectivisation-an-economic-and-political-disaster/>

The Economic aims of Collectivisation were very simple indeed, to increase grain production, as this was the very basis on which Russia was to catch up with the western nations. Grain was needed in three particular areas, firstly the grain was needed to feed the workers in the cities who worked in industry and are fundamental to the modernisation of the country. Without grain they cannot work without the workers there can be no secondary revolution. Secondly the grain is needed for the army, as Stalin is well aware that Russia needs a strong military if it is to compete with the capitalist states.

Stalin knows that the strong nations prey on the weaker nations and Russia has been plagued by its backwardness in the past this is why he wants a strong army. Finally the surplus grain was sold through export to gain capital to then be used in the Industrialisation that now swamped the urban areas. Collectivisation really began to become predominant in the 1930's, in 1930 23.6% of all farms were collectivised and by 1936 89.6% were collectivised showing a massive increase in one decade.

In terms of Stalin this was fantastic as the more collectivised farms that there were then the more control and power that he had over the countryside, which tended to be a very difficult place to control in the years of the Tsars. This could well be seen as a political success from collectivisation. However Collectivisation was met with much opposition from the peasants and almost resulted in civil war. Stalin managed to shift the blame to corrupt officials who were "dizzy with success" and was therefore able to continue with his policy of collectivisation.

However it showed how the Government was not in total control and the peasantry were not in favour of Stalin's agricultural policy. In order to get the peasantry on side and inspire their enthusiasm towards collectivisation, Stalin used powerful propaganda campaigns. Stalin had almost invented a class, which were named the Kulaks. The Kulaks were according to Stalin the capitalist peasants who had benefited from exploiting the other peasants during the years of the NEP. However the concept of the Kulak class has been shown by scholars to be no more than an invention of the Stalin Government.

Whereas the peasants who were richer than others were simply those who ran more efficient farms than the other peasants were. However the peasantry lapped up this propaganda and there were attacks on the Kulaks by the other peasants such treatment was often prelude to the arrest and deportation by the anti-Kulak squads. This was a large success for Stalin in many different aspects. Firstly the creation of anti-Kulak squads and the renewal of terror served as a deliberate policy to warn the peasantry of the consequences of resisting state reorganisation and soviet agriculture.

The process of De-Kulakisation was to speed up the tempos of collectivisation amongst the peasantry. Finally De-Kulakisation had its economic benefits for Stalin as well with the large increase in the number of prisoners to be used as a large labour force Stalin was able to build and continue with his Industrialisation scheme. The reality of Collectivisation is that it was a massive social upheaval, the peasantry had to change all their traditions and felt disorientated, and therefore the results were fairly disastrous.

<https://assignbuster.com/to-what-extent-was-collectivisation-an-economic-and-political-disaster/>

The majority of peasants began to eat their seed corn and slaughter their livestock to eat. The Soviet Government had no idea how to react and respond to the disasters in the country. Their methods of execution, imprisonment and deportation served only to make matters worse. The "twenty-five thousand" were the party members sent from the towns into the country to attempt to restore food production levels. They had no idea of farming techniques and only added to the disruption and chaos.

The little grain that was being produced was being exported as "surplus" to gain external capital that was essential to the industrialisation process. The levels of foods had dropped dramatically as the following statistics show. In 1928 consumption of bread in kilos per head was 250. 4 but by 1932 that had gone down to 214. 6. Similarly potatoes in 1928 was 141. 1 but 1932 it had dropped to 125. The livestock had also been depleted due to the mass slaughter of animals in order to survive, the number of horses in 1928 was 33, 000, 000 but by 1932 it was under half that at 15, 000, 000.

Cattle had dropped a huge amount from 70, 000, 000 in 1928 to 34, 000, 000 in 1932. This was a catastrophe in terms of agriculture, there was not enough food to feed the whole nation and to export to foreign countries but also the effects on the levels of livestock would be devastating. Areas worst hit include Kazhakstan and Ukraine who lost nearly 90% of their livestock it may have taken decades to renew the livestock numbers to what they used to be.

Also in the Ukraine there were cases of cannibalism showing a complete breakdown of the social system and their morale instincts. By 1932-3 the

situation in the collective farms had become so bad that it Russia was in a state of famine, It was only from western reports that new of the horrendous events became known. The official Stalinist line was that there was no famine. This was a political success for Stalin, as by acting like there was no famine he had no obligation to solve the problem and bring in measures that would resolve the issue.

As they did not publicly acknowledge the famine then they could not ask for assistance from the outside world and so it was what Isaac Deutcher referred to as the first man made famine in history. In Conclusion it is difficult to weigh up the various different aspects and consequences of the policy of collectivisation. The negative aspects include horrendous situations where livestock has to be slaughtered just in order to survive and in the extreme cases there has been a complete breakdown on morality and people have actually resorted to cannibalism in order to survive.

Also Collectivisation never really took off and the peasantry could never completely grasp its political and economic justification meaning they were never committed to the scheme and so it was never going to be successful if the peasants did not agree with what they were forced into doing. However in terms of successes Stalin managed to incorporate socialism into the countryside and defeat the remaining capitalists in Russia. Also Stalin received a large free labour force in the form of the arrested Kulaks which he used to continue with his industrialisation scheme.

The successes of Collectivisation both political and economic all seem to be benefit Stalin and the Stalin government where as the downfalls seem to

have had a bad effect on the peasantry in particular in this case. This shows Stalin was willing to sacrifice others for his own success, this is most clearly shown by his refusal to acknowledge the famine just so that he wouldn't have to take actions to resolve it. Yes collectivisation was a disaster for the people and Russia as a whole but Stalin reaped the rewards however few they were.