Why did the Soviet Union need to change?

In 1928, the USSR was still a poor, backward country, producing fewer industrial goods than many smaller countries. Stalin aimed to transform it into a modern, powerful industrial nation.

There were three main reasons for developing industry quickly:

- to provide the machinery, especially tractors, needed to mechanise farming and produce more food
- to catch up with the Western world and make Russia less dependent on the West for industrial goods
- to have a strong industry capable of producing armaments so that Russia could defend itself from attack.

But to develop industry, it was also necessary to develop agriculture. Agriculture in the USSR was still not very sophisticated, and Stalin needed to produce more food, especially grain, to feed the growing number of workers. He also needed to export grain to foreign countries in order to earn foreign currency to buy essential industrial machinery and goods. Stalin chose to change agriculture by collectivisation (see pages 95–101).

1. Why was it so important to the Communists to industrialise the USSR?
2. Why was agriculture so closely linked to industrial development?
3. Why, according to Stalin in Source 2, was it important to make the changes quickly?
4. a) What image of Stalin is presented in Source 1?
   b) Why would Stalin want the Russian people to see this poster?

Source 1: A propaganda poster showing Stalin marching alongside miners, made during the first Five-Year Plan.

Source 2: From Stalin’s Collected Works, 1931

"We must... create in our country an industry which would be capable of re-equipping and organising not only the whole of our industry but also our transport and our agriculture... The history of Russia shows... that because of her backwardness she was constantly being defeated... We are 50 or 100 years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this lag in ten years. Either we do it or we will go under."
How did Stalin industrialise the USSR?

SOURCE 1  A map showing the new industrial centres

The planned economy
Stalin and the Communist Party believed that the way to develop industry and run the economy was through state planning. The state would determine not only what should be produced, but also how, when and where it would be produced. It also determined prices and wages. To organise this sort of planning, the idea of Five-Year Plans was adopted. The detailed planning of the economy was carried out by Gosplan, the state planning agency.

How did the Five-Year Plans work?
The plans set production targets, which industries had to reach. For example, the coal industry was set the target of producing 75 million tons of coal by 1932. To achieve this, coal-producing areas and local managers were given their own specific targets. Source 2 shows the production targets set by each plan.

- The first Five-Year Plan emphasised heavy industries – coal, oil, iron and steel, electricity – to lay the foundations for future industrial growth. The targets set were unbelievably high and unrealistic, but remarkable results were achieved. Coal and iron both doubled their output; electric power production almost trebled; 1,500 new industrial plants were built. The building of over 100 new towns, some carved out of nothing, was started.

Five-Year Plans
First: 1928–32
Second: 1933–37
Third: 1938–41 (interrupted by the Second World War)

1. Why did Stalin build the new industrial centres so far to the east, a long way from Moscow and St Petersburg?
2. How is a free-market economy different from a planned economy?
- The second Five-Year Plan gave heavy industry top priority, but communications, especially railways, became important to link cities and industrial centres. New industries, such as chemicals and metallurgy, grew enormously.
- The third Five-Year Plan ran for only three years, up to 1941, when Russia entered the Second World War. As war approached, more resources were put into developing armaments - tanks, planes and weapons.

1. From the figures in Source 2, how successful do the plans seem to have been?
2. Why might you be worried about accepting figures produced by the Soviet government?
3. Why do you think the idea of using targets was effective?
4. Stalin always declared the Five-Year Plans completed a year ahead of schedule. Can you explain why?

**Specialists**
Stalin brought in specialist advisers from other countries to help develop industry. There were a lot of British and American engineers. The Dnieper dam project was carried out under the supervision of an American, as was the building of the Soviet asbestos industry. The Ford motor company helped the Soviet car industry to build 140,000 cars in 1932.

**Single managers**
Stalin reintroduced single managers to run state enterprises and factories. The idea of workers' control was left far behind. Stalin thought he would get better results from individual managers who were directly responsible for the targets they had to fulfil. Trade unions were told not to interfere. Managers who did well were richly rewarded, many receiving large houses and motor cars.

**Spectacular achievements**
A feature of all the plans in the 1930s were spectacular building projects, held up as showpieces of Soviet achievement. These included the dam on the River Dnieper in eastern Russia, the Moscow–Volga canal and the Moscow Metro – an underground train system with stunning stations built on a grand scale.

**Source 2**
Production figures for 1927 (before the first Five-Year Plan), and for the first two Five-Year Plans in millions of tons. Production targets are shown in brackets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1927</th>
<th>1932</th>
<th>1937</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>64 (75)</td>
<td>128 (152)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21 (22)</td>
<td>29 (47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron ore</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12 (19)</td>
<td>not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig iron</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6 (10)</td>
<td>15 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6 (10)</td>
<td>18 (17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If things go wrong, blame the workers

Despite these apparent successes, the central planning was not very efficient. In some industries there was overproduction, in others underproduction, so that factories were kept idle for weeks, waiting for essential parts. Yet the drive was always to fulfill the targets at any cost. Some of the goods produced were almost unusable because they had been turned out so quickly by untrained workers. Mistakes were made: machines were unwittingly wrecked by unskilled workers, many of them ex-peasants who had been used to only the most primitive levels of technology.

But these mistakes could not be admitted – the system could not be at fault. So ‘wreckers’ or ‘saboteurs’ were found and blamed. As early as 1928, when the coal mines in the Donbass region fell behind target, 53 engineers were accused of conspiracy to wreck the Soviet coal-mining industry. This led to the famous Shakhny trial. Other show trials were to follow.

The hysteria and fear created by the trials and accusations of sabotage had important effects. People covered up mistakes and faults. Output figures were inflated so that industries could not be accused of failing to fulfill their targets. Workers were intimidated so that they would work harder.
How were the workers made to work so hard?

Workers in the 1950s received few rewards. Their wages were low and there were few consumer goods to buy until the end of the 1950s. Food was short and their working conditions and hours were appalling. Houses were of low standard. So how did Stalin get them to work so hard?

A better society
Many workers, especially the young, were inspired by the great task of transforming Russia. They volunteered to work on distant projects under arduous conditions. They believed in the worth of what they were doing, and were prepared to make sacrifices. They thought they were building a better society for their children.

Propaganda
A huge propaganda campaign in the cinema, on radio and in newspapers and posters was mounted to encourage people.

1. In Source 4:
   a) Who does the man in the top hat represent?
   b) Why is he laughing at the idea of the Five-Year Plan?
   c) Why has his expression changed in 1953?
   d) What was the purpose of this poster?

Awards
Awards and honours were given to individuals and groups who worked hard. Groups were also encouraged to compete against each other. One famous worker, Alexei Stakhanov, gave birth to the Stakhanovite Movement, dedicated to hard work. Stakhanov was a Donbass miner who was supposed to have moved 102 tons of coal on his own in one shift – some fourteen times the amount one man would be expected to produce. This was held up in newspapers and posters as a model for others to follow. Workers who exceeded production targets could become Stakhanovites. This entitled them to better housing, free holidays and cash prizes.

SOURCE 4 A Soviet cartoon, 1933. The sign being held up reads 'Five-Year Plan'.

Wages
Wages were also used as incentives. Wages were usually paid according to how much was produced. Skilled workers could get up to four times the wages of their unskilled comrades. Those who moved up into management could get much more.

Punishments
Not all workers responded to the propaganda campaigns, and measures were introduced to deal with slackers. The fear of being accused of sabotage and sent to a labour camp encouraged workers to carry out their tasks obediently. There was also a strict code of labour discipline with tough punishments:
Was Stakhanov’s story true?

The Stakhanov story was a set-up. He had two helpers who shored up the tunnel and removed the coal while he worked at the coal face with his pick. It is likely that other Stakhanovites also asked others to help them so that their tremendous achievements would be reported in newspapers. Although they got rewards, Stakhanovites were often very unpopular with other workers, as they pushed up the production norm (the amount a worker had to produce in a shift), on which wages were calculated.

