

# Analysis of the totalitarianism in a soviet society

Government



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Totalitarian is stated as a political authority widely used to describe the kind of state and society engineered by Joseph Stalin. Historians on Soviet politics recognize the two theories focused on the totalitarian model. Basically, there are two totalitarian models- " an operational one that tried to describe the existing Soviet society and a developmental one that focused on the origins of totalitarianism and on the responsibility of Marxism-Leninism for Stalinist. " | According to Marxist theory, only through a modern industrialized economy could a true proletariat class be plopped, as Marx makes no mention of a peasant class.

Marxist theory aside, the need to industrialize was also a pragmatic matter of self-defense that was rooted on ideology; In a sense, it called for a totalitarian authority to successfully pull off the grandiose project. <sup>2</sup> This paper argues that while there is much discussion about the heavy industrialization and rapid acclimatization done during Stalin's reign, there is evident indications that it was during this time that Soviet Union truly became a totalitarian state. In a totalitarian authority, there is an evident indication of a nominated leader and a one-party state.

There is also the presence of brutal crushing of internal opposition. " The state not only monopolized the instrumentalities of coercion but also dominated the means of mass communication;" <sup>3</sup> totalitarianism allows " no challenge to the single official ideology. " <sup>4</sup> Those who actually publicly oppose the leader are then faced with brutal suppression. The period during Stalin's reign was perhaps the most transformation period of Soviet history. He consolidated his grip on power and used this to actively transform the culture and economic realities of the time.

It was during Industrialization that the Soviet union became truly totalitarian. Industrialization was the key element of Stalin's revolution. Rejecting the prior Bolshevik conviction with the bourgeois institution, he sought to embrace "socialist realism,"<sup>5</sup> denouncing anything that was remotely of "bourgeois intellect."<sup>6</sup> However, these cultural changes were minor in comparison to the vast changes of his economic policies. Joseph Stalin understood the inherent problem in starting a communist revolution in Russia: the nation failed capitalism, and it would need to undergo a transition from socialism to communism.

He understood that the transition would require heavy industrialization on a massive scale in order to successfully compete with Western modernization.<sup>7</sup> Stalin saw the need to industrialize as a pragmatic matter of self-defense. "Do you want our socialist fatherland to be beaten and to lose its independence?"<sup>8</sup> he asked in a famous February, 1931 speech. He continued on: "If you do not want this you must put an end to its backwardness in the shortest possible time and develop genuine Bolshevik tempo in building up the socialist system of the economy..."

We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this difference in ten years. Either we do it, or we shall be crushed."<sup>9</sup> Once Stalin ascended into power, the New Economic Policy introduced by Lenin was gradually destroyed.<sup>10</sup> In agriculture it was replaced by collective farms, while in industry, it paved the way to a Five-Year Plan which assigned production targets to production figures for heavy industrialization quotas at the beginning of the first five year plan in 1929.

As Keen pointed out, the unrealistic optimism of these goals were to be reached until 1960. 11 It seemed that there was no viable structure behind the planning as "planning" was reduced to naming target figures which had little more than propaganda significance" 12. Abstract commands were of a more practical importance than carefully elaborated planning; and "the commands were based on guesses, prejudices, and whims." 13 The propaganda, however, was extremely successful in that it accomplished its goal which was to increase production.

By 1934, there was a fifty percent increase in industrial output with an average annual growth rate of eighteen percent, while the population of industrial workers doubled. 14 The success was due to the effective manipulation of the public in Stalin's grandiose project; the workers' continuous belief that accepting lower standards of living was a small amount to pay for the future modernization of Soviet Union. Cashbook, a peasant, described how his family property was arbitrarily taken and his brother murdered, only to conclude: "But then, after all, look at what we're doing."

In a few years now we'll be ahead of everybody industrially. We'll all have automobiles and there won't be any differentiation between kulaks and anybody else" 15 The poor were blinded by an unrealistic optimism of a utopian society Stalin has laid out. Stalin and his followers undertook a series of actions that drastically reinforced totalitarianism in the Soviet order. The basic elements were maintained: the single-party state, the single official ideology, the manipulation of legality and the state's economic dominance.

Service pointed out that other elements were greatly altered as he " crucified politics and hyper-centralized administrative institutions. " 16 In 1927, the localization began with voluntary collective farms. However, very few volunteered. In 1928, only less than 1% of arable lands were collective and by 1929, the numbers increased to 7%, which were still not sufficient. 17 As Stalin continued to intimidate those who politically opposed him, the courage of people who wanted to stand up to his wild economic policies faltered. By the spring of 1930, the proportion of collective lands increased to 60%. 8 The reason was Stalin's decision to make acclimatization a mandatory process, which was also increasingly violent and brutal. The government called for the rapid and complete acclimatization, which would eventually lead to the overall colonization of the countryside. Kulaks stood to lose the most from acclimatization; the process of rapid acclimatization was made possible through a governmental assault on the peasant group. Stalin's government proclaimed that the collective farms should be formed exclusively from the poor peasant households.

