

# Russia under stalin



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Russia Under Stalin After Lenin's death in 1924, Josef Stalin became the leader of the Communist government. Stalin was born Josef Dzhugashvili, but he took the name Stalin, which means "man of steel." Stalin was one of history's cruelest leaders. Think Ivan the Terrible cruel. Under Stalin's rule, the Soviet Union became a totalitarian country. In a totalitarian country, a dictator or a small group of people control every part of the lives of its citizens. Life under Stalin was not fun. Like Peter the Great, Stalin wanted to modernize his country. Stalin wrote that his goal was to: "... transform our land from an agricultural [farming] country to an industrial giant." He wanted the Soviet Union to catch up with the West (Europe and America). Well, that doesn't sound too bad. To reach his goal, Stalin began a series of 'five year plans.' The government controlled banks, factories, mines, and other industries. The government decided that Russia needed coal, steel, and machines to become a strong industrial country. The government built a lot of tractor factories, steel mills, and electrical power plants. Consumer goods--goods that people use up such as soap, clothing, furniture, and food--were produced in fewer amounts. So, what? Well, that meant that things we use to make our lives more pleasant, I don't know, like toilet paper, were hard to come by. Ok, that's not fun, but how does this make Stalin cruel? Be patient. Under the five year plans, the government set production goals for each industry and for farming. The government told farms and factories what to produce and how much to produce. Always, it was "more, more, more." Workers only received their regular pay if they reached their goals. If they produced more or less than their goals, they got extra or less pay. According to Spartacus. school, "every factory had large display boards ... that showed the output of workers. Those that failed to reach the required targets were

publicly criticized and humiliated. Some workers could not cope with this pressure and absenteeism increased. This led to even more repressive measures being introduced. Records were kept of workers' lateness, absenteeism and bad workmanship. If the worker's record was poor, he was accused of trying to sabotage the Five Year Plan and if found guilty could be shot or sent to work as forced labour on the Baltic Sea Canal or the Siberian Railway. " Did I just say, " shot?! " Yes. Yes, I did. Stalin was even more brutal when it came to reforming the Soviet Union's 25 million small farms. Remember, Lenin had taken land from wealthy landowners and had given the peasants their own small farms. In 1928, Stalin announced that all family farms would be abolished. They would be replaced by collective farms, or large farms worked by hundreds of families. The government expected that these collective farms, with the help of modern technology, would produce more food with fewer workers. The members of the collective farm worked the land together. They owned the machinery together. They divided what the collective farm produced according to the work each had done. The Communists liked the collective farms. The government could control the peasants better on collectives than on millions of small farms. The Communists also thought the family farms were too small and poor to use machinery. On the collective farms people were supposed to have tractors and machines. Fewer people could do more work and produce more food. This would free up people to work in the new mines and factories. Many peasants did not want to give up their small farms. The Communists called them " enemies of the people. " Millions were herded into slave labor camps called the Gulag. Many others were killed. Others died from famine. Life in Stalin's totalitarian country was often worse than life under the tsars. People

were arrested for practicing their religion. Even the director of the Moscow Zoo was arrested because his monkeys got a deadly disease. Many Russians were targeted for simple criticisms overheard by police informers . Stalin used the national secret police (the KGB). The secret police arrested anyone suspected of opposing Stalin's rule and anyone who was critical of Communism. They were considered to be " enemies of the people. "

Between 1934 and 1939, a bloody period of state terror known as the Great Purge existed. Purge means to clean out, and in this case, it meant to clear out the opposition. Millions were executed, while others were imprisoned in the Gulag. He even targeted the Red Army! In all, 30, 000 members of the armed forces were killed. Of those killed, 50% were officers! By the time Stalin died in 1953, 20 million Russians had died because of his harsh rule. Stalin had industrialized the Soviet Union. Using his absolute power, he built the Soviet Union into a world power, but he also exhausted the people with 25 years of terror.