

## BACKGROUND JOSEPH STALIN READING ONE



Leon Trotsky and Joseph Stalin were among Lenin's revolutionary supporters. They both helped Lenin and the Bolsheviks bring an end to the Czar's rule. The Bolsheviks supported a worldwide communist revolution where the people would have control when the government organized the situation.



During his early days as a Bolshevik, he changed his name from Dzhugashvili to Stalin, which means "man of steel" in Russian.

The name fit well. Stalin was cold, hard and impersonal. Lenin, unsure of his successor, began to distrust Stalin. Lenin believed that Stalin was a dangerous man. Shortly before Lenin died, he wrote *"Comrade Stalin has concentrated enormous power in his hands, and I am not sure that he knows how to use that power with sufficient caution."*

When Lenin died, there was no one person chosen to be leader. The Soviet Union did not allow for elections. The Communist Party got to choose his successor. Trotsky and Stalin became bitter rivals for control of the Communist Party. The outcome of this struggle would determine the future course of the Soviet Union. In the course of the struggle, Stalin had Trotsky exiled to Mexico and later had him assassinated.

### STALIN BECOMES A DICTATOR



Stalin was faced with control of a nation that was possibly a hundred years behind the rest of the world in terms of industrial production and military strength. The people were facing poverty and starvation. The Russian Civil War had ended just a few years earlier. Stalin brought new economic plans to the Soviet Union with a communist economy. He controlled all aspects of business and agriculture and all aspects of people's lives.

Millions of people died under Stalin's rule. These people included fellow communist members who he perceived as enemies of the state and peasants who resisted the changes he brought to the Soviet Union.

## A TOTALITARIAN STATE READING TWO

Lenin and Trotsky wanted to unite Communists around the world. Stalin, however, focused on Russian development. He coined the phrase "socialism in one country" to describe his aims of perfecting a Communist state in Russia. The Soviet Union was behind the rest of the world in terms of both agricultural and industrial production. To realize his vision, Stalin would transform the Soviet Union into a totalitarian state.

The term totalitarianism describes a government that takes total, centralized state control over every aspect of a person's of public and private life. Totalitarian leaders, such as Stalin, take advantage of the insecurities of a nation and appear to provide a sense of security and give a direction for the future.

Totalitarianism is the opposite of what western democracies like the United States value the most. Western values such as human reason, freedom, human dignity, and the worth of the individual are not encouraged in a totalitarian government. Totalitarianism relies on absolute authority of the government by one political party. Often, one dynamic leader comes forward. He helps unite the people toward a common vision and insists on unconditional loyalty and uncritical support. Leaders often justify their violent actions in the name of progress and use radios, newsreels and loudspeakers to spread their words. In a totalitarian society, the government controls businesses, family life, housing, education and religion. Their goal is to build up military weapons and will use force and intimidation to shut up their critics.

Other totalitarian government besides the Soviet Union emerged in the twentieth century in the 1920's and 1930's, two other European dictators Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy – were shaping their visions of a totalitarians state.

Under Stalin's totalitarian regime, the government controlled every aspect of the worker's life. Officials chose the workers, assigned the jobs and determined their working hours. Workers needed the police's permission to move. The secret police were ready to imprison or execute those who did not contribute to the Soviet economy; these forceful means of making the Soviet Union a modern industrial nation took a great toll on people's personal lives. Many families and marriages broke up.



## X FIVE YEAR PLANS X READING THREE

Stalin had very different plans for the economy than Lenin's plan. Under the New Economic Plan, Lenin decided to allow some capitalism and chances for the people to make money. Stalin, however, returned to total communism and total state control. His plans called for a command economy—a system in which the government made all economic decision.



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To modernize the Soviet state, Stalin tried dramatic changes in industry and agriculture.

In 1928, Stalin outlined the first of industrial plans for the development of Soviet Union's economy. In these plans, the government would take drastic steps to promote rapid industrial growth and to strengthen national defense. Stalin announced, "*We are fifty or a hundred years behind advanced*

*countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it or we shall be crushed.*"

These plans to increase manufacturing were called **Five Year Plans**. They set high quotas or goals to increase the output of steel, coal, oil and electricity. These goods were considered necessary for the future of the Soviet Union but they were so high they were impossible to reach. The government had a strong desire to make military products such as weapons and bombs. Since there were only so many factories, the government limited production of consumer goods such as food and clothing. As a result, people faced several shortages of housing, food, clothing and other necessary goods.

Stalin's grim methods, however, also produced fantastic economic results. Although most of the targets of the First Five-Year plan fell short, the Soviets made impressive gains. A second plan, launched in 1933, proved equally successful. From 1928 to 1937, industrial production increased more than 25 percent but the people had very little to show for it.

## COLLECTIVE FARMS READING FOUR

As leader of the Soviet Union, Stalin found himself faced with the difficult problem of feeding millions of people in both the city and the countries. At the beginning of his leadership in the Communist Party, almost 80% of the farmers and peasants were not under the control of the government. They were used to selling their crops to the government for a profit as they did under Lenin's plan.



Stalin's agricultural revolution took a different approach and showed how brutal and mean he really was. He also showed how successful his tactics could be. In 1928, the government started taking over 25 million privately owned farms in the USSR. It combined them into large, government owned farms, called **collective farms**. Hundreds of families worked in these farms, producing food for the state. The government expected that the modern machinery on the collective farms would boost food production and reduce the number of workers.