SOURCE 5 A photograph of Alexei Stakhanov

- Absenteeism was punished by fines, loss of ration cards or dismissal. By 1940, it had become a crime and a prison sentence was given for second offences.
- Workers had to carry labour books, which recorded their jobs and unfavourable comments about them. A bad record could lose a worker food rations or lead to imprisonment.

A large proportion of the workforce consisted of forced labour. These workers were made to work hard by compulsion, fear of physical punishment or being denied food. Often the really heavy work involved in constructing dams, canals and building projects – clearing sites, digging foundations – was done by prisoners, many of whom were peasants sent to labour camps as a result of COLLECTIVISATION.

TASK

1. Make a list of the positive ways in which workers were encouraged to increase production.
2. Which of these ways would you consider to be Socialist and which non-Socialist?
3. Why do you think that propaganda and the Stakhanovite campaign were such an important part of Stalin’s methods?
4. ‘Coercion and fear were the main ways Stalin got workers to work hard’ How far do you agree with this statement?
CASE STUDY: How was Magnitogorsk built?

SOURCE INVESTIGATION

MAGNITOGORSK WAS a showpiece of Soviet achievement, but how was it built and what was the ‘Socialist city’ like?

1. What impression of the building of Magnitogorsk is given in Source 2?
2. Do you think the writer was a supporter of the Soviet Union? Explain your answer.
3. On what points do Sources 2 and 3 agree?
4. How is Source 5 different? Suggest reasons for this.
5. Who carried out the work at Magnitogorsk, according to Sources 2 and 3?
6. Does this suggest enthusiasm for the building of the Soviet dream?

SOURCE 1 A photograph showing an industrial plant being built at Magnitogorsk


"On the right bank of the small river which skirted the mountains lay the Cossack village of Magnitnaya. In 1929, windswept, flowery meadows lay beyond the village. The mountain was one vast lump of iron ore . . . .

An area of 54 square kilometres was selected for the site of Magnitogorsk. Workers of 35 nationalities assembled and built barracks for workers . . . .

The attack upon the mountain began. Ledges 30 feet high were cut in it to get the ore.

Enormous structures rose; the housing of huge ore crushers . . . batteries of coke ovens and blast furnaces towering to the height of 150 feet.

The city itself is planned with care: Soviet factories turn out men as well as steel: seventeen great blocks of buildings, each with its own department store, school, restaurant, and creches; each apartment in the blocks of flats with its own bath, running water, electric light, gas and central heating.

By 1934 the mills turned out about 10 million tons of cast iron. By 1937 this had grown to 14.5 million tons. Steel production increased nine and a half times to upwards of 17.5 million tons."
Encouragement

SOURCE 7 From Behind the Urals by John Scott

“Competition between individuals, brigades and whole departments was encouraged... The Stakhanov movement hit Magnitogorsk in the autumn of 1935. Brigade and shop competition was intensified. Banners were awarded to the brigades who worked best, and monetary remuneration accompanied banners... Wages rose. Production rose.

In 1938, though the city was still in a primitive state... it did boast 50 schools, three colleges, two large theatres, half a dozen small ones, seventeen libraries, 22 clubs, eighteen clinics... a large park had been constructed in 1935.

The city of Magnitogorsk grew and developed from the dirty chaotic construction camp of the early 1930s into a reasonably healthy and habitable city.”

5. Using Sources 5 and 6, make a list of the problems involved in building Magnitogorsk.
6. What did Magnitogorsk consist of in 1929? What was it like by 1958?
7. Do the sources on these two pages support the statements about how industrialisation took place, made on pages 87–91? Find three examples to justify your answer.
8. How reliable do you think John Scott is as a source of evidence?

ACTIVITY

It is 1958. You are a Party activist who travels around industrial centres in the USSR encouraging workers. Use Sources 1–7 to write a speech about the achievements of Magnitogorsk that you will give to workers elsewhere. You can add ideas of your own using information from pages 87–91. These could include:

- industrial achievement throughout the USSR
- the Stakhanovite campaign
- the problems of wreckers and saboteurs
- the future for Soviet children.
Was industrialisation successful?

**SOURCE 1** Industrial production figures, 1921–40, based on data collected by the Soviet government

1. Do the figures in Source 1 prove that Stalin’s industrialisation programme was successful?
2. How reliable is Source 2 as evidence of industrial achievement?
3. Do Sources 5 and 4, written by Western historians, support Source 2?
4. What do you think were the ‘failings and shortcomings’ that Westward refers to in Source 4?

**SOURCE 2** A Soviet view of the achievements of the second Five-Year Plan, from “History of the USSR” by Y. Kukushkin, 1938:

> “While the economies of the capitalist countries were sinking ever deeper into recession, the Soviet economy was booming... The second sections of the Magnitogorsk and Kuznetsk iron and steel complexes were completed ahead of schedule. At the start of the Five-Year Plan a major victory was scored on the industrialisation front when the Ural and Novo-Kramatorsk heavy engineering plants went into operation... Good progress was made in constructing new railways and motorways... 4,500 new factories, plants, mines and power stations were commissioned, three times as many as in the first Five-Year period... During the second Five-Year Plan period, industrial output went up by 129 per cent. The USSR moved into first place in Europe and second in the world in gross industrial output.”

**SOURCE 5** From The Russian Century by Brian Moynahan, 1995:

> “Huge plants were built in Magnitogorsk, Chelyabinsk, Stalingrad; the giant hydroelectric scheme on the Dnieper, which quintupled Soviet electric power output... was for two years the world’s largest single construction site... New mines were opened in Kazakhstan; heavy industry reached into Georgia; Moscow’s cobbled winding lanes were replaced by broad avenues and concrete buildings, beneath which ran a subway system with marble stations.”

**SOURCE 4** From Endurance and Endeavour, by N. Westward, 1973:

> “The failures and shortcomings cannot disguise the fact that by 1941 the main aim of Stalin’s policy of rapid industrialisation had been achieved. The USSR... was one of the world’s great industrial powers.”

**ACTIVITY**

Write an assessment of Stalin’s industrialisation policy. Include in it:

- the reasons why Stalin wanted to industrialise Russia quickly
- whether the plans achieved his aims
- the sort of achievements that marked the Five-Year Plans
- the problems in the new industries
- the price some workers had to pay for industrialisation.

Write a paragraph summing up the good and the bad points about Stalin’s policy.
Why did Stalin introduce collectivisation?

In May 1929, the new Five-Year Plan for agriculture announced that five million households were to be put into collective farms by 1932–33.

How were collective farms formed?

Peasants in a particular area were encouraged to put their individual plots of land together to form a collective farm or kolkhoz. They had to hand over their animals and tools to the farm, which would be run by a committee. The idea was that they would work together and share everything, including what the farm produced. Some of the produce would be sold to the state at a low price and, in return, the state would provide agricultural machinery such as tractors, and help the peasants to farm more efficiently.

There were other types of collective farms. In the ‘toz’ type, the peasants owned their own land but shared machinery. Some, called ‘sovkhозes’, were owned and run by the state. But the kolkhoz was the type preferred by the Communists.

Many peasants were unhappy about the idea of the kolkhoz, as Source 1 shows.

1. The peasants here put forward a number of reasons why they do not think collective farms a good idea. Write down these reasons in your own words.

Source 1 From Red Bread, by Maurice Hindus, 1931. A lot of peasants had objections to collective farms, as the author discovered when he visited the village where he used to live, in 1929.
**Why did the Communists support collectivisation?**

- Agriculture was still very backward. Most farms were small, because of the way land had been shared out after the Revolution. Old traditional methods – strip farming with wooden ploughs – were still used. Collectives made it easier to introduce modern machinery, especially tractors, and new methods of farming, which would produce more food.
- More efficient mechanised agriculture would require fewer peasants to work the land and release the labour needed for the growing industries.
- It was easier for the state to get grain from collective farms than from individual peasants.
- Collectivisation was the Socialist way to farm the land. How could you build a Socialist state when peasants owned their own land and sold their produce on the private market? Collectivisation would replace capitalist attitudes with Socialist attitudes of cooperation and sharing.

