

Joseph stalin

[War](#), [Cold War](#)



Joseph Stalin dominated the Soviet scene to a degree unequalled in the United States by Truman or even Roosevelt. Stalin was born in the Russian empire's southern province of Georgia in 1879. He began studying for the priesthood but was thrown out of seminary for revolutionary activity and some believe because of laziness. After the 1917 Bolshevik revolution he climbed to prominence in the new ruling Communist Party thanks to his administrative skills and adroit political maneuvering and building up a following of supporters. Following Lenin's death in 1924, Stalin made himself the dominant figure in the party. The concentration of power at the top made it easy for Stalin to fully consolidate his control by 1929 and to make the party-state serve, as an extension of his will and vision for almost a quarter-century. Stalin brought to his era of unchallenged control a variety of striking personality traits. Stalin was neither intellectually cultivated nor well traveled. He was a domineering leader who insisted on making final decisions on a wide range of issues. Comrades either turned into servile courtiers full of praise for the "Genius Leader" or fell victim to his mistrust. Paranoia drove him to fix blame for errors that he regarded as serious whether in family matters or national affairs. (Hunt, 2003) Starting in the late 1920s, Joseph Stalin launched a series of five-year plans intended to transform the Soviet Union from a peasant society into an industrial superpower. His development plan was centered on government control of the economy and included the forced collectivization of Soviet agriculture, in which the government took control of farms. Millions of farmers refused to cooperate with Stalin's orders and were shot or exiled as punishment. The forced collectivization also led to widespread famine across the Soviet Union that

killed millions. Stalin ruled by terror and with a totalitarian grip in order to eliminate anyone who might oppose him. He expanded the powers of the secret police, encouraged citizens to spy on one another and had millions of people killed or sent to the Gulag system of forced labor camps. During the second half of the 1930s, Stalin instituted the Great Purge, a series of campaigns designed to rid the Communist Party, the military and other parts of Soviet society from those he considered a threat. Additionally, Stalin built a cult of personality around himself in the Soviet Union. Cities were renamed in his honor. Soviet history books were rewritten to give him a more prominent role in the revolution and mythologize other aspects of his life. He was the subject of flattering artwork, literature and music, and his name became part of the Soviet national anthem. His government also controlled the Soviet media. (Hunt, 2003) Education was strictly controlled by the state. In 1932, a rigid program of discipline and education was introduced. Exams, banned under Lenin, were reintroduced. The way subjects were taught was laid down by the government - especially History where Stalin's part in the 1917 Revolution and his relationship with Lenin was overplayed. Books were strictly censored by the state and Stalin ordered the writing of a new book called " A short history of the USSR" which had to be used in schools. Outside of school, children were expected to join youth organizations such as the Octobrists for 8 to 10 year olds and the Pioneers for the 10 to 16 year olds. From 19 to 23 you were expected to join the Komsomol. Children were taught how to be a good socialist/communist and an emphasis was put on outdoor activities and clean living. There was a marked increase in the attacks on the churches of the USSR throughout the 1930's. Communism

had taught people that religion was "the opium of the masses" (Karl Marx) and church leaders were arrested and churches physically shut down. Stalin could not allow a challenge to his position and anybody who worshipped God was a challenge as the "personality cult" was meant for people to worship Stalin. For a short time under Lenin, women had enjoyed a much freer status in that life for them was a lot more liberal when compared to the 'old days'. Among other things, divorce was made a lot easier under Lenin. Stalin changed all this. He put the emphasis on the family. There was a reason for this. Many children had been born out of marriage and Moscow by 1930 was awash with a very high number of homeless children who had no family and, as such, were a stain on the perfect communist society that Stalin was trying to create. The state paid families a child allowance if there were a married couple. It became a lot harder to get a divorce and restrictions were placed on abortions. Ceremonial weddings made a comeback. In the work place, women maintained their status and there was effective equality with men. In theory, all jobs were open to women. The only real change took place in the image the state created for women. By the end of the 1930's, the image of women at work had softened so that the hard edge of working became less apparent. Researchers before the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union attempting to count the number of people killed under Stalin's regime produced estimates ranging from 3 to 60 million. After the Soviet Union dissolved, evidence from the Soviet archives also became available, containing official records of the execution of approximately 800,000 prisoners under Stalin for either political or criminal offenses, around 1.7 million deaths in the Gulags and some 390,000 deaths during kulak forced

resettlement — for a total of about 3 million officially recorded victims in these categories. The official Soviet archival records do not contain comprehensive figures for some categories of victims, such as the those of ethnic deportations or of German population transfers in the aftermath of World War II. Eric D. Weitz wrote, " By 1948, according to Nicolas Werth, the mortality rate of the 600, 000 people deported from the Caucasus between 1943 and 1944 had reached 25%." Other notable exclusions from NKVD data on repression deaths include the Katyn massacre, other killings in the newly occupied areas, and the mass shootings of Red Army personnel (deserters and so-called deserters) in 1941. The Soviets executed 158, 000 soldiers for desertion during the war, and the " blocking detachments" of the NKVD shot thousands more. Also, the official statistics on Gulag mortality exclude deaths of prisoners taking place shortly after their release but which resulted from the harsh treatment in the camps. Some historians also believe the official archival figures of the categories that were recorded by Soviet authorities to be unreliable and incomplete. In addition to failures regarding comprehensive recordings, as one additional example, Robert Gellately and Simon Sebag-Montefiore argue the many suspects beaten and tortured to death while in " investigative custody" were likely not to have been counted amongst the executed. (Weitz, 2005) Joseph Stalin did not mellow with age: He prosecuted a reign of terror, purges, executions, exiles to labor camps and persecution in the postwar USSR, suppressing all dissent and anything that smacked of foreign—especially Western—influence. He established communist governments throughout Eastern Europe, and in 1949 led the Soviets into the nuclear age by exploding an atomic bomb. In 1950, he gave

North Korea's communist leader Kim Il Sung (1912-1994) permission to invade United States-supported South Korea, an event that triggered the Korean War. (Weitz, 2005) Stalin, who grew increasingly paranoid in his later years, died on March 5, 1953, at age 74, after suffering a stroke. His body was embalmed and preserved in Lenin's mausoleum in Moscow's Red Square until 1961, when it was removed and buried near the Kremlin walls as part of the de-Stalinization process initiated by Stalin's successor Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971). Works Cited Hunt, M. H. (2003). *The world transformed, 1945 to the present*. Bedford/st Martins. Weitz, E. (2005). *A century of genocide: Utopias of race and nation*.