Collectivisation

What was collectivisation? Why was it carried out in the Soviet Union? What were the results?

All Communists believed that socialism could only come about in a modern industrialised country. They believed the Soviet Union must build factories and heavy industry, particularly if they wanted to prevent attack by hostile capitalist states.

However, the Soviet Union in the 1920s was still basically a poor country of peasants. They had been given their land in 1917, because the Communists had not been strong enough to prevent it even if they had wanted. Most Communists disliked private land ownership. They believed that, although many peasants were becoming better off under NEP, they were only interested in themselves. Also the Communist Party had relatively few members in the countryside.

If the Communists of the 1920s were going to industrialise the USSR they would have to work out where the money and workers were going to come from and decide what role the peasants would play in this.

During the struggle for the leadership in the 1920s, two main views were put forward. The Left believed that the peasants should be heavily taxed, and the money used to pay for industrialisation. The Right, led by Bukharin, believed that the kulaks or richer peasants should be encouraged to grow even more. By becoming richer, they would be able to buy more goods and so industry would grow anyway.

B From a speech by Stalin to party members in 1929:

We must break down the resistance of the kulaks and deprive this class of its existence. We must eliminate the kulaks as a class. We must smash the kulaks ... we must strike at the kulaks so hard as to prevent them rising to their feet again. We must annihilate them as a social class.

The ‘Urals–Siberian method’
The situation became serious in 1927. Peasants were unwilling to sell extra grain, because they wanted higher prices. The government was afraid that there would not be enough food for workers
in the towns. In 1928 there was rationing of bread. The government was forced to requisition grain from the peasants as in the days of War Communism. Because of the area in which this happened, this seizure of grain was called the ‘Urals–Siberian method’.

The collectivisation programme

Stalin strongly supported this. He was determined that never again should peasants be in a position to threaten Russia’s food supplies. Stalin and his followers decided that the answer was to get more control over the peasants and to make farming more efficient. This would also mean that fewer farmers would be needed, and more people would be available to work in industry.

By 1929 the programme of collectivisation had begun. The idea was that in selected areas, the peasants would be persuaded to join their small farms together into large farms called collectives (the Russian word for a collective farm was a kolkhoz).

These farms were very large, often covering the area of entire villages. They were either run directly by the government, or more often by the peasants themselves, but managed by a Communist Party member. Members of the collective had one duty above all others: they had to provide a fixed amount of food to the government, which then sold it in the towns. The collective farm workers could share out what was left after all debts were paid.

Many of the poorer peasants were happy to join collective farms. After all, they had little or nothing to lose. The problem came with kulaks. The Party encouraged poorer peasants to attack kulaks and seize their property and belongings. Stalin claimed that while the kulaks existed, there would be no equality in the USSR.

Resistance

The kulaks objected to collectivisation. They attacked Communist Party officials. They burned their crops and killed their animals rather than hand them over to the Communists. Food production fell. Millions of kulaks were imprisoned, sent to remote Siberia, shot, or sent to work in new factories.

The process of collectivisation took several years to complete. In 1930 there was so much opposition that Stalin called a temporary halt to the programme. He blamed over-keen officials, who had become ‘dizzy with success’. But the drive to collectivise soon began again.

The results of collectivisation

By the mid 1930s most of the USSR’s farmland was collectivised. What were the results?
Life on the collective farm was not all bad. Some collectives even had schools and hospitals for the workers. They were allowed small plots of private land on which they could grow a few crops or keep animals for their own use. Not surprisingly, peasants usually put more effort into these plots than the collective farm. MTS or Motor Tractor Stations were also built: collective farms could hire tractors from them instead of using the old primitive farming methods.

**D Some peasants’ reactions to collectivisation (quoted in *From Lenin to Stalin* by Victor Serge, 1937).**

Eighty peasants in this hole-in-the-ground came to the public prosecutor to complain that they had been forced by violence to join the kolkhoz. Presidents of kolkhozes have been assassinated nearby ... About 15 per cent of the farmers are firmly for the kolkhozes. These are the young Communists ... The other peasants go into the kolkhozes because they cannot do otherwise, but they make sure to enter with empty hands ... A nearby soviet has just announced the expulsion of 20 poor peasants, some of whom are sincerely devoted to the regime. All are condemned as ‘agents of the kulaks’. Their crime is that they have not always kept silent, that they have said their condition has grown worse.

**E Russian peasants greet the first tractor in their village.**

**F A typical collective farm.**

---

By 1936
25 million small peasant farms had been replaced by 250 000 collective farms.

By 1937 about four per cent of the kolkhoz had electricity; even less had running water.

The kolkhoz must make fixed deliveries of crops to the state no matter what the problems may be.

'The First Commandment' — Stalin

The MTS tractors could plough an average kolkhoz in five days but most did not have tractors.

Agricultural experts sent by the Communist Party to advise villagers
However, the results of collectivisation were disastrous. Over ten million peasants were deported or killed. It took years to recover from the drop in food production. Famine broke out in some areas like the Ukraine, and millions died of starvation. Farming remained inefficient. Soviet farmers produced much less per head than farmers in America or western Europe.