**Why was collectivisation so urgent?**

Communist Party members were staggered by Stalin’s announcement that he was going to carry out a crash collectivisation programme in four years.

The reason for this urgency lay in the food crisis of the late 1920s. Despite good harvests between 1925 and 1928, the peasants were holding back grain, because the price the state paid for it was low and they could not afford to buy much. In 1928 and 1929, matters were so bad that bread and meat had to be rationed in the cities. Stalin himself and other Party officials went out into the main grain-producing areas to seize grain. Many peasants stopped producing so much and hid supplies.

Stalin blamed the kulaks, or rich peasants, for hoarding grain, and had many arrested and deported. But he was tired of the yearly struggle to get grain which was desperately needed to feed the workers and to help pay for the industrialisation programme. Instead, he decided to break the peasants and their stranglehold on food supplies. The tool he used to do this was collectivisation.

1. Do you think the Communists had a good case for making the peasants go into collectives?
2. Why did Stalin decide to force the peasants into collectives in such a short time?
3. What consequences do you think this might have had?
4. Which of Sources 3–8 do you think were intended as government propaganda?
5. What benefits of collectivisation do they show?
6. If you were running a Communist Party newspaper, which would you use? Explain your reasons.

SOURCE 8  A poster with the slogan 'Come and join our kolkhoz, comrade!'
How was collectivisation carried out?

In 1930, bands of Party activists and officials, backed up by the OGPU (state police), were sent into the countryside to organise the peasants into collective farms.

The activists would 'persuade' peasants to sign a register demanding to be collectivised. Then animals, implements and buildings would be taken from the kulaks (rich peasants) and would usually form the basis for the new collective farm. If the peasants refused to join the collective, they would be labelled as kulaks and shot, deported or sent to labour camps. Sometimes, whole villages were deported as a lesson to others.

'Dekulakisation' was central to the collectivisation process. It was important to have a class enemy — the kulaks — to blame for everything that went wrong. But the term 'kulak' actually meant very little by the 1950s. There were few rich peasants left; the people referred to were usually the most efficient farmers, who owned a few animals and some machinery.

However, even where kulaks did not exist, the Communists still insisted that they had to be found and cleaned out. Stalin said, 'We must liquidate the kulaks as a class.' He used class hatred to whip up hysteria. The district authorities told local Soviets how many kulaks they had to find and lists of names were drawn up. Peasants denounced others as kulaks, some to settle old scores with neighbours. Children were encouraged to inform on anybody, even their own parents.

The Soviet version

Source 1 Peasants protesting against the kulaks

Source 5 The official view given in the Party history published in 1960

"[The peasants] saw that the Party and the government, overcoming difficulties, were building factories to make tractors and new farm machines. Numerous groups of peasants visited the new factories, attended workers' meetings, and were inspired by their enthusiasm. Upon returning to their villages, the working peasantry took the initiative in setting up new collective farms."

Source 2 From The History of the Communist Party (Short Course), a Soviet textbook in use in the USSR during the Stalin period

"The peasants chased the kulaks from the land, dekulakised them, took away their livestock and machinery, and requested the Soviet power to arrest and deport the kulaks."
**How others saw it**

**SOURCE 5** A collective farm meeting

**SOURCE 6** Vasily Grossman, a Jewish Soviet writer, quoted in *The Harvest of Sorrow* by Robert Conquest

"They would threaten people with guns, as if they were under a spell, calling small children 'kulak bastards', screaming 'bloodsuckers!'... They had sold themselves on the idea that the so-called 'kulaks' were pariahs, untouchables, vermin. They would not sit down at a 'parasite's' table; the 'kulak' child was loathsome, the young 'kulak' girl was lower than a louse. They looked on the so-called 'kulaks' as cattle, swine, loathsome, repulsive: they had no souls; they stank; they all had venereal diseases; they were enemies of the people and exploited the labour of others... and there was no pity for them."

**SOURCE 7** A photograph of a girl informing on her parents

**SOURCE 8** A kulak's description of collectivisation to John Scott, an American volunteer, quoted in *The Russian Century* by Brian Moynahan

"The poor peasants of the village get together in a meeting and decide: 'So-and-so has six horses; we couldn't get along without those in the collective farm; besides, he hired a man to help him in the harvest.' They notify the OGPU, and there you are. So-and-so gets five years. They confiscate his property and give it to the new collective farm. Sometimes they ship the whole family out."

**SOURCE 9** From Victor Kravchenko's book *The Chase for Freedom*. Victor Kravchenko, a Communist eye-witness, arrived in a village to find a commotion

"'What's happening?' I asked the constable.
'Another round-up of kulaks,' he replied. 'Seems the dirty business will never end. The OGPU and District Committee people came this morning.'

A large crowd was gathered outside the building... A number of women were weeping hysterically and calling the names of husbands and fathers... In the background, guarded by the OGPU soldiers with drawn revolvers, stood about twenty peasants, young and old, with bundles on their backs. A few were weeping. The others stood there sullen, resigned, helpless.

So this was 'Liquidation of the kulaks as a class'? A lot of simple peasants being torn from their native soil, stripped of all their worldly goods and shipped to some distant labour camps. For some reason, on this occasion, most of the families were being left behind."

1. Sources 1–4 give the Soviet version of how collectivisation was carried out. How do these sources suggest it was done?
2. How does this compare with the version in Sources 5–9?
3. In what ways do the two versions agree with each other?
4. Which version do you think is more reliable? Consider the sources individually.
5. a) How can you explain the attitudes towards the kulaks described in Source 6?
   b) Have you come across this type of abuse in other periods of history? If so, where?
6. a) How were kulaks identified?
   b) Why do you think it was so important for Stalin to present the kulaks as the enemy?
How were the peasants affected by collectivisation?

There was fierce resistance to collectivisation. Peasants refused to hand over their animals, preferring to slaughter them and eat or sell the meat. They burnt crops, tools and houses rather than hand them over to the state. There were also riots and armed resistance. One riot lasted five days and armoured cars were needed to put it down.

So fierce was this reaction that in March of 1950 Stalin called a temporary halt. He was worried that there would be no crop to harvest in the summer. He blamed the activists and local officials for going too far. But as soon as the harvest was gathered in, the process was begun again, a little more slowly but with just as much violence.

So much disruption was caused to agriculture that there were severe food shortages. When, added to this, there was a disastrous harvest in 1952, the result was a famine of unimaginable severity in the years 1932–53. Yet the state never admitted that a famine was taking place and did not ask for, or get, international aid. Indeed, food was still being exported from the USSR to other countries. To make matters worse, Stalin sent out requisitioning gangs to take what little grain there was. Grain was held in stores that were ‘almost bursting’, and even left to rot in the open while people nearby starved to death.

It has been estimated that at least thirteen million peasants, and possibly many more, died as a result of collectivisation – a human tragedy on a gigantic scale. But Stalin had succeeded in breaking the peasants and obtaining the grain he needed for industrialisation.

Source 1 From Victor Serge’s Memoirs of a Revolutionary

“The women came to deliver the cattle confiscated by the kolkhoz, but made a rampart of their own bodies around the beasts: ‘Go on, bandits, shoot!’

In a Kuban market town whose entire population was deported, the women undressed in their houses, thinking that no one would dare make them go out naked; they were driven out as they were to the cattle trucks, beaten with rifle butts...

Trainloads of deported peasants left for the icy north, the forests, the steppes, the deserts. These were whole populations, denuded of everything; the old, folk starved to death in mid-journey; newborn babies were buried on the banks of the roadside, and each wilderness had its crop of little crosses.”

Source 2 In the 1930s a novel, Virgin Soil Upturned, was published in Russia. It was written by Mikhail Sholokhov, who was a Communist and took part in collectivisation as a Party activist. Here he writes about how the peasants reacted

“Stock was slaughtered every night in Gremyachy Log. Hardly had dusk fallen than the muffled, short bleats of sheep, the death squeals of pigs, or the lowing of calves could be heard. Both those who had joined the kolkhoz and individual farmers killed their stock. Bulls, sheep, pigs, even cows were slaughtered, as well as cattle for breeding...

