

By 1921, Lenin and the Communists had won the civil war that followed the Russian Revolution. They were then faced with the enormous task of rebuilding Russian society. Millions of Russians had died since the outbreak of World War I, from fighting and from famine, and Russia was in a state of chaos. Lenin's policy of "war communism" outraged the people and brought the Russian economy to the brink of collapse.



>> One million Russians attended Lenin's funeral march in Red Square. His death set off a power struggle within the Soviet Union.



Interactive Flipped Video

The Soviet Union Under Stalin

Stalin Builds a Command Economy

That year, Lenin introduced his New Economic Policy, which allowed limited capitalism. This brief compromise with capitalism helped the Soviet economy recover and ended the armed resistance to Lenin's government.

Stalin Takes Charge Lenin died in January 1924. Tens of thousands of people lined up in Moscow's historic Red Square to view his body. Lenin's widow, Nadezhda Krupskaya, had wanted to bury him simply next to his mother. But Joseph Stalin wanted to preserve Lenin's body and put it on permanent display. In the end, Lenin's body was displayed in Red Square for more than 65 years. By preserving Lenin's body, Stalin wanted to show that he would carry on the goals of the revolution.

In fact, Stalin moved the Soviet Union in directions Karl Marx had never foreseen. Marx had predicted that under communism the state would eventually wither away. Instead, Stalin turned the Soviet Union into a totalitarian state controlled by a powerful and complex

>> Objectives

Explain how Stalin built a command economy in the Soviet Union.

Describe how Stalin used terror to build a totalitarian state.

Analyze Stalin's use of propaganda to control thought and the arts.

Summarize the characteristics of Soviet society under Stalin.

Understand the goals of Soviet foreign policy.

>> Key Terms

command economy
collective
kulak
Gulag
socialist realism
Osip Mandelstam
Boris Pasternak
russification
atheism
Comintern

bureaucracy. For almost 30 years, Stalin held more power than any other leader in history.

Stalin's Five-Year Plans Once in power, Stalin set out to make the Soviet Union a modern industrial power. In the past, said Stalin, Russia had suffered because of its economic backwardness. In 1928, he proposed the first of several "five-year plans" aimed at building heavy industry, improving transportation, and increasing farm output.

To achieve his goals, Stalin brought all economic activity under government control. The government owned all businesses and distributed all resources. The Soviet Union developed a **command economy**, in which government officials made all basic economic decisions. By contrast, in a capitalist system, the free market determines most economic decisions. Privately owned businesses compete to win the consumer's choice. This competition regulates the price and quality of goods.

Stalin's five-year plans set high production goals, especially for heavy industry and transportation. The government pushed workers and managers to meet these goals by giving bonuses to those who succeeded—and by punishing those who did not. Between 1928 and 1939, large factories, hydroelectric power stations, and huge industrial complexes rose across the Soviet Union. Oil, coal, and steel production grew. Mining expanded, and new railroads were built.

