

Success and failures of stalin's five year plans

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" The Five Year Plans were successful in strengthening the Economy before 1941. " Explain why you agree or disagree with this view. Though with many flaws Stalin's five year plans did create a strong industrial base for Russia. Stalin's aims for strengthening the economy could identify the successes of the five year plans.

Stalin wanted to strengthen the economy to increase military strength due to the fear of foreign invasion he needed a well-developed industrial base especially of heavy industry.

He also wanted to achieve self-sufficiency, and to improve standards of living of people in Russia to bridge the gap between them and the West. A strengthened economy would fulfil and maintain the promise to international proletariat to develop the country and become the first socialist state by industrialising. In some ways, the five year plans fulfilled some of Stalin's aims for example, the focus on rapid increase in industrial capacity and growth of industry especially, heavy industry and armament production.

Coal and iron output doubled and defence armaments grew rapidly as resources were diverted to them.

Also hydro-electric dams, canals, railways and other infrastructural projects were built. The five year plans transformed the primitiveness of the country, creating a massive urban working class and trebling electricity production.

As well as strengthening the economy and achieving military strength this expansion gave Russia enough strength to resist and eventually beat the Nazis in 1941. In addition, the plan's strengthened the economy as there was 4-12% annual growth.

USSR's economic standing in relation to other countries improved.

Rapid urbanisation meant new growth. People were made to work hard and the influx of women and peasants into the workforce strengthened the economy as output was increased, wages even rose in cities. However, despite the huge industrial growth some parts of industry such as consumer goods were neglected throughout each five year plan. This did not help to strengthen the economy or bring in any additional revenue and living standards of people suffered due to shortage of consumer goods.

Even growth in the heavy industries was inefficient and poorly organised. Stalin goal of self-sufficiency only reached the extent that Russia was independent only for heavy industry whereas other areas like consumer goods and food were given no attention or priority.

Instead of strengthening the economy this accentuated the problems of the working class. Furthermore, standards of living showed little signs of improvement. The successes of the five year plans in strengthening the economy brought with it downfalls of appalling human cost.

The workers were maltreated, forced to work harder, absenteeism faced great punishment, slave labour and labour camps were used. On great engineering projects conditions were terrible and accidents and deaths were prevalent. Eventually famine broke out which devastated the USSR and this weakened the economy as an unfit workforce would work less and produce less.

In the cities, overcrowding was very intense in inadequate accommodation as building materials were diverted to factory building.

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Along with the profound lack of consumer goods and food rationing the economy regressed and morale was low. Overall, Stalin's Five Year Plans were undoubtedly successful in increasing the country's industrial output and making the country more self-sufficient ultimately strengthening the economy. However, the social devastation Stalin's plans resulted in the, poor working conditions of workers, deficient quality of goods, famine, and millions suffering in due course decelerated industrialisations and weakened the economy.