‘Kill, it’s not ours any more… Kill, they’ll take it for meat anyway… Kill, you won’t get meat on the collective farm…”

And they killed. They ate until they could eat no more. Young and old suffered from stomach ache. At dinner-time tables groaned under boiled and roasted meat. At dinner-time everyone had a greasy mouth, everyone hiccupped as if at a wake. Everyone blinked like an owl, as if drunk from eating.”

Here, Andrei Razmzhotov, an activist, is speaking about the brutal treatment of the peasants

“What am I? An executioner? Or is my heart of stone? And he again began to shout: ‘Gayev’s got eleven children. How they howled when we arrived! It made my hair stand on end. We began to drive them out of the kitchen… I screwed up my eyes, and stopped my ears, and ran into the yard. The women were all in a dead fright... The children – Oh, by God, you…”

But the other chief activist would not have it: ‘Snake!’ he gasped in a penetrating whisper, clenching his fists. ‘How are you serving the Revolution? Having pity on them? Yes... You could line up the thousands of old men, women and children and tell me they’d got to be crushed into the dust for the sake of the Revolution, and I’d shoot them all down with a machine gun.’

1. Use Sources 1 and 2 to explain:
   - the ways in which the peasants resisted collectivisation
   - what happened to those who resisted.
2. Why do you think this was such a bitter struggle?
3. What do Sources 2 and 5 tell you about the activists who carried out collectivisation and why they did it?
4. Source 2 is from a novel. How useful do you think it is to historians of this period?
5. a) How does Kopelev’s evidence in Source 5 support the novel?
   b) Do you think that the fact that he went into exile means that his account is less reliable?
HOW WERE THE PEASANTS AFFECTED BY COLLECTIVISATION?

SOURCE 4

An eyewitness account by a survivor from Vinkyna (in the Kiev/Odessa region)

"The poor widow Darylia and her sons had a very tragic end. Her dead body was eaten by maggots and the two sons, Pavlo and Oleska, fell dead begging for food...

Oleska Voitsyshkousky saved his and his family's lives by consuming the meat of horses which had died in the collective of glanders and other diseases. He dug them up at night and brought the meat home in a sack."

SOURCE 5

Collecting the dead during the 1932 famine, probably in the Ukraine

SOURCE 5

By Lev Kopelev, a party activist who later went into exile

"With the rest of my generation, I firmly believed that the ends justified the means. Our great goal was the universal triumph of Communism...

I saw what 'total collectivisation' meant — how they mercilessly stripped the peasants in the winter of 1932–33. I took part in this myself, scouring the countryside... testing the earth with an iron rod for loose spots that might lead to buried grain. With the others, I emptied out the old folk's storage chests, stopping my ears to the children's crying and the women's wails. For I was convinced that I was accomplishing the great and necessary transformation of the countryside; that in the days to come the people who lived there would be better off...

In the terrible spring of 1933 I saw people dying of hunger. I saw women and children with distended bellies, turning blue, still breathing but with vacant lifeless eyes. And corpses — corpses in ragged sheepskin coats and cheap felt boots; corpses in the peasant huts... I saw all this and did not go out of my mind or commit suicide... Nor did I lose my faith. As before, I believed because I wanted to believe."

6. Why has the famine of 1932–35 been described as man-made?
7. What reason could Stalin have for not taking action to relieve the suffering of the famine?

ACTIVITY

It is 1950.

Either

You are a Communist activist, who has been involved in 'persuading' peasants to join collective farms. You are talking to a friend of yours who works in a rural Soviet who is having doubts. Convince your friend of the importance of the success of collectivisation. Explain why it has been necessary. Mention:

- the problems of persuading the peasants to give up their grain in the late 1920s
- the need to deal with the capitalist kulaks
- the benefits of collective farms
- the importance of collectivisation to industrialisation and the Revolution.

Or

You are the friend. Explain your reservations about the way collectivisation is being carried out, especially the way in which kulaks are identified.

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Did collectivisation succeed?

**SOURCE 1** Agricultural production, based on figures produced by the Soviet government

**SOURCE 2** Grain procurements (grain taken by the state)

1. a) What does the chart in Source 1 show happened to agricultural production between 1928 and 1940?
   b) How can you explain this?
   c) How does this compare with what was being produced in 1913 before the Communists came to power?
2. a) What does Source 2 show about the amount of grain that the state was able to get from the peasants even in the bad year of 1932?
   b) What did this mean for the aims of Stalin's policy?
5. How useful as evidence is Source 3 about the success of collectivisation?
4. Do you agree with the assessment of collectivisation by the two historians in Sources 4 and 5? Use evidence from this page and pages 95–103 to support your views.

**SOURCE 3** Bertha Malnick visited the USSR several times during the 1930s, collecting material for her book *Everyday Life in Russia*, 1938. This extract is from a speech by the brigadier of a collective farm.

"We have more than 600 hectares; of these 123 are sown with cotton, 225 planted with wheat. Our vineyards cover 45 hectares. Our three lorries can hardly cope with the work. Our farmers have built 70 new houses for themselves during the last few years... Look inside these houses. You will find rich carpets and musical instruments...

Four times [this year] the whole farm went to the opera in Erevan, to the theatre, to concerts, to the cinema... Look at our happy children. They all go to school. We have two schools... We, the older generation, dared not dream of such things... In our club dozens of farmers are learning to read and write, joining literary, agricultural and political classes...

I could say much more about the life of our collective farm, but the young wine is bubbling impatiently in your glasses. Drink to the good Stalin, who brought us to this life."

**SOURCE 4** From European History 1848–1945 by T.A. Morris

"Destruction by rebellious peasants, the loss of kulak expertise, and the inexperience of collective farm managers resulted in a sharp decline in many areas of production. Between 1928 and 1934 the cattle population of the USSR declined from 66.8 million to 35.5 million, the number of sheep and goats fell from 114.6 million to 36.5 and the number of horses from 34 million to 16.3 million. Grain shortages, combined with continued forced procurements, led to rural famine...

Not until 1940 did figures for grain production reach those of 1914."

**SOURCE 5** From A History of Soviet Russia, by Adam Ulam, 1976

"Collectivisation accomplished its main aims. In the first place, the regime could now commandeer food from the peasants at incredibly low prices. Then it acquired the additional working force for industrialisation... mechanisation, especially after tractors began to be produced in quantity, released millions of rural youth for industries in the cities."
In the 1930s, Stalin consolidated his position as supreme dictator of the Soviet Union. Stalin's USSR developed into a totalitarian state, like Adolf Hitler's Germany. A totalitarian state is one in which those in power have total control - every aspect of people's lives is controlled and monitored. The Soviet Union in the 1930s had many features in common with Nazi Germany:

- authoritarian control through terror
- secret police
- labour camps
- cult of the leader
- education controlled by the state
- propaganda and censorship
- state control of arts and sciences
- only one political party.

In other words, Stalin maintained his powerful position in the USSR by two main methods:

- control by terror
- control of ideas.

Source 1 (left): A poster celebrating Stalin's constitution, 1937

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Murder of Kirov; Stalin launches the Purges - some against ordinary people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>First show trial: Zinoviev and Kamenev executed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Second show trial: senior Party members executed. Purge of the army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Third and last show trial: Bukharin and Rykov executed. Purge of the NKVD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Great Purges

The 'GREAT PURGES' lasted from 1934 to 1938. During this period millions of Russians - in the Communist Party, the army, the arts and sciences, and many other walks of life - were arrested and either sent to the labour camps or shot. A feature of the purges was public show trials, where old Bolsheviks confessed to crimes against the Soviet Union.

How did the purges begin?

Many Communists, especially old Bolsheviks, had been deeply disturbed by the violence of collectivisation in the early 1930s. They were shocked by the mass slaughter and human misery it had brought about. Some, including Stalin's wife, were so disillusioned that they committed suicide during the dreadful famine in 1932-33.