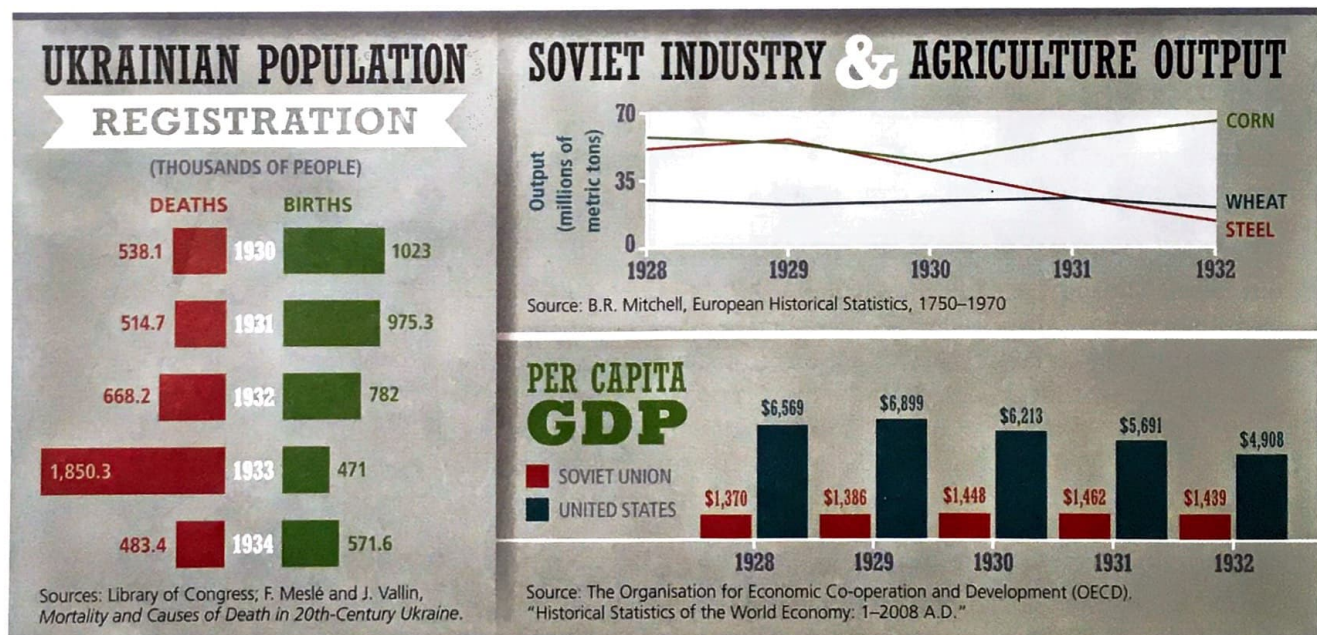
Industrial Policy Yields Mixed Results During this time, the West was in the grip of the Great Depression. The Soviet Union had little international trade, so it was insulated from many of the harshest effects of the global economic crisis. Some people in Europe and North America pointed to the industrial growth of the Soviet Union as proof that Stalin's economic policies were successful—ignoring the fact that this success came at a staggering human cost.

Despite impressive progress in some areas, Soviet workers had little to show for their efforts. Some former peasants did become skilled factory workers or managers. Overall, though, the standard of living remained low. Wages were low, workers were forbidden to strike, and consumer goods were scarce. Central planning was often inefficient, causing shortages of some goods and surpluses of others. Many managers, concerned only with meeting production quotas, turned out large quantities of low-quality goods.

During and after the Stalin era, the Soviet Union continued to produce well in heavy industry, such as the manufacture of farm machinery. But its planned economy failed to match the capitalist world in making consumer goods, such as clothing and cars.

Forced Collectivization in Agriculture Causes Misery Stalin also brought agriculture under government control, but at a horrendous cost. The government wanted farmers to produce more grain to

EFFECTS OF STALIN'S FIVE-YEAR PLANS



>> **Analyze Information** Describe the effect of the Five-Year Plans on steel and corn production.

feed workers in the cities. It also hoped to sell grain abroad to earn money.

Under Lenin's New Economic Plan (NEP), peasants had held on to small plots of land. Many had prospered. Stalin saw that system as being inefficient and a threat to state power. Stalin wanted all peasants to farm on either state-owned farms or **collectives**, large farms owned and operated by peasants as a group.

On collectives, the government provided tractors, fertilizers, and better seed, and peasants learned modern farm methods. Peasants were permitted to keep their houses and personal belongings, but all farm animals and implements had to be turned over to the collective. The state set all prices and controlled access to farm supplies.

Many peasants resisted collectivization by killing farm animals, destroying tools, and burning crops. The government responded with brutal force. Stalin targeted **kulaks**, or wealthy farmers.

In 1929, Stalin declared his intention to "liquidate the kulaks as a class." To this end, the government confiscated kulaks' land and sent them to slave labor camps, where thousands were executed or died from overwork.

Despite the repression, angry peasants continued to resist by growing just enough to feed themselves. In response, the government seized all of their grain for the cities, purposely leaving the peasants to starve. In 1932, this ruthless policy, combined with poor harvests, led to a terrible famine. Later called the Terror Famine, it caused between five and eight million people to die of starvation in the Ukraine alone. Millions more died in other parts of the Soviet Union.