**Success at a price**

In some ways collectivisation was a success for Stalin and the Communists. They had finally got control of the countryside. The peasants never again openly rebelled against Communist rule. Stalin had also made sure that he had a secure supply of food for the towns, and workers for the factories. This was very important to Stalin. His main aim was to build up industry and to do this, he had to guarantee the food supply for millions of townspeople.

![A Soviet cartoon showing a peasant working on his private plot rather than on the collective farm.](image)

There was still not enough food, and some had to be bought from abroad. But, by the middle of the 1930s, there was just about enough for everybody. For Stalin that was all that mattered. He was a brutal ruler, and he was prepared to cause millions of deaths and great unhappiness to achieve what he wanted.

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1. a) *Why did many Communists want to change the system of farming in the 1920s?*
   b) *How did the Right and the Left believe that the peasants should be treated?*

2. *What was the 'Urals–Siberian method'?*

3. *Look at source B. How would you describe Stalin's attitude towards the kulaks?*

4. *What was collectivisation, and why did Stalin favour it?*

5. *Who resisted collectivisation, and what forms did this resistance take?*

6. a) *In what ways are sources A, G and H propaganda?*
   b) *Why did the government feel the need to issue such propaganda?*
   c) *From what you have read in this chapter, how accurate was the view of collectivisation given in sources A and G?*

7. *In what ways do sources C and D show the results of collectivisation?*

8. *Use the evidence in this chapter to decide (i) whether collectivisation was necessary and (ii) whether or not it was a complete disaster for the Soviet Union.*
What was the purpose of the Five-year Plans? How was industrialisation carried out? How successful was it? What effects did it have on the Soviet Union?

During the 1920s Stalin had wanted the USSR to follow a policy of 'socialism in one country'. He meant that the Soviet Union should concentrate on building up its strength by developing much more industry. This would mean building new towns and modern factories, improving transport and communications, and carrying out great industrial projects. The New Economic Policy (NEP) was to be abandoned, and the government would direct the whole programme.

The USSR became the first planned economy in the modern world. This meant that the state, or government, planned exactly what should be made, and where and when it should be made.

The First Five-year Plan

Although some projects were begun in 1927, the First Five-year Plan was officially started in 1928. GOSPLAN, the state planning authority, set targets for every industry, and allocated resources. The targets set were very ambitious, expecting production to be doubled within five years in many industries.

These targets had to be adjusted. Even so, Stalin declared in 1932 that the Plan had been successfully completed ahead of schedule. Soviet statistics cannot always be trusted to be completely accurate. Nevertheless the results certainly seemed impressive, as source E shows.
<table>
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<tr>
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<th>1927–28</th>
<th>1932</th>
<th>1937</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Coal (million tonnes)</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil (million tonnes)</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>28.5</td>
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<td>Pig-iron (million tonnes)</td>
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<td>6.2</td>
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<td>Steel (million tonnes)</td>
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<td>5.9</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity (thousand million kilowatt hours)</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. Results of the First and Second Five-year Plans.

Enormous efforts had to be made to meet the targets. Thousands of peasants helped to build dams and factories, and to work in them. Millions more people went to work in the growing towns.

Young Communist volunteers worked on some projects. Millions of prisoners in the notorious gulags (labour camps) were also put to work. The face of the USSR changed. Typical were the new industrial towns such as Magnitogorsk, built in difficult and remote areas like Siberia.

A poster from 1931 says that if more nurseries, laundries and canteens are provided, women will be able to contribute to industrial growth.

F. Sverdlovsk in the Ural Mountains, in 1928 (top) and then in 1933 (bottom).
Working for Mother Russia

Ordinary Soviet citizens found work very hard. Factory discipline was extremely harsh. Those who stayed away from work could be executed. Workers needed permission to change jobs. Factory managers and workers who failed to meet targets were liable to disappear into labour camps. People were under pressure and often frightened.

The government also used propaganda to urge workers to work harder and persuade them that life was getting better, despite all the sacrifices. Some workers were given medals and higher pay. Good workers were given medals and higher pay. Some workers came from abroad. It was claimed that Alexei Stakhanov had set a world record for the amount of coal mined in one shift, 102 tonnes, which was 14 times the usual amount. Workers who achieved great feats were called ‘Stakhanovites’.

Life was also hard because most of the effort of the Five-year Plan went into producing what we call capital or producers’ goods. These are things like coal, cement, steel and machine tools. These products are necessary to build up industry, although they are not things that ordinary people need. There was a shortage of consumer goods – things like clothes, radios, furniture – that people wanted to buy in the shops. But workers were told that they had to make sacrifices for a better future.

What was produced was often of a poor quality. Factory managers were only interested in meeting targets for the amount produced, not whether the products were of good quality or not. The quality also suffered because much of the new workforce was unskilled or poorly trained.