By 1934, when things started to improve, a large group in the Communist Party thought that it was time to slow down the drive towards industrialisation and to improve relations with the peasants. Sergei Kirov, a leading Communist, put forward these views at the Seventeenth Party Congress. There was talk of removing Stalin as leader, and Kirov seemed to be emerging as a popular alternative.

Shortly after the Congress, Kirov was shot outside his office in Leningrad. Stalin claimed that there was a conspiracy to murder him and destroy the Party. Using the atmosphere of fear created by the murder, he ordered arrests.

Purging the Communist Party - the show trials

SOURCE 1 Sergei Kirov in the 1920s. At the Seventeenth Party Congress, Kirov got more applause than Stalin, a sign of his popularity.

SOURCE 2 A photograph of a 1930s show trial. On the right you can see Vyshinsky, the state prosecutor, who questioned the defendants.

SOURCE 3 A newspaper feature put together by supporters of Trotsky in 1938, including photographs of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party of 1917, showing those who had become victims of Stalin.

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SOURCE 4  By Fitzroy MacLean, a British diplomat who observed the show trials

"The prisoners were charged . . . with every conceivable crime: high treason, murder, espionage and all kinds of sabotage. They had plotted to wreck industry and agriculture, to assassinate Stalin, to dismember the Soviet Union for the benefit of their capitalist allies. They were shown for the most part to have become criminals and traitors to the Soviet cause ever since the Revolution – before it, even . . . One after another, using the same words, they admitted their guilt . . . And yet what they said, the actual contents of their statements, seemed to bear no relation to reality."

In 1936, Stalin set about purging (cleaning out) the Communist Party to get rid of all the people who might oppose him, particularly Bolsheviks who had been important in the past. The first to go were the old enemies – Zinoviev and Kamenev. Along with fourteen others, they were accused of organising the murder of Kirov and planning to assassinate Stalin.

They were put on trial in full view of the world, in the so-called ‘show trials’, which were broadcast on radio. The accused confessed to laughable charges (see Source 4), including plans to murder Lenin. The details of the evidence were even more bizarre. One of the hotels where the plotters were supposed to have met to plan the murder had been demolished years before; Smirnov, another ‘plotter’, had actually been in jail at the time.

Getting confessions was important. Confessions showed that the state and Stalin were right – a conspiracy did exist. It did not help the people who confessed. Zinoviev, Kamenev and the others were all executed.

The show trials were just the tip of the iceberg. Between 1936 and 1938, thousands of Communist Party members were denounced in meetings and expelled from the Party. Denouncing others was a good way to get a better job in the Party. Denunciations usually led to arrest and torture. Under torture, people often made confessions implicating others, who would then be arrested in their turn.

The second main show trial took place in 1937, when senior Party members were accused of industrial sabotage and spying. The third and last great show trial in 1938 included Bukharin, Rykov and Yagoda. It was too dangerous to have men like Bukharin around, who knew so much about the old revolutionary days. He was shot along with Yagoda, who had been the previous head of the NKVD (secret police).

By the end of the purges of the Party, it has been estimated that over one fifth of the members had been expelled or shot. Of the 1,961 delegates at the Seventeenth Party Congress in 1934, where Kirov was clapped for longer than Stalin, 1,108 were arrested. Of the 139 Central Committee members, over 90 were shot. Five (out of eleven) of the Politburo of 1934 were dead, some in mysterious circumstances.

1. Why do you think so many of those who attended the Seventeenth Party Congress did not survive?
2. Why are the crimes that the prisoners were accused of (Source 4) surprising and rather strange?
3. a) What is the message of the cartoon in Source 5?
b) Who might have produced it?
4. What do you think was the effect of the purges on the surviving members of the Communist Party?

ACTIVITY

Write a newspaper report about one of the show trials and the events surrounding it. Many people at the time believed the charges, but you can be a reporter who does not. Use information from pages 106–7 to help you write your article.
How did the purges affect the Russian people?

The purges were not restricted to the Party. Anybody suspected of opposing Stalin was to be removed. Nobody was safe. People were taken away without warning and were never often never seen again. Fathers, wives, brothers and sisters simply disappeared, first to prison and then on to labour camps, usually without a trial. What crimes had these people committed? Often they never knew, or some offence would be made up, usually connected with sabotage. A railway engine driver could be arrested for driving his train too quickly or too slowly. It was not a good idea to make jokes about Stalin.

Scientists, doctors, actors, teachers, workers, all came to fear the knock on the door which announced the arrival of the secret police, the NKVD. The NKVD drove around in black cars called ‘ravens’. They liked to call in the early hours of the morning. People often kept a bag packed in case the knock was for them.

Poets and writers were not trusted by Stalin. Many were arrested and treated badly. Meyerhold, a theatre director, complained that his brutal interrogator had forced him to drink his own urine and broken his left arm whilst forcing him to sign a confession with his right.

An army of informers kept the NKVD busy. Children were encouraged to inform on their parents and neighbours denounced each other. One woman was supposed to have denounced 8,000 people; the streets emptied when she came out. Pavlik Morozov, aged fourteen, denounced his own father. He was later stabbed to death by members of his family. He was held up as an example to children about how to do the ‘right thing’ by informing on parents disloyal to the new society. Statues of him were put up and buildings were named after him.

Informing on others was a way of proving one’s loyalty – or a way of settling old scores. It was part of the hysteria which was created by the atmosphere of terror. People lived in fear of denunciation in the factory, office, farm, street and home.

Source 1: The people told many stories and grim ‘4.00 a.m.’ jokes about the purges. These are quoted in The Russian Century by Brian Moynahan and Man of Steel by Elizabeth Roberts, 1988.

“A Moscow girl who had been out partying rang the doorbell when she came back in the early hours. Her father answered the door fully dressed, bag in hand, and slapped her face when he saw who it was. [He thought it was the secret police.]

At four o’clock in the morning there was a knock on the door of a Moscow house which was occupied by five families. All of them leapt out of bed, but none dared to open the door... The knocking grew louder. Finally, one of the tenants took his courage in both hands and opened the door. He was heard whispering for a few moments... Then he came back to his terrified fellow tenants with a bright smile on his face. ‘Nothing to worry about, comrades. the house is on fire, that’s all!’

1. Why do you think Stalin wanted to create this atmosphere of terror amongst the people?
2. How do you think stories and jokes like the ones in Source 1 came to be told?

Tamara Ter-Yegiazarova

"It became vastly more difficult to socialise because nobody knew who was informin on them... in the morning when you left your flat, you saw that a flat had been sealed and that those people were no longer there. Of course, your state of mind was utter terror, because nobody knew whether they would be arrested... People turned in on themselves."

Olga Slozberg describes having to leave her children when she was arrested with her husband

"My son had woken up, and I said, 'Little son, get up and go to your granny - I'm going away for a while... Then I went to the little girl - she was four years old; he was six. She was sleeping with her nose in the pillow. I turned round and she started smiling. What could I do? I kissed her and left."

The end of the purges

In 1938, Stalin called a halt to the purges. Things were getting out of hand. The purges had developed a power of their own and were pulling Soviet society apart. As usual, Stalin blamed others for the excesses, though in this case it was probably true. The NKVD itself was now purged so that its knowledge of what had happened could be conveniently forgotten. It is said that the agents faced torture and death with remarkable calm.

Soviet historians have estimated that by 1959 over twenty million Russians had been transported to labour camps, and that approximately twelve million of these died. Mass graves of people killed in the 1930s have been found. A grave discovered at Chelyabinsk in the Urals in 1989 contained the bodies of more than 80,000 people.

As a result of the terror, Stalin's position was unchallengeable. He had created a Party which was composed of men and women totally loyal to him, who carried out his orders and had no memory of the old heroes of the Revolution. Moreover, all sources of opposition outside the Party had been crushed.

The purges of the armed forces

Stalin wanted to make sure that the army remained loyal and that any officers capable of opposing him were removed. In 1937, Marshal Tukhachevsky, along with seven other generals, all 'Heroes of the Civil War', were executed. It was also another act of personal revenge for Stalin: Tukhachevsky had had serious disagreements with Stalin in the Civil War. In the following months, thousands of army officers shared their fate. The navy and the airforce were also purged.