Like Lenin before him, Stalin saw the kulaks, vaguely defined as wealthy peasants, as " unacceptably capitalist. " 19 Stalin was forceful in denunciation of the kulaks, he said: " We have gone over from a policy of limiting the exploiting tendencies of the kulak to a policy of eliminating kulaks as a class... Decentralization is now an essential element in forming and developing kolkhoz. Therefore, to keep on discussing decentralization is ridiculous and not serious. When the head is cut off, you do not weep about the hair. " 20 Stalin successfully divided the peasants, which made it easier for them to oppose.

The attacks on the kulaks also helped make the impression that it was only the kulaks that resisted acclimatization. They were used for such an impression that they were exploiting their neighbor peasants. The lower peasants felt no empathy towards the Kulaks, who always was a little better off than them. And since kulak was so loosely defined, anyone who resisted acclimatization could be quickly labeled a kulak. The Communists were often dismayed that even after vicious propaganda campaigns, most peasants sympathized more with kulaks than with the Communist Party.

So those who sympathized with the pleas of the kulaks were quickly labeled a sub-kulak. 21 Many of these poorer peasants were ultimately reclassified as kulaks themselves as they strongly resisted Stalin's oppression. Most joined the collective farms reluctantly. Many were executed for trying to sell off or slaughter their livestock rather than donating them to the collective farms. Stalin's Russia was a case of a totalitarian state. Stalin was an absolute dictator who used the most conniving means of coercion. The Kulaks who opposed acclimatization were dealt with absolute brutal treatment.

Many were killed, sent to Siberia, or thrown in the gulags, forced labor camps. 22 And the one thing that remained consistent was their loss of properties. Local districts were even required to fill quotas of Kulaks to be identified. Keen described the violence of this time as "collaboration's most significant precedent: Mass murder for vaguely defined political and economic goals became a possibility - this was the most important legacy of acclimatization" 24 The ultimate results of acclimatization were not what the regime had hoped.

Grain production declined ten percent between 1928 and 1932, and in addition delivery quotas were " two to three times higher than the quantities the peasants had previously marketed".<sup>5</sup> Many people starved to death between 1932 and 1933. The grain production was minimal and the statistics were miscalculated. As there was little amount of grains brought in the cities, almost none were left for the people in the countryside. The horrors of the famine were focused in Ukraine. It was estimated that five to seven million people starved to death.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, the Cheek, also known as the Main Political Administration, efficiently detected and suppressed any dissent in the city. Stalin and the Cheek chief Yuga scoured for any political opponents. Former Immensities and Socialist-Revolutionaries were hunted out penthouse their political parties had barely existed since the 1922 show-trials.<sup>27</sup> In 1931, newspapers were filled with stories of professional malefactors caught, accused, and sentenced. A witch-hunt atmosphere ascended as " workers were hallowed into denouncing any superiors who obstructed the implementation of the Five-Year Plan.<sup>28</sup> Stalin had tried to root out any possible opposition. When Bess Laminated and Sergei Sorts, who were supporters of Stalin , had publicly expressed their disgruntlement, the Cheek immediately arrested them and later were punished for factionalism. " <sup>29</sup> Stalin ran a tight political control as he used the Cheek as a weapon to bring terror to all opposition to his economic policies. The rapid acclimatization and industrialization under Stalin's regime had costs millions of lives.

The purges which victimized the peasants, workers, the intelligentsia, and the State party itself had been " previously unequaled in the long and brutal

history of Russia. " 30 As Stalin launched his revolution from above, the rapid industrialization and acclimatization of agriculture races of capitalism left by the New Economic Policy was reached. While many historians still argue whether Stalin intentionally starve the people to death or it was simply a matter of miscalculated production , the consistency remains on the fact that it was through acclimatization and industrialization that Soviet Union's totalitarian rule was sealed.

Stalin's central planning was immediately heavily emphasized on rapid industrialization, which ultimately led to its collapse due to the high imbalance. Although the goals set out benefited the nation, the process of localization and industrialization bought in violent coercive methods that created a period of famine and left the legacy of broken morale.

During Stalin's acclimatization, the difference between public and private spheres of life was utterly destroyed as everything was state-centered. The attempts to immobile the public in Stalin's grandiose projects to gain legitimacy of the act, the tight political and economic control run by violence and threats, as well as the utter destruction of public and private affairs are all substantial evidences of Soviet Union becoming an official totalitarian state.