Unlike western Europe, there was no unemployment in the USSR in the 1930s. There was a shortage of workers. Millions of Russian women became full-time factory workers for the first time.
The Second and Third
Five-year Plans

The Second Five-year Plan ran from 1933 to 1938. It showed more concern with improving efficiency and quality. It also gave more attention to consumer goods. The Third Plan, begun in 1938, gave more attention to producing weapons, because of the growing threat of war. It was brought to a halt by the German invasion of Russia in 1941.

The Soviet people achieved so much in such a short time because all the country’s wealth belongs to the working people who create this wealth ... The Stakhanovite movement, as it was called, spread all over the country. Thousands of workers and collective farmers, among them engine-driver Maxim Krivonos, the Vinogradov sisters Maria and Yevdokia who were both weavers, the collective-farm girl Maria Demchenko and the girl tractor-driver Pasha Angelina, topped quotas over and over. This was because they worked for themselves, for their own state. Miracles were created by the free work of the Soviet people.

A new Russia

In the space of little over ten years from 1928, the USSR was changed from a largely agricultural country to one whose power was based on industry. The USSR avoided the Great Depression which badly affected western countries. There was no unemployment, rather a shortage of workers. But the workforce worked hard, and there was little to buy. Later Soviet politicians said that these sacrifices were worth it, because they made it possible for the USSR to survive the terrible coming war with Germany. For Stalin, if the aim was right, any means to achieve it were acceptable.

1. What did Stalin mean by ‘socialism in one country’?
2. How did the Five-year Plans organise industry?
3. Look at source C. What reasons did Stalin give for wanting rapid industrialisation?
4. Look at sources D, E and F. Do these sources suggest that the Five-year Plans were successful? Explain your answer.
5. How were workers’ lives affected by the industrialisation programme?
6. Stalin claimed that the aim of modernising the USSR and protecting it against invasion justified the use of harsh discipline and temporary suffering. Do you agree?
What were the purges and the Terror? Why did Stalin carry out the Terror? What impact did it have in the USSR?

Violence and fear had often been part of Soviet life since 1917. After the revolution there had been the killings and the atrocities of the Civil War. After the Civil War members of other political parties were imprisoned or killed by the Communists as Russia became a one-party state. The Soviet secret police, far more efficient than the Tsarist secret police, were constantly rounding up real or suspected opponents of the Soviet system. However, things had become more relaxed for ordinary people as conditions improved under NEP in the 1920s.

The early purges

After 1921 there was a ban on factions within the Communist Party. A faction was a group of Communist Party members who disagreed with the official policy. Arguments continued of course, but Party members who stepped out of line were often ‘purged’. This meant that they were sacked from the Party, and lost the privileges which went with membership.

After Stalin came to power at the end of the 1920s, the word ‘purge’ took on a new and more frightening meaning. It could now mean not just dismissal from the Party, but imprisonment or death, as Stalin was determined to enforce his own way of doing things.

As early as 1928 15 mining engineers at Shakty were executed after being put on trial, accused of sabotaging or wrecking the First Five-year Plan.

The start of the Terror

What became known as Stalin’s Terror really began in 1934. That year, at a Congress of leading Party members, Sergei Kirov showed himself to be very popular. He was head of the Communist Party organisation in Leningrad (the city formerly called Petrograd). It was rumoured that many in the Party wanted Kirov to replace Stalin as leader. Later that year Kirov was assassinated at his headquarters. His assassin was killed, but there was a strong suspicion that Stalin had arranged Kirov’s murder in order to get rid of a younger rival.
Bukharin was accused of having plotted to kill Lenin and Stalin in 1918, and the judge told him at his trial that he was a ‘damnable cross of a fox and a swine’.

Show trials and mass murder

Whatever the truth, Kirov’s murder was used by Stalin as an excuse to begin more extreme purges. Many people, both within and outside the party and including both well-known and ordinary people, were arrested. Famous Communists were often persuaded or tortured into confessing to all sorts of ‘crimes’ such as sabotage, working as agents for Trotsky or spying for Germany. Then they confessed to their ‘crimes’ in public show trials before being found guilty and shot. The biggest show trials were held in 1936 and 1938, and were well publicised. The victims included Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin, who had all been close to Lenin and rivals of Stalin in the 1920s. Two heads of the secret police, Yagoda and Yezhov, were also purged.


The Zinoviev trial was an act of murder performed by Stalin. From the start the rigging of the trial was closely planned by Stalin in person. He had many ways of making his victims talk. Held in isolation for months or even years on end, deprived of sleep, beaten night and day, the defendants were usually more than half broken already when confronted with the signed confessions of associates previously brainwashed. Stalin would shout that Zinoviev and Kamenev were to be ‘given the works’ until they came crawling on their bellies with confessions in their teeth. Zinoviev was influenced by threats to his family, being also subjected to the physical ordeal of a cell deliberately overheated in the height of summer ... The dictator did, however, give his personal word that neither Zinoviev nor Kamenev would be executed if they would stand trial on his terms. It was on the basis of this lying assurance that the two chief victims finally went to their doom.

The Muslims, millions of whom lived in the