Although collectivization increased Stalin's control of the peasantry, it did not improve farm output. During the 1930s, grain production inched upward, but meat, vegetables, and fruits remained in short supply. Feeding the population would remain a major problem in the Soviet Union.

? EXPLAIN How did Stalin take control of the Soviet Union's economic life?

Control Through Terror

In addition to tactics like the Terror Famine, Stalin's totalitarian state used secret police, torture, and violent purges to ensure obedience. Stalin tightened his grasp on every aspect of Soviet life, stamping out any signs of dissent even within the Communist elite.

Terror as a Weapon Stalin ruthlessly used terror as a weapon against his own people. He perpetrated crimes



>> This propaganda poster supports one element of Stalin's Five-Year Plan for industry: the creation of an industrial area in Siberia that took advantage of the region's vast coal reserves.



>> The Gulag was the system of Soviet forced-labor camps. It housed political prisoners as well as actual criminals and became a symbol of political repression in the Soviet Union.

against humanity, carried out politically motivated mass murders, and systematically violated his people's individual rights. Police spies did not hesitate to open private letters or plant listening devices. A vast network of internal spies reported on groups or individuals. Nothing appeared in print without official approval. There was no free press, and no safe method of voicing protest. Grumblers or critics were rounded up and sent to the **Gulag**, a system of brutal labor camps, where many died.

Stalin's Great Purge Even though Stalin's power was absolute, he had obsessive fears that rival party leaders were plotting against him. In 1934, he launched the Great Purge. During this reign of terror, Stalin and his secret police cracked down especially on Old Bolsheviks, or party activists from the early days of the revolution. His net soon widened to target army heroes, industrial managers, writers, and ordinary citizens. They were charged with a wide range of crimes, from counter-revolutionary plots to failure to meet production quotas.

Between 1936 and 1938, Stalin staged a series of spectacular public "show trials" in Moscow. Former Communist leaders confessed to all kinds of crimes

after officials tortured them or threatened their families or friends.

Many of the purged party members were never tried but were sent straight to the Gulag. Secret police files reveal that at least four million people were purged during the Stalin years. Some historians estimate the toll to be much greater.


Impact of the Great Purge The purges increased Stalin's power. The purges destroyed the older generation of revolutionaries, replacing them with younger party members who owed absolute loyalty to Stalin. The program of terror increased Stalin's power by impressing on the Soviet people the dangers of disloyalty.

However, the Soviet Union paid a heavy price. Among the victims of the purges were experts in industry, economics, and engineering, and many of the Soviet Union's most talented writers and thinkers. The purge also included most of the nation's military leaders and about half of its military officers. The loss of so many military leaders would come back to haunt Stalin in 1941, when Germany invaded the Soviet Union.

? IDENTIFY CAUSE AND EFFECT In what ways did Stalin's terror tactics harm the Soviet Union?



>> Stalin used propaganda to win the hearts and minds of Soviet citizens. This poster reads, "Thanks to dear Stalin for a happy childhood."

 **Interactive Gallery**

Stalin Builds a Totalitarian State

The use of terror and intimidation was one of the major characteristics of Stalin's totalitarian stage. Like other totalitarian rulers, Stalin sought to control the hearts and minds of Soviet citizens. He tried to do this by tirelessly distributing propaganda, censoring opposing ideas, imposing Russian culture on minorities, and replacing religion with communist ideology.

Propaganda and the "Cult of Personality" Stalin tried to boost morale and faith in the communist system by making himself a godlike figure. He used propaganda as a tool to build up a "cult of personality" around himself.

Using modern technology, the party bombarded the public with relentless propaganda. Radios and loudspeakers blared into factories and villages. In movies, theaters, and schools, citizens heard about communist successes and the evils of capitalism.

Billboards and posters urged workers to meet or exceed production quotas. Headlines in the Communist party newspaper *Pravda*, or "Truth," linked enemies

The Soviet Union, 1928–1941



>> Analyze Maps Stalin used terror and labor camps to control the huge, multinational Soviet Union. In which part of the Soviet Union was the heaviest concentration of Gulag labor camps?

at home to foreign agents seeking to overthrow the Communist regime.