The consequences of this were almost disastrous for the Soviet Union. So many top army officers were removed, including 90 per cent of all Soviet generals, that the Russian army found itself in a desperate situation at the beginning of the Second World War in 1941.

TASK

What were the main consequences of the purges for the Soviet Union? Look back through this section before you answer. Include comments on the following:

- how Stalin's political position had changed
- what had been lost - people, ideas, artistic work
- what had happened to the Communist Party
- what had happened to the army
- how people's lives were affected.

SOURCE 5: The mass grave at Chelyabinsk being excavated
**Why did Stalin carry out the purges?**

Did Stalin start the purges because he was power mad? Was he a cruel tyrant suffering from paranoia? Or were there other reasons?

As we have seen, Stalin's position as leader was under threat in 1954 (see page 106). There had been calls for his removal and many Communists wanted to build better relations with the people.

Stalin, for his part, was convinced that he was the only person who could transform the Soviet Union into a modern, industrialised country, and that it had to be done quickly. He was obsessed by the idea that Hitler would attack the USSR and that it would lose the war if it could not produce enough armaments. To slacken the pace of industrialisation, therefore, would be a betrayal of the Soviet Union. Any person who tried to stop him accomplishing this great task was, in Stalin's eyes, a traitor. Historians and others have given various reasons for the purges.

1. The official Soviet version of the purges is given in Source 4.
   a) Why were the purges necessary according to this version?
   b) How useful is this version to historians studying Soviet history?
2. a) What role, according to Sources 5 and 6, did Stalin's personality and psychology play in this?
   b) How far can we rely on Bukharin's and Khrushchev's opinions?
3. What evidence can you find in this section to support Isaac Deutscher's statement in Source 7?

### SOURCE 4

From A Short History of the USSR by A.V. Shestakov, 1938, the official Soviet history book written for students.

"Trotsky and his contemptible friends... organised in the USSR gangs of murderers, wreckers and spies. They caused train collisions in the USSR, blew up and set fire to mines and factories, wrecked machines and poisoned workers and did all the damage they possibly could. These enemies of the people had a definite programme, which was to restore the yoke of the capitalists and the landlords to the USSR, to destroy the collective farms... and to promote the defeat of the USSR in the event of war."

### SOURCE 5

Bukharin speaking in Paris in 1936.

"He [Stalin] is convinced that he is greater than everyone else... If someone speaks better than he does, that man is for it! Stalin will not let him live, because that man is a constant reminder that he, Stalin, is not the first and best... he is a narrow-minded, malicious man - no, not a man, but a devil.

Later he said in a letter to a friend:

*Old Bolsheviks rejected Stalin in the depths of their hearts, old Bolsheviks would betray him at the first change in the political atmosphere.*"

### SOURCE 6


"Stalin was a very distrustful man, sickly suspicious... He could look at a man and say: 'Why are your eyes so shifty today?' or 'Why are you turning so much today and avoiding looking me directly in the eyes?' The sickly suspicion created in him a general distrust even toward eminent Party workers whom he had known for years. Everywhere and in everything he saw 'enemies', 'double dealers' and 'spies'."

### SOURCE 7

Adapted from Stalin, by Isaac Deutscher, 1949.

"Stalin's real motive was to destroy the men who might form an alternative government."

### ACTIVITY

Write a short essay on why Stalin carried out the purges. Use all the information on pages 106–12. Mention:

- the situation in 1954
- why Stalin thought it was important he remain leader
- why he wanted to get rid of the old Bolsheviks
- the role of terror in controlling the Party and the people
- other factors, including his personality and psychology.
THE LABOUR CAMPS were at the centre of Stalin's programme of terror. People feared being sent to them almost as much as being shot. Few survived the harsh conditions there. The camps were found all around the Soviet Union, but some of the worst were in the frozen north, where conditions were severe in the extreme.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, labour camps took the peasants accused of being kulaks or who resisted collectivisation and the workers accused of sabotage and 'wrecking'. These people were often used as forced labour to clear ground for industrial towns or for big projects such as the building of the Belomar Canal. After the purges began, the camps filled up with political prisoners. There were also women's and children's camps.

What was it like in the camps?

SOURCE 1 These letters were sent by people who were put in the camps because of their religious faith

From the Urals
1 February 1931
Dear . . . .
It is impossible to describe the need, grief, pain and humiliation which we are suffering here.
Everyone is forced to work, from the age of twelve to 70 and over; in fact everyone who is still able to stand on his feet; some of them are even taken from their sick beds. They wanted to take one man by force and refused to believe he was ill, and the same evening he died, leaving a sick wife with three children.

From 'R' in North Russia
18 February, 1931
My dear sister,
Received your letter with many thanks, and am longing for another sign of life from you . . . Eighty per cent are already unable to work. Numbers of them have frozen hands and feet. Many run away from the work as they have no warm clothing and are starving. When caught, they are locked up and have to lie on the cold ground without food, and thus they remain until the Almighty releases them from this world.
Many die of hunger in the woods and are simply buried in the snow without clothing. Some are seen lying on the road too weak to move. Try to work day and night on 300 grams of bread a day, without rest! Drops of our blood are on every log. In our barracks we have eleven cases of typhoid, and no medicine.

SOURCE 2 Forced labourers building the Belomar Canal in 1931

SOURCE 3 Extracts from Eleven Years in Soviet Prison Camps, by Elinor Lipper, 1951

Meals
“Breakfast: Half a herring or 50 grams of salt fish; sweetened tea; one third of the bread rations [300–850 grams].
Lunch: Cabbage-leaf soup, one pint. Groats. One third of the bread rations.
Supper: Cabbage-leaf soup, with a few grains of some cereals and fish heads floating in it. One third of the bread rations.”

Bugs
“The barracks were so overrun with bed bugs that sleep was almost impossible at night, when the creatures are most active. From the walls and the planks above and beneath us, they came crawling; they fell on the tormented bodies of the prisoners, who twisted and writhed at the stinging bites.”

Rape
“The guard who was supposed to take her back to the women's camp had not yet come. The men, of course, hastened to pay her compliments, and invited her back to their barracks . . . A few men stood as lookouts . . . the others fell on her . . . After a while, she learned she had contracted both syphilis and gonorrhoea. Her experience was not unique in Kolyma.”
SOURCE 4 From Into the Whirlwind by Evgenia Ginzburg, 1965

"The camp consisted of a huge, dirty yard surrounded by barbed wire, it stank intolerably of ammonia and chloride of lime, which was forever being poured down the latrines. A special breed of bugs infested the long wooden huts. . . . Before dawn we were marched to a bleak open field. Until 1.00 p.m. we hacked at the frozen soil with spades. We ate between 1.00 p.m. and 1.30 a.m. at the camp, trying to warm ourselves over the stove. From 1.30 until 8.00 p.m. we worked again."

SOURCE 5 Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote a novel, One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, which was based on the eleven years he spent in prison and camps

"As usual, at five o'clock that morning reveille was sounded by the blows of a hammer on the length of rail hanging up near the staff quarters. . . . everything outside still looked like the middle of the night when Ivan Denisovich Shukhov got up to go to the bucket."

Food
"[Shukhov's bread was handed to him.] A spoonful of granulated sugar lay in a small mound on top of the hunk . . . he sucked the sugar from the bread with his lips . . . and looked at his ration, weighing it in his hand and hastily calculating if it reached the regulation 55 grams. . . . There was short weight in every ration. The only point was how short. . . . The little fish were more bone than flesh; the flesh had been boiled off the bone and had disintegrated, leaving a few remnants on head and tail. Shukhov went on chewing his teeth and sucking the bones, spitting the remains on the table. He ate everything – the gills, the tail, the eyes when they were still in their sockets . . . After . . . there was magara porridge. It had grown cold too, and had set into a solid lump . . . it was tasteless when hot, and left you with no sense of having filled your belly."

