

The Soviet Union under Stalin



Vladimir Lenin worked tirelessly to create his vision of a classless society in Russia. In honor of the small councils called “Soviets” that supported the Bolshevik Revolution, he renamed Russia the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) in 1922, (also referred to as the *Soviet Union*). Soon after, Lenin became sick and died in 1924. During the end of his life, a Bolshevik named Joseph Stalin was slowly working his way up in the new Communist government. Stalin would continue many of Lenin’s Communist policies, but he would rule the USSR as a harsh dictator.

Communism- *What is it?*

Modern European society had been based around the idea of gaining personal wealth. The harder someone works, and the better they do business, the more wealth they can acquire. This economic system is called **Capitalism**. Followers of Communism believed that capitalism was unfair because it created a very small wealthy class, and a very large poor class.

In 1848, philosophers named Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published their ideas on politics and government in their book called the Communist Manifesto. The main goal of The Communist Manifesto was to focus on the unfairness between the rich and poor. Marx believed that since feudal times, the majority of people have been repressed by the upper classes. The Communist manifesto hoped to create a model society that would destroy the upper class - freeing the lower class. Their vision was a society controlled by the people where everyone was equal. Some of their ideas include:

- No more Private Property.
- Government Control of Education.
- Children cannot inherit their parent’s wealth.
- Government owns and controls all Communication and Transportation.

The Communist Manifesto formed the basis of what is now called **Communism**. Communism is an economic system where all means of production are controlled by the government.

The Economies of Communism and Capitalism

In the United States as well as many Western countries, economies are made up of companies that are privately owned (*Example- Microsoft was owned by Bill Gates*). This kind of economy is known as a **Market Economy** or **capitalism**.

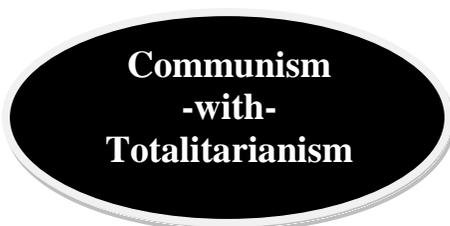
The Soviet Union took a very different approach. Soviet economic policies involved total control by the government. The government owns all companies and factories and makes all economic decisions. Private ownership is illegal in this kind of economy. This is known as a **command economy**, and was the economic approach taken by the Soviet Union. A Command Economy includes:

- A Central Bank.
- Government Ownership of Factories and Agriculture.
- Government Control of Labor.
- Corporate Farms and Regional Planning.

The Politics of a Communist and Capitalist Society

Communist and Capitalist societies usually go “hand in hand” with certain political systems.

Communist societies are usually run by “**totalitarian**” leaders. A totalitarian leader has “total” control over its society and people. A capitalist society usually has a “**democracy**”. A democracy is when the people can have a say in government by electing their leaders.



List the benefits (<i>good features</i>) of each system	
Communism	Capitalism

Should Stalin be considered a hero of the USSR?

DIRECTIONS: Examine documents A, B, C, and D. After you read each document, decide if it shows Stalin as a hero of the USSR. Provide specific evidence to support your answer.

A) Five Year Plans

As part of the command economy approach, Stalin attempted to greatly increase the Soviet production of natural resources such as oil, coal, iron, and electricity in order to strengthen the Soviet Union. This was known as the **Five Year Plan** which he started in 1928. To produce the amounts of goods that Stalin wanted, the Russian people faced great shortages of food, housing, and other necessary goods. The results however, were dramatic:

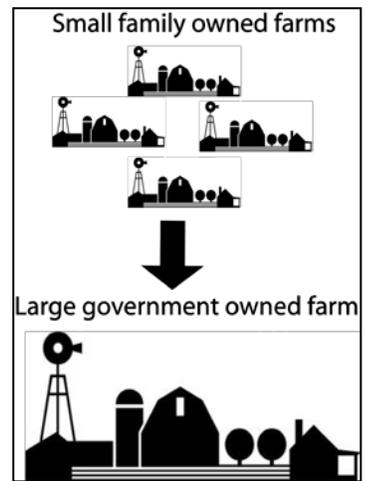
The Five Year Plans			
	1927	1932	1937
Coal - millions of tons	35.4	64.3	128.0
Oil - millions of tons	11.7	21.4	28.5
Pig-iron - millions of tons	3.3	6.2	14.5
Steel - millions of tons	4.0	5.9	17.7
Electricity - thousand million kilowatt hrs.	5.0	17.0	36.2
Wollen cloth - millions of meters	97.0	93.3	108.3

Does this show Stalin as a hero of the USSR? **yes no** (circle one)

Our evidence: _____

B) Collectivization and the Great Famine

As part of the Five Year Plan, privately owned **farms** were **collectivized**—combined into larger government controlled farms. These farms were supposed to produce much more food than smaller, independently run farms. At first, many farmers resisted collectivization by killing their animals and refusing to farm the land. These reactions led to low harvests in the following years. Between the years of 1930- 1935, the grain that was produced was taken by the Soviet government to pay for the 5-year plans. Peasants who resisted were shot or deported. Today, we know that 4.5 to 7 million people in the Ukraine area starved to death because of Stalin’s collectivization policies.



Does this show Stalin as a hero of the USSR? **yes no** (circle one)

Our evidence: _____

C) Life Under Stalin’s Rule

“The Soviet government assigned every factory a quota. That was a certain amount it had to produce each month...The government kept increasing the quotas, but the pay did not (increase)... Wages in the USSR were fixed by the government...The average Soviet worker had a low standard of living. Meals consisted largely of bread, cereal, potatoes, and vegetables in season. Meat was rare. Clothing was very expensive. Housing was the worst problem of all. Several families often shared a single apartment with an entire family in each room.

Does this show Stalin as a hero of the USSR? **yes no** (circle one)

Our evidence: _____

D)The Great Purge (1937-1938) (a purge means to “get rid of”)

“Death solves all problems - no man, no problem.”- Joseph Stalin

**For this document, watch the video clip and then discuss it with your partner before answering.*

Does this show Stalin as a hero of the USSR? **yes no** (circle one)

Our evidence: _____