Censoring the Arts At first, the Bolshevik Revolution had meant greater freedom for Soviet artists and writers. Under Stalin, however, the heavy hand of state control also gripped the arts. The government controlled what books were published, what music was heard, and which works of art were displayed. Stalin required artists and writers to follow a style called **socialist realism**. Its goal was to show Soviet life in a positive light. Artists and writers could criticize the bourgeois past, but their overall message had to promote hope in the socialist future. Popular themes for socialist realist artists were peasants, workers, and heroes of the revolution—and, of course, Stalin.

Artists who ignored socialist realism guidelines could not get materials, work space, or jobs. Writers, artists, and composers also faced government persecution. The Jewish poet **Osip Mandelstam**, for example, was imprisoned, tortured, and exiled for composing a satirical verse about Stalin. Out of fear for his wife's safety, Mandelstam finally submitted to threats and wrote an "Ode to Stalin." **Boris Pasternak**, who would later win fame for his novel *Doctor Zhivago*, was afraid to publish anything at all during the Stalin

years. Rather than write in the favored style of socialist realism, he translated foreign literary works instead.

Despite restrictions, some Soviet writers produced magnificent works whose themes reflected the history and culture of Stalinist Russia. Yevgeny Zamyatin's classic anti-Utopian novel *We* became well known outside of the Soviet Union, but was not published in his home country until 1989. The novel depicts a nightmare future in which people go by numbers, not names, and the "One State" controls people's thoughts.

And Quiet Flows the Don, by Mikhail Sholokhov, passed the censor. The novel tells the story of a man who spends years fighting in World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the civil war. Sholokhov later won the Nobel Prize for literature.

Russification of the Republics Yet another way Stalin controlled the cultural life of the Soviet Union was by promoting a policy of **russification**, or imposing Russian culture on the diverse Soviet empire. During the Soviet era, the U.S.S.R. came to include 15 separate republics. Russia, or the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, was the largest and dominant republic. The others, such as Uzbek and the Ukraine, had their own languages, historical traditions, and cultures.


At first, Stalin encouraged the autonomy, or independence, of these cultures. However, in the late 1920s, Stalin turned this policy on its head and systematically tried to promote Russian culture. He appointed Russians to high-ranking positions in non-Russian SSRs and required the Russian language to be used in schools and businesses. Many Russian citizens were sent to settle in the other republics, furthering the spread of Russian customs and culture.

Communists Wage War on Religion In accordance with the ideas of Marx, **atheism**, or the belief that there is no god, became the official Soviet state policy. Early on, the Communists targeted the Russian Orthodox Church, which had strongly supported the tsars. The party seized most religious property, converting many churches into offices and museums. Many priests and other religious leaders were killed in the purges or sent to die in prison camps.

Other religions were persecuted as well. At one show trial, 15 Roman Catholic priests were charged with teaching religion to the young, a counter-revolutionary activity. The state seized Jewish synagogues and banned the use of Hebrew. Islam was also officially discouraged.



>> To weaken the power of the Russian Orthodox Church, the party seized church property and converted churches into offices and museums. Here, Red Army soldiers carry off religious relics from a church.

 Interactive Chart

The Communists tried to replace religion with their own ideology. Like a religion, communist ideology had its own “sacred” texts—the writings of Marx and Lenin—and its own shrines, such as the tomb of Lenin. Portraits of Stalin replaced religious icons in Russian homes. However, millions of Soviets continued to worship, in private and sometimes in public, in defiance of government prohibitions.

? IDENTIFY CENTRAL IDEAS How did Stalin use censorship and propaganda to support his rule?

Soviet Society Under Stalin

The terror and cultural coercion of Stalin’s rule made a mockery of the original theories and promises of communism. The lives of most Russians did change. But, while the changes had some benefits, they were often outweighed by continuous shortages and restricted freedoms.

The Soviet Elite Takes Control The Communists destroyed the old social order of landowning nobles at the top and peasants at the bottom. But instead of creating the classless society that Marx had predicted, they created a society where a few elite groups emerged as a new ruling class. At the top of society were members of the Communist party. Only a small fraction of Soviet citizens could join the party. Many who did so were motivated by a desire to get ahead, rather than a belief in communism. The Soviet elite also included industrial managers, military leaders, scientists, and some artists and writers.