Going to work
"Once beyond the camp boundary, the intense cold, accompanied by a head wind, stung Shukhov's face."

ACTIVITY
You are a political prisoner who has been to several labour camps. You are desperate to smuggle out a report to the rest of the world to tell people what is happening in the USSR. Use Sources 1–5 to write your report on life in the labour camps. Mention:

- daily life
- the work you have to do
- the conditions of work
- food
- accommodation
- the behaviour of the guards.

The chief of the escort recited the 'morning prayer', which every prisoner was heartily sick of.

'Attention, prisoners. Marching orders must be strictly obeyed. Keep to your ranks. No hurrying; keep a steady pace. No talking. Keep your eyes fixed ahead and your hands behind your backs. A step to the right or left is considered an attempt to escape and the escort has orders to shoot without warning. Leading guards, quick march.'

From time to time one of the escorts would cry: 'U 48. Hands behind back', or 'B 502. Keep up.'

Work
"They'd been given the job of pecking out holes in the ground. The holes were small enough . . . but the ground, stony hard even in summer, was now in the grip of frost . . . They went for it with picks – the picks slipped, scattering showers of sparks, but not a bit of earth was dislodged."

Parcels
"Every time someone in the team, or close by in the barracks, received a parcel (which was almost every day) his heart ached because there wasn't one for him. . . . Guards opened the parcels . . . They took out everything and examined the contents. . . . If there was anything home-baked, or some tasty sweetmeats . . . the guard would take a bite at it himself. . . . Every zek [prisoner] who got a parcel had to give and give, starting with the guard who opened it."
How did Stalin control ideas?

TERROR AND PROPAGANDA were two of the chief ways in which Stalin controlled ideas in the Soviet Union. People were too frightened to speak out against the state, because someone might report them to the secret police. Stalin mounted a huge propaganda campaign in posters, films, radio, books and newspapers (all of which were state-controlled) to push the government's views.

The arts
Stalin regarded writers and artists as dangerous. Writers were censored: their books and articles had to be submitted to committees before they were published. They had much less freedom under Stalin than they had had in the 1920s. Artists were forced to produce work which glorified the achievements of Soviet workers and peasants, or of the Revolution. This was called 'Socialist Realism'. Sources 1 and 2 are examples of Socialist Realist paintings. Socialist Realist novels had as their heroes ordinary people helping to build the new Soviet society.

Any work other than this was called 'bourgeois'. Writers and artists accused of bourgeois tendencies would find that their work was never published or seen. They might lose their livelihood, as the state paid their wages. If they went too far, as Osip Mandelstam did when he wrote a poem critical of Stalin (see Source 5), they would find themselves in a labour camp.

Some artists, so depressed by what had happened in the USSR, left the country or committed suicide.

You can see other examples of Socialist Realist paintings on pages 117 and 119.

SOURCE 1  A painting entitled Higher and Higher, 1934

SOURCE 2  A painting entitled A Collective Farm Harvest Festival, 1937

1. What impression of Soviet society are the artists of Sources 1 and 2 trying to put across?
2. Compare the Socialist Realist paintings in Sources 1 and 2 with the art of the post-Revolution 1920s on pages 70–73.
   a) What are the main differences?
   b) What are the similarities?
3. Why do you think Stalin wanted to make all art and literature follow the Socialist Realism line?
SOURCE 5
An extract from Osip Mandelstam's poem about Stalin

“All we hear is the Kremlin mountaineer
The murderer and peasant-slayer
His fingers are fat as grubs
And the words, final as lead weights, fall from his lips,
His cockroach whiskers leer
And his boot tops gleam.
Around him a rabble of thin-necked leaders –
Fawning half-men for him to play with
They whinny, purr or whine
As he prates and points a finger”

SOURCE 4
From Victor Serge's Memoirs of a Revolutionary

“Censorship in many forms, mutilated or murdered books. Before sending a manuscript to the publisher, an author would assemble his friends, read his work to them and discuss together whether such-and-such pages would ‘pass’. The head of the publishing enterprise would then consult the Glavlit, or Literature Office, which censored manuscripts and proofs. Once the book was published, official critics would issue their opinion ... whether it would be tolerated, or whether it would be withdrawn from publication.”

Education

Education was strictly controlled. In the 1920s, old forms of discipline and examinations had been abolished. But this created unruly, poorly educated pupils. In 1932, a rigid programme of education was introduced. Discipline was strict and examinations were brought back.

What was taught in schools was laid down by the government. History was particularly important, and as the 1950s went on it was rewritten to suit Stalin. As the old Communists were purged, their pictures were pasted out of the textbooks. Trotsky disappeared early on, and later generations of Soviet children knew little about him. Stalin had a new book, A Short History of the USSR, written for school students, which gave him a more important role in the Revolution.

Outside school, children joined political youth groups, which trained them in Socialism. Children aged eight to ten joined the Octobrists, and those aged ten to sixteen joined the Pioneers. Young people aged nineteen to twenty-three joined the Komsomol. These groups were taught political ideas through activities such as sports, camping, model-making and so on.

The Church

Attacks on the Orthodox Church and religious ideas increased in the 1950s. The 'League of the Godless' smashed churches and burned religious pictures. Members of religious groups, such as the Baptists, were arrested in large numbers and sent to labour camps (see Source 1 on page 113). The Orthodox Church was hit harder as the purges continued, with most of its bishops being arrested. Trying to spread religious ideas was a passport to prison.

1. a) What is Osip Mandelstam's poem saying?
   b) Did he deserve to be put in a labour camp for it?
2. a) How were books censored (see Source 4)?
   b) What kind of books would not be ‘passed’?

ACTIVITY

Discuss the following questions in class:
1. Why do some governments today, and in the past, worry about the ideas of artists, poets and writers?
2. Why is education, especially the history children are taught, so important if you want to control a society?
The cult of personality

One of the features of totalitarian societies is the glorification of the leader as an almost god-like super-being. This is called the 'cult of the personality'. A huge propaganda machine pushed the cult of Stalin into every corner of the workplace, street and home. Huge parades in Red Square in Moscow, films, statues and paintings all proclaimed the good fortune of the Soviet people in having Stalin to guide and care for them.

1. Look at the images of Stalin in Sources 1–4. Describe how he is presented in each source. Refer to details in the source to explain your answer.

Source 1 The cover of Ogoniok magazine, December 1949, showing Stalin as a god-like figure in the sky

Source 2 A poem printed in Pravda in 1935

"O great Stalin, O leader of the peoples, Thou who broughtest man to birth... Thou who makest bloom the spring, Thou who makest vibrate the musical chords... Thou, splendour of my spring, O thou, Sun reflected by millions of hearts."

Source 3 A poster showing Stalin thanking Soviet youth

Source 4 A painting of Stalin with industrial workers
SOURCE 5  From an interview with Alexander
Avdeyenko, quoted in Stalin, A Time for Judgement, by
J. Lewis and P. Whitehead

"Looking back on my life, I now see that period
as one of sincere enthusiasm, of genuine happiness,
and yet, at the same time, of self-hypnosis...from
the personality cult of Stalin. It was impossible to
withstand...the pressure which was put on
people's reason, heart and soul. Day and night,
radio told us that Stalin was the greatest man on
earth - the greatest statesman, the father of the
nation, the genius of all time...Man wants to
believe in something great."

SOURCE 6  Pavel Litvinov, a schoolboy at the time,
quoted in Stalin, A Time for Judgement, by J. Lewis and
P. Whitehead

"Stalin was like a God for us. We just believed he
was an absolutely perfect individual, and he lived
somewhere in the Kremlin, a light always in his
window, and he was thinking about us, about each
of us. That was how we felt. For example,
somebody told me that Stalin was the best surgeon.
He could perform a brain operation better than
anyone else, and I believed it. I knew that he was
busy with other things, but if he wanted to do it he
would be better."

1. What effect did the propaganda have on young
   Russians (Sources 5 and 6)?
2. How does Source 5 account for the success of the
   propaganda?
3. What do you think is the purpose of creating the
   'cult of the personality'?

