

STALIN'S FIRST FIVE-YEAR PLAN

How the Man of Steel Broke the People, 1928-1933

Stalin launched the First Five-Year Plan in 1928, part of a series of 5-year plans to modernize the Soviet Union. "We are 50 to 100 years behind advanced countries. We must cover the distance in 10 years," he said. "To slacken the tempo means to fall behind. And the backward are always beaten." Under the ambitious First Five-Year Plan, Stalin wanted to industrialize the nation as quickly as possible and to collectivize agriculture. He also wanted to stamp out any traces of capitalism, and to make the Soviet Union a fully socialist society.

The Communist Party adopted Stalin's First Five-Year Plan in 1928. The state took ownership and control of all industries and services. Thousands of new factories and plants were built throughout the Soviet Union. All resources were poured into making it a great industrial nation. In these five years, the Party hoped for huge increases in industrial development (250%) and heavy industry (330%).

Industrialization occurred rapidly. The state took ownership of all factories, set quotas for production, and saw enormous gains. From 1928 to 1937, Russian national income rose 395%, coal output rose 361%, steel production rose 442%, and electricity output rose



Factories in Zaporozhia. Production increased greatly during the First Five-Year Plan and the subsequent five-year plans.



700%. The proletariat (working class) backed socialism.

One of the major successes of the First Five Year Plan in the Ukraine was the building of a dam across the Dnieper River near Zaporozhia. The Dneprostroi Dam, when finished in 1932, was the largest power plant in Europe at that time. The

Mennonite colonies benefited from its power.

While the cities were industrializing at lightning speed, agriculture was being collectivized in the countryside. Small individual farms were combined into giant state-run collective farms. Tractors replaced workers who had previously tilled the land by hand and freed them up to work in industrial centers. All private property went into the collective: barns. Collectivization was supposed to improve productivity, meaning that there would be enough grain to feed the urban work force and surplus for export, which would fund industrialization... theoretically, at least.

However, collectivization met with severe peasant resistance. Skilled farmers had to turn over their hard-earned estates to Communist ideologues, people who had no knowledge about farming. Production fell. Quotas for farm production were set in Moscow; they were hopeful numbers, completely unrealistic at the outset, and then continually increased. The peasants were penalized for not fulfilling these state quotas.

The peasants staged many uprisings in 1930, but they were crushed. Undaunted, committed unswervingly to his course, Stalin determined to fulfill his goals regardless of the human cost. Using a series of harsh policies, Stalin subdued the peasantry. Here were his methods:

Dekulakization. The Soviet government liquidated most of the peasant leadership, an entire class of people called "kulaks." In all, about five million people, were arrested, deported or executed.

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Known as “Man of Steel,” Stalin’s determination to advance socialism caused the death of 11 million of his own citizens during the years of the First Five-Year Plan. His policies tolerated no dissent, and were enforced in a series of deportations, purges, executions, and famines.

R: Stalin drumming with human bones.



End of Religion. Stalin believed that religion was an obstacle to progress. He ordered the destruction of thousands of churches, cemeteries, and religious symbols. Ministers were arrested and deported as well.

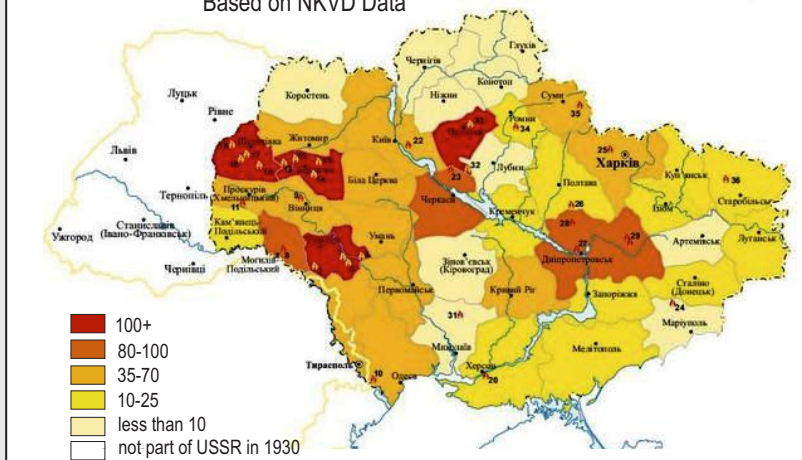
Growth of the Gulag. Since 1918, the Communist Party had used concentration camps as a place to send its enemies. Under Stalin, the Gulag expanded enormously. The prison system not only took care of dissenters, but provided a rich source of slave labor to exploit the Soviet Union’s natural resources. Stalin used these political prisoners to build roads, bridges, and canals in the worst conditions. People were frozen, starved, or worked to death in terrible conditions.

Requisitioning and Famine. Sending brigades to take food directly from homes and refusing to pay collective farm workers led to a famine in 1932-33 that was caused by government policy, not by any food shortage. Even as Soviet citizens harvested a bumper crop in newly collectivized fields, 5-7 million of them starved to death.

Stalin’s First Five-Year Plan was declared officially complete at the end of 1933, and the Party named its 1934 Congress the “Congress of Victors.” Its victory occurred, however, at the expense of 11 million Soviet citizens, who the government killed in vast numbers in Gulag camps and Ukrainian villages.

Peasant Uprisings Feb. 20-Apr. 2, 1930

Based on NKVD Data



Peasants reading “Pravda,” the Party newspaper that told how wonderfully collectivization was progressing. Meanwhile, Pravda failed to mention the hundreds of peasant uprisings protesting collectivization (see map, left). Using repression, the Party pushed on, and claimed victory in 1934.