The elite enjoyed benefits denied to most people. They lived in the best apartments in the cities and rested at the best vacation homes in the country. They could shop at special stores for scarce consumer goods. On the other hand, Stalin’s purges often targeted the elite.

Limited Benefits Although excluded from party membership, most people did enjoy several new benefits. The party required all children to attend free Communist-built schools. The state supported technical schools and universities as well.

Schools served many important goals. Educated workers were needed to build a modern industrial state. The Communist party also set up programs for students outside school. These programs included sports, cultural activities, and political classes to train teenagers for party membership. However, in addition to important basic skills, schools also taught communist

values, such as atheism, the glory of collective farming, and love of Stalin.

The state also provided free medical care, day care for children, inexpensive housing, and public recreation. While these benefits were real, many people still lacked vital necessities. Although the state built massive apartment complexes, housing was scarce. Entire families might be packed into a single room. Bread was plentiful, but meat, fresh fruit, and other foods remained in short supply.

Women Win Greater Equality Long before 1917, women such as Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, worked for the revolution, spreading radical ideas among peasants and workers. In 1905, Alexandra Kollontai noted "how little our party concerned itself with the fate of working class women." After becoming the only high-ranking woman in Lenin's government, she continued her campaign for women's rights.

Under the Communists, women won equality under the law. They gained access to education and a wide range of jobs.

By the 1930s, many Soviet women were working in medicine, engineering, or the sciences. By their labor, women contributed to Soviet economic growth. They worked in factories, in construction, and on collectives. Within the family, their wages were needed because men and women earned the same low salaries.

? GENERATE EXPLANATIONS How did Communist schools benefit the state and Communist party?

Soviet Foreign Policy

Between 1917 and 1939, the Soviet Union pursued two very different goals in foreign policy. As communists, both Lenin and Stalin wanted to bring about the worldwide revolution that Marx had predicted. But as Soviets, they wanted to guarantee their nation's security by winning the support of other countries. The result was a contradictory and generally unsuccessful foreign policy.

Promoting Communist Revolution In 1919, Lenin formed the Communist International, or **Comintern**. Its purpose was to encourage worldwide revolution. To this end, it aided revolutionary groups around the world and urged colonial peoples to rise up against imperialist powers.

The Comintern's support of revolutionary groups outside the Soviet Union and its loud propaganda against capitalism made Western powers suspicious of the Soviet Union.



>> Soviet ideology stressed gender equality in labor and education. Many Soviet women held jobs and earned advanced degrees.

In the United States, fear of Bolshevik plots led to the "Red Scare" in the early 1920s. Britain temporarily broke off relations with the Soviet Union when evidence revealed Soviet schemes to turn the 1926 general strike into a revolution.

Seeking Recognition Even while the Comintern supported the global communist struggle, the Soviet Union sought international recognition and trade with capitalist countries, especially the United States and Britain. In 1933, the United States and Soviet Union finally set up diplomatic relations, and the following year, the Soviets joined the League of Nations. However, mistrust still poisoned relations, especially after the Great Purge.

In the early years of Stalin's rule, the Soviet Union remained, for the most part, isolated from the West. By the late 1930s, however, Stalin feared a growing threat from Nazi Germany. In April 1939, he suggested that Russia, France, and Britain form an alliance against Germany. Western suspicions of Soviet intentions made an agreement impossible. Within months, Stalin

made an about-face and signed an alliance with Nazi Germany.

? ANALYZE INFORMATION How did the Soviet Union's foreign policy goals contradict one another?

ASSESSMENT

1. **Identify Cause and Effect** What were the goals and results of Stalin's five-year plans?
2. **Contrast** For those not in the elite party, how did life change under Soviet rule?
3. **Explain** How did Stalin attempt to control thought in the Soviet Union?
4. **Summarize** What methods did Stalin use to create a totalitarian state?
5. **Compare** What foreign policy goals did both Lenin and Stalin pursue?