

How did ten years of  
stalins rule change  
society in the ussr



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How did ten years of Stalin's rule change society in the USSR Answer with reference to the period 1928-1938. Josef Stalin's rule of the Soviet Union from 1928 through to 1953 is one of the most controversial periods in Russian history. Stalin's rule had enormous effect on society in Russia. Before Stalin came to power Russia was a backward country in turmoil just a few years after world war one, the 1917 Bolshevik revolutions and the civil war.

Russia was an agriculture country with little economic and urban development. Stalin replaced Lenin as leader of the Bolshevik party in 1927 after a struggle for power with Leon Trotsky. Trotsky believed the only way forward for the Soviet Union and socialism was permanent revolution in contrast Stalin argued the first task for the socialist party was to build up Russia to compete with the industrial western powers and for the survival of socialism. Stalin became successor to Lenin and immediately began transforming the Russian economy with major impact on Russian society. During the ten year period between 1928 and 1938 Russia was transformed from a backward agricultural country to a major industrial power with severe impact on society.

Stalin introduced five year plans in 1928 for the economic growth of Russia and strict collectivization of agriculture to feed the growing urban centres. Stalin's policies had severe implications on Russian society with famine, disease, terror and purges rampant throughout the period between 1928 and 1938. To develop this argument further it is important to look at the Soviet Union before Stalin's takeover and the contrasts between Stalin and Lenin before investigating Stalin's rule and his impact on the Russian

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society. Stalin or Josef Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili [1] was a professional revolutionary who came to Lenin's attention well before the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. Lenin described Stalin as the "Wonderful Georgian" [2]. Stalin was very persuasive, arrogant, deceptive, remorseless, cunning and always had a closed mind. He was described by a Russian journalist as "He is about as emotional as a slab of basalt. If he has nerves, they are veins in rock" [3]. Stalin was not part of Lenin's Bolshevik revolutions of 1917 but became a very effective figure in the communist party and society after 1917.

Stalin was made commissar of nationalities and was part of the first politburo along with six other members including Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotsky. In April 1919 Stalin was made head of workers and peasants' inspectorate and in April 1922 Stalin became General Secretary. He is unquestionably a man of outstanding will and outstanding ability [4]. Within a few years Stalin had become a prominent figure in Lenin's communist Russia and would defeat Trotsky in the struggle for power. Stalin's regime from 1928 onwards was similar to Lenin's Marxism policies.

Like Stalin Lenin believed in consolidating the communist power and building the Soviet Union in his new economic plans. After a mutiny of Soviet sailors Lenin introduced his economic policy. However unlike Lenin Stalin's rule was by far more extreme and radical and effectively changed soviet society in contrast Lenin sought to rebuild Russia as it was before the Bolshevik revolution which did not involve the killings of millions of peasants and forced labour. Lenin simply wanted to accommodate the agricultural class in <https://assignbuster.com/how-did-ten-years-of-stalins-rule-change-society-in-the-ussr/>

his socialist regime. Lenin's rule did not involve the role of terror and the authoritarian rule of one man. Stalin defeated opposition using Lenin to legitimise his positions in ideological battles with political opponents in the struggle for power and developed a cult of personality reshaping history through the weapon of propaganda with a profound influence on public opinion. Stalin now set about consolidating his position and developing the Soviet economy with devastating effects on Soviet Society. As mentioned previously Stalin believed utterly in building up Russia as opposed to Trotsky's radical idea of war communism. Stalin firmly believed in building up Russia in order to resist the restoration of private capitalism.

Russia was in a deteriorated state and there was a need for undertaking an industrial and technical revolution to overtake western economies in order to demonstrate the superiority of socialism and protect Russia from western capitalism in Stalin's own words he describes his policy in November 1928 'In order to achieve the final victory of socialism in our country, it is necessary to catch up and surpass the advanced countries'. [5] The ten year period between 1928 and 1938 marked a vast, extensive and a very rapid industrial expansion in Russia, new towns and cities were built. As well as the vast industrialisation there were developments in education with the literacy level in Russia rising rapidly between 1928 and 1938. The first five year plan was implemented in 1928 setting industrial targets for the industrial growth of the Soviet Union. The great industrial expansion represented Stalin's policy of building socialism through economic modernization and industrialisation, Stalin desperately wanted to transform Russia from economic turmoil into an industrial and military power. In 1932

Stalin in a speech conveyed the importance of economic growth for the protection of soviet Russia ??? we are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten.

