

# Did the benefits of stalin's economic policies justify their implementation?

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In 1928, Russia was poor and her industry was smaller than many countries. Stalin aimed to transform this and turn Russia into a powerful and strong nation. He wanted to create a modern industry so Russia was less dependent on the western world and could catch up with America. He also wanted to protect Russia so they were military strong in case of war and they had a strong industry capable of producing good armaments so they had defence in case of attack. Stalin aimed to re-organise agriculture to produce food so Russia could trade with Europe and America so they could get money to buy raw materials and machinery. He wanted to feed Russia's population. Stalin also aimed for Russia to become self-sufficient.

In order to develop Russia's industry rapidly, Stalin organised this planning with the 'Five-Year Plans'. There were three plans which determined how and when things were produced and how prices and wages were determined. The benefits of these plans were that the production of coal and iron increased quickly. Huge new industrial complexes were built like the Magnitogorsk, the Belomor Canal, railways and motorways. These all were showpieces of Soviet achievement. They had great facilities and steel and iron production was increasing. Defence and armaments grew rapidly also. Transport and communications grew and electricity production expanded. Overall industrial output went up by over 50% and Russia became the second in gross industrial output worldwide. By 1937, Russia was virtually self-sufficient.

However, there were economic disadvantages as a result of the 'Five-Year Plans'. Targets were too high so factories lied about their production levels. Products were bad quality because there was a lack of skilled workers and they didn't have good equipment. Some industries were over-producing and <https://assignbuster.com/did-the-benefits-of-stalins-economic-policies-justify-their-implementation/>

others under-producing so many factories ran short of materials. Un-skilled workers and ex-peasants made mistakes, but these mistakes weren't admitted but blamed on 'wreckers' and 'saboteurs'. Oil production failed to meet targets and led to fuel crisis. The lack of skilled workers created instability because they were constantly changing jobs.

The effects on the people as a result of the 'Five-Year Plans' were very bad. In the building of the Magnitogorsk, working conditions was dangerous. The workers got little food, and the bubonic plague was common. Vermin and bed bugs were at risk also. Sanitary conditions and heat was intolerable. It was a bad organisation of labour. Workers were paid minimum wages and food was rationed but it improved by the mid-1930s. There were millions of peasants so housing became impossible. Most families had to live in overcrowded shabby buildings. There was also a shortage of clothing and consumer goods. Many peasants were sent to Gulag (a force labour camp) if they did not fulfil Stalin's wishes.

Collectivisation was a method of farming to make it more efficient in which people can use more machinery. It was the Socialist way to farm the land. The idea was that the peasants' would share their land and work together to form a collective farm. All the grain produced was shared also. This was an easy method for the state to get grain. The grain needed for industrialisation was obtained because a lot was produced rapidly. Wheat, cotton and vineyards were increasing by more than 600 hectares also. Overall more food was produced and it was easier to introduce modern machinery.

Tractors began to be produced in quantities and the 'economies of scale' method started. Generally, agricultural production rose.

However, collectivisation had its disadvantages. If peasants refused to join the collective, they were shot by activists or sent to Gulag. This caused violence to erupt and riots occurred. There were severe food shortages although food was being exported from Russia to other countries. A lot of disruption was caused to agriculture and there was disastrous harvest. The result of this was famine, which the state never admitted existed. Stalin began to demand gangs to take the small amount of grain, which was kept in stores or left to rot whilst people starved to death.

Russia eventually did become an industrially modernised nation. Although there was terrible famine and kulaks (rich peasants) suffered, most people benefited. Large complexes were made, there were good facilities and agriculture had improved. Russia became self-sufficient and independent. The human costs were high as many people died because of the famine and living conditions. But Hitler became a threat and Russia didn't have enough protection in case of war.