Changing history
Stalin had got rid of the old Communists, who knew
about the past. They were now 'enemies of the
people'. He could not admit that they had been
'Heroes of the Revolution'. So history was rewritten
and photographs were doctored so that these people
disappeared from Soviet history.

At the same time, Stalin wanted Russians to think
that he had been the most important person, after
Lenin, in planning and carrying out the Revolution.
He wanted to associate himself with Lenin, who was
treated like a god in Soviet society. Stalin encouraged
the 'cult of Lenin', and had paintings done to show
how close to Lenin he had been in the revolutionary
days.

4. Look at Source 7. Which of these two photos
   would Stalin not allow to be used in books?
   Explain why.

SOURCE 7  Two photographs of Lenin addressing a crowd. The photos were taken within seconds of each other.

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5. Compare the photographs in Sources 8 and 9. What has changed and why?
6. What does this tell you about the use of photographs as evidence in history?
7. Why would Stalin want the images of him in Sources 10 and 11 (he is to the right of Lenin) to be shown to the Russian people?
8. The process of changing history continued under later Soviet leaders. What has happened to Stalin in Source 12? Why?

ACTIVITY
Discuss the following questions in class:
1. Why are visual images so important in history and society?
2. What do they do that words cannot?

SOURCE 8 A photograph taken in April 1925

SOURCE 9 The same photograph, published in the Soviet Union fourteen years later

SOURCE 10 Stalin has been added to this 1922 photo of Lenin

SOURCE 11 A Socialist Realist painting of Lenin addressing workers, soldiers and sailors during the Revolution, painted by V. Serov in the 1940s

SOURCE 12 Painted by Serov in the 1950s, after Stalin's death
What was daily life like in the mid-1930s?

Life was not bad for everybody in the 1930s. For some there had been a marked improvement since Tsarist times and the early revolutionary period, even if some early ideas were abandoned. Many people believed in Stalin and went about their daily lives convinced they were building a better society. They shared many of Stalin's hopes and values.

The changing role of women

By the mid-1930s, some of the more liberal ideas—free love, easy abortion and divorce—of the early 1920s had been abandoned and the family was back in favour. The upheavals of the early 1930s and the very high divorce rate had created a vast army of homeless children, who lived on the streets, begged and robbed passers-by. The state now encouraged families to stay together through propaganda (see Source 5).

Source 1 A poster with the slogan: 'The wide development of a network of creches, kindergartens, canteens and laundries will ensure the participation of women in Socialist reconstruction'

Source 2 Women expressing milk at a factory. Their babies could be given the milk while the women worked

Source 3 Soviet pilots in the 1930s
SOURCE 4 Children at a state-run kindergarten in the 1930s

SOURCE 5 From Pravda (the Party newspaper), 28 May 1936

"When we talk of strengthening the Soviet family we mean the fight against [the wrong] attitudes towards marriage, women and children. 'Free love' and a disorderly sex life have nothing in common with Socialist principles or the normal behaviour of a Soviet citizen... The outstanding citizens of our country, the best of Soviet youth, are almost always devoted to their families."

They also paid child allowances for married couples. Divorce was made much harder, and restrictions were placed on abortion. Ceremonial marriages also made a comeback.

On the work front, the gains made by women in the Revolution were maintained. Women were now on a much more equal footing with men, able to gain jobs in all fields. There were demands for even more support to enable them to work, as in Source 1. Towards the end of the 1930s, however, more 'feminised' images replaced those of shock-worker women.

1. What do Sources 1-4 tell us about attitudes towards women in Soviet society?
2. What view of sex and the family was Pravda promoting in 1936 (Source 5)?
3. a) What views about abortion are given in Source 6?
b) Which view is closer to the ideas about abortion after the Revolution?

SOURCE 6 Extracts from letters to magazines at the time of the new abortion law, May 1936

From Tatanya Koval of the Lubchenko collective farm, Kiev district

"I can't find words to express my gratitude to the Party and the Government, to dear Comrade Stalin for his care of us women. I have seven children... My children are my joy. I've never had an abortion, and I'm not going to have any. I've borne children and shall go on bearing them."

From Nina Ershova, Moscow

"If a mother has seven children one has to be sent to school, another to the kindergarten, the third to a creche; and then in the evening Mother has to collect them all, give them supper, look after their clothes, put them to bed... Well, then, that mother won't have much time left for work - in fact, she won't have a single minute left to herself. This surely means that women will be unable to take part in public life, unable to work...

This new law undoubtedly has much in its favour, but it is still too early to talk of prohibiting abortion. We must first further develop our communal restaurants so that a woman shall not have to bother about dinners, suppers and breakfast... We must have more and better creches and kindergartens, more laundries..."
Living standards

Living standards rose in the mid-1930s, but there were still shortages of food and other goods. Some Russians were doing quite well in the new system, especially high-ranking Party officials, skilled factory workers and peasants, who could get high prices for food grown on their private plots. There were great differences in wages.

The government put a lot of resources into building a health service, although the demands on it were overwhelming. It was very rigid, with people being forced to do as they were told (including having operations that were not required), but there was a great increase in facilities and doctors.

Housing

Housing remained a problem, and there was little overall improvement: in Moscow, only six per cent of households had more than one room. However, there was some progress in the new industrial towns by the end of the decade.

SOURCE 10 A description of a Moscow apartment house by Freda Utley, from Last Illusion, 1949

“Badly built, with doors and windows of unseasoned wood which would not shut properly, unpapered and thinly whitewashed walls, these two rooms were home... By American and British standards, we were living in a squalid tenement house. But by Soviet Russian standards we were housed almost like Communist aristocrats. We not only had two rooms to live in, but we had the luxury of gas for cooking instead of a smelly oil stove. And best of all we had a bathroom with a lavatory, which we had to share with only one other family...”
Leisure
Another area in which life improved was leisure. Sport and fitness were encouraged to improve the general health of Soviet men and women. Every worker was entitled to take a holiday each year - holidays had been unknown for ordinary Russians before the Revolution. Trade unions and collective farms played a big role in providing clubs, sports facilities, film shows, festivals and general entertainments.

SOURCE 11 From John Scott's Behind the Urals, 1942

"Magnitogorsk had ten theatres with a total seating capacity of 9,000, all attached to various clubs... the activities of these clubs were varied and included dramatic circles, classes, sports circles, chess and checkers, art and literary groups... Ballroom dancing in 1935 became a popular phase of club activities... We went to the movies in the cinema palace, the so-called 'Magnit' which seated about 1,000. About 20,000 people attended the cinema per month."

SOURCE 12 Extracts from the summer programme of the Gorky Park of Culture and Rest in Moscow

Physical culture
Sports stadium, training ground for acrobatics, volleyball, basketball and tennis, table games, wrestling and boxing rings, weight-lifting. Swimming school open from 10.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m.

Children's section

Lenin Hills section
Bathing beach - open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunbathing... beach chairs, games and diversions. Gymnastics - doctor in attendance. Boats and canoes.

Theatres, etc.

SOURCE 15 A Leningrad café in 1937

1. In what ways had living standards improved in the Soviet Union?
2. a) What, according to Source 10, was the quality of housing like?
b) Why do you think that housing was still a problem?
5. a) Did everybody have the same quality of housing?
b) How did people get better living accommodation?
4. What types of leisure activities did Russians enjoy in the 1930s?
5. Do you think the lives of many ordinary people in Soviet Russia had improved since the Revolution?
a) You could draw up a chart to help you answer this question. Things you could compare are: work, the role of women, clothes, housing, health, education, leisure activities.
b) Write down your conclusions: in what ways had things got better and in what ways had they got worse?

ACTIVITY
It is 1937. You have come to the USSR on a visit from Britain as part of a trade union delegation, to look at life in the new Socialist society. You have to give a talk entitled 'Life in the Soviet Union today' when you return home. Write the notes which you will use to give the talk. Then choose three pictures to illustrate your talk and write detailed captions for each one. Use Sources 1–15 and the other information in this section to help you.