Either we do it or they will crush us??™ [6]During the late 1920??™s and 1930??™s Russian heavy industry grew rapidly at the expense of consumer goods as implemented in the first famous five year plan. Steel and iron manufacturing soared and there was great demand for raw materials and fuel. Likewise roads and great hydroelectric dams were constructed across rivers to produce power for the new factories and towns. It is important to look at the development of industrial activity and the great advances made by the Russian economy in the context of time. In 1929 all western economies experienced the great depression with severe economic implications and shortages in food. Indeed it was out of the ashes of the great depression it can be argued that fascist leaders like Hitler emerged due to the political space which the great depression created in Germany. As the economies of western capitalism were in turmoil Stalin??™s socialist economy was expanding and transforming into a great industrial power indeed the first great five year plan was completed in four years in 1932 and resembled how far the soviet economy had advanced.

Like the Russian economy Stalin??™s first five year plan had a profound impact on soviet society. For the advancement of the Russian economy and growth of industry it was necessary for the soviet government to transform agriculture to meet the needs for the growing demand of food. In 1929 Stalin introduced collectivization which aimed at bringing millions of peasants together into co-operative farms. From the beginning of 1928 millions of <https://assignbuster.com/how-did-ten-years-of-stalins-rule-change-society-in-the-ussr/>

unskilled peasants from the country side poured into soviet towns and cities to work as labourers in factories and construction of buildings. These poorly paid peasants lived in overcrowded tenements where disease and starvation were rampant. Most of these peasants migrated from agricultural lands as a result of another radical policy of Stalin's rule collectivization. During Lenin's new economic policy only one percent of peasant farms were in collective farms by 1932 at the end of the first five year plan sixty percent of all peasant farms were involved in collectivization.

At the onset in 1929 there was widespread opposition of collectivization by the soviet peasants. They stood up firmly to Stalin by slaughtering their cattle and destroying their grain however Stalin met this opposition vigorously by letting the peasants starve and sending the kulaks or rich peasants to harsh labour camps which were described by as 'Auzwtich without the ovens'. Indeed slavery was rampant during 1928 and 1938 where slave labourers were forced to work in harsh conditions in wastelands and mountains in the process of industrialisation. Stalin's soviet economy was advancing rapidly by the end of the first five year plan while western capitalism was struggling however Stalin's rule up to 1932 proved very costly for society in the Soviet Union. By the beginning of 1928 peasant interests stood in path of Stalin's advancement in Socialism and industrialisation of the Soviet economy.

Rural and agricultural life in Russia was based on the family unit for the production of grain and livestock. This system of agriculture was totally inefficient to produce enough grain for the growing towns. During 1927 and 1928 there were two very poor harvests and Stalin urged party leaders to <https://assignbuster.com/how-did-ten-years-of-stalins-rule-change-society-in-the-ussr/>

achieve grain procurement targets, Stalin himself visited Siberia to force the procurement of grain. Stalin set about forced collectivization of agriculture with severe implications on soviet society.

Stalin's coercive policy on the peasant problem was strict and resembled war communism of the countryside. Stalin divided the peasants into class groupings: Kulaks or rich peasants, seredniaks (middle peasants) and finally bedniaks (poor peasants) [7]. This policy was known as the 'Ural-Siberian method'. Its aim was to destroy the economic power of the rich peasantry known as dekulakization. Colonization of mass peasantry was launched in autumn of 1929. Stalin called for the confiscation of kulak property and were forced into labour camps. Stalin applied brute force against peasants with military detachments and requisition squads enforcing the millions of peasants into collective state owned farms. Stalin's policies were extremely radical. He firmly believed in the elimination of the capitalism system of kulaks. Today we have an adequate material base for us to strike at the kulaks. To eliminate them as a class and to replace their output with the output of the collective farms and state farms. Collectivisation of soviet agriculture had great impact on the advancement of the Russian economy into an industrial superpower with adequate supply of grain for the industrial workers in the towns and cities.