The peasants, however, did not want to give up their lands to the government. They resisted Stalin's actions fiercely. Many killed livestock and destroyed crops in protest. Stalin used terror and violence to force peasants to work on collective farms. Soviet secret police herded them onto collective farms at the point of a bayonet. Between 5 million and 10 million peasants died as a direct result of Stalin's agricultural revolution. Millions more were shipped to Siberia. Resistance was especially strong among kulaks, a class of wealthy peasants. The Soviet government decided to eliminate them. Thousands were executed or sent to work camps.

By 1938, more than 90 percent of all peasants lived on collective farms. Agricultural production was on the upswing. That year the country produced almost twice the wheat than it had in 1928 before collective farming.

## THE GREAT PURGE READING FIVE

The problem with a communist or command economy is that there is little incentive for the individual to work harder. If the government is making all the economic decision, there is little motivation to work harder because wages are set and profit isn't allowed. Stalin solved that problem by using force and intimidation to make people work.

Stalin began building his totalitarian state by destroying his enemies-real and imagined. Stalin's secret police used tanks and armored cars to stop riots. They monitored telephone lines, read mail and planted informers everywhere. Even children told authorities about disloyal remarks they heard at home. The secret police arrested and executed millions of so-called traitors.

In 1934, Stalin turned against members of the Communist Party. He launched the Great Purge campaign of terror that was directed at eliminating anyone who threatened his power. Thousands of old Bolsheviks who helped stage the Revolution in 1917 stood trial. They were executed for "crimes against the Soviet state."



The state had the authority to punish even the most minor acts. The police arrested the director of the Moscow Zoo because his monkeys got tuberculosis. The police themselves were not above suspicion, especially if they did not meet their quotas of "crimes" arrested. Every family came to fear the knock on the door in the early hours of the morning. Such as surprise visit from the secret police usually meant the arrest of a family member.

When the Great Purge ended, Stalin had gained total control of both the Soviet government and the Communist Party. Historians estimate that Stalin was responsible for the deaths of 8 million to 13 million people

## CENSORSHIP AND PROPAGANDA READING SIX

In order to keep control, Stalin needed to educate the people of the Soviet Union to understand the goals of the communist party. They also stressed the importance of sacrifice and hard work to build the Communist state. State-supported youth groups served as training grounds for future party members.

Totalitarian states also spread **propaganda**. Propaganda is information given to the people that only shows one point of view or leaves out important facts. It was designed to sway people to accept certain beliefs or actions of the communist party. Soviet newspaper, posters and radio broadcasts made Communist ideas wonderful and wrote favorably about Stalin. They often exaggerated his economic progress.

Many towns, factories and streets in the Soviet Union were named for Stalin. A new metal was called Stalinite. An orchid was named Stalinchid. Children standing before their desks every morning said, "Thank Comrade Stalin for this happy life."

Stalin also relied on **censorship**. Since his government controlled the newspapers and radio stations, he would not let them print anything negative about his plans. Many Soviet writers, composer, and other artists also fell victim to official censorship. Stalin would not tolerate individual creativity. He demanded conformity and obedience of all his citizens.



Communists aimed to replace religious teachings with the ideals of communism. Under Stalin, the government officially sponsored groups of atheists, people who did not believe in God. "Museums of atheism" displayed exhibits to show that religious beliefs were mere superstitions. Yet many people in the Soviet Union still clung to their faiths.

The Russian Orthodox Church was the main target of persecution. Other religious groups, including Roman Catholics and Jews, also suffered greatly under Stalin's totalitarian rule. The police destroyed magnificent churches and synagogues. Many religious leaders of all faiths were killed or sent to labor camps

## READING SEVEN

### LIFE UNDER JOSEPH STALIN

Stalin's totalitarian rule revolutionized Soviet society. He relied on total control and limited individual freedoms. Women's roles, however, were greatly expanded. With the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, women won equal rights. After Stalin became dictator, women helped the state-controlled economy prosper. Under his Five-Year Plans, they had no choice but to join the labor force in increasing number. Young women performed the same jobs as men. Millions of women worked in factories and built dams and roads.

Given new educational opportunities, women prepared for careers in engineering and science. Medicine, in particular attracted many women. By 1950, they made-up 75 percent of the Soviet doctors.



Soviet women paid a heavy price for their rising status in society. Beside their full time jobs, they were responsible for housework and child care. Motherhood was also considered a patriotic duty in totalitarian regimes. Soviet women were expected to provide the state with future generations of loyal, obedient citizens.

Under Stalin, the government controlled all education—from nursery schools through the universities. Schoolchildren learned the wonders of the Communist Party. College professors and students who questioned the Communist Party's interpretations of history or science risked losing their jobs or faced imprisonment.

People became better educated and mastered new technical skills. The dramatic changes in people's lives had a downside, though. As servants of a totalitarian state, they would make great sacrifices in exchange for progress.

Education was not merely indoctrination. Stalin's economic plans created a high demand for many skilled workers. Government paid university and technical training for the most able students became the key to a better life. As one young man explain, "If a person does not want to become a collective farmer or just a cleaning women, the only means you have to get something is through education."

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