Likewise collectivisation led to the migration of millions of peasants to urban areas to work on Stalin's five year plans. Like the impact of collective state owned farms on the economy, colonization had extreme impact on soviet society. Five to six million kulak peasants were exiled to labour camps or perished in vast soviet wasteland. Likewise millions of peasants

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died of starvation and disease in the early 1930s during the early stages of collectivisation there was extreme peasant unrest to Stalin's policy, livestock was slaughtered and crops burned and destroyed as peasants openly opposed government ownership of land as a result millions perished of mass starvation as Stalin resisted opposition and terrorised and forced the remaining peasants into the collective farms. Between 1929 and 1930 the collective and state farms rose from two million peasants in 1929 to fifteen million in 1930 by 1936 ninety percent of all peasant households had been collectivised.

Collectivisation was one of the most controversial events in Russian history with severe hardship on Russian society it has been described as 'the harvest of sorrow for Russian land' [8] like colonization Stalin's rule brought with it a reign of terror in the mid to late 1930s which changed soviet society. Terror was a central feature of Stalin's rule between 1928 and 1953 as conveyed with the forced collectivisation of land and the elimination of kulacks. In the mid thirties when Stalin had transformed Russia into a powerful industrial state with the first five year plans and the agricultural economy was meeting yields and quotas and all opposition to Stalin was eliminated, Stalin had created an authoritarian dictatorship and his power seemed secured. However Stalin plunged the entire Soviet society into a period of terror sheer pain and paranoia. All of Russian society were in danger of Stalin's terror from the poorest peasant to the most influential communist party leader. Sergie Kirov was assassinated by a communist by the name of Leonid Nikolayev [9] it is argued Stalin planned the murder as Kirov was leader of the communist party of Leningrad and was it was speculated at the



17th party congress that Kirov was a good candidate as alternative to Stalin as leader of the Communist Party [10].

The Kirov murder was significant as it began a period of unconditional terror on Russian society. Stalin became paranoid and insecure and saw his position under threat and nobody in society was safe. Stalin used the Kirov assassination as a means of legitimising the introduction of terror. Stalin introduced a law after the Kirov murder which gave the Communist government and NKVD police legal power to implement terror at will to eliminate enemies of Communism, no level in society was safe everyone was suspect to Stalin's reign of terror in the closing stages of the 1930s. The Communist Party and police were victims of Stalin's terror which made it so distinctive. Millions of Soviet civilians went into forced labour and no more than seven hundred thousand were executed as a result of Stalin's terror.

Stalin's reign of terror involved large scale purges of the Communist Party, government officials, Red Army leadership, NKVD police and the repression and persecution of peasants and civilians. The most radical legacy of the Great Terror was the show trials and purges of Stalin's so-called enemies between 1936 and 1938. The first trial involved former Communist and Politburo leaders Zinoviev and Kamenev. The victims of the purges and show trials were forced to confess to crimes against Russian society and plotting to assist the exiled Trotsky in the assassination of Stalin, despite no evidence and legal representation the accused confessed and were immediately shot.

In 1937 the second Great Show Trial involved similar confessions before the Great Show Trial of March 1938 of 21 including former Communist leaders

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Bukharin and Rykov and most alarming of all the former NKVD chief Genrikh Yagoda who had originally set up the trial of 1936 this conveyed the radical nature of Stalin's terror nobody in society was safe. Stalin's rule from 1928 to 1938 radically transformed Russia from a backward country exhausted from revolutions and civil war to a leading industrial power conveying the sheer strength of Stalin's socialist regime in Russia, Stalin's Soviet Union was able to resist German invasion in Operation Barbarossa and it can be argued the industrial revolution in Russia played an important role in the German defeat. After World War Two Stalin's Russia was victorious in the war and became the second largest industrial power in the world after North America. Despite the advancement of Russia in education, industrialisation and agricultural in striking contrast Stalin's leadership between 1928 and 1938 had enormous negative impacts on changing society in the Soviet Union. Immediately when Stalin came to power after the struggle for power he set about building up Russia with the industrialisation in the five year plans and collectivisation of agriculture. Stalin implemented these policies with terror and forcible pressure on peasants and industrial workers.

Likewise in the concluding years up until 1938 Stalin's reign of terror as he consolidated power shaped society as millions were executed and displaced to labour camps. The Russian army took a long time to mobilise in the early years of World War Two as a result of Stalin's radical purge on the army and party leadership. Like 1928 despite the advancement of the Soviet Union in education, industry and economy society was again in an exhausted state millions had died of starvation, millions were forced into labour camps and

industrialisation of the five year plans and millions lived in overcrowded and disease ridden tenements in the cities and towns.

Overall stalins rule between 1928 and 1938 was ruthless and had far reaching and devastating consequences on society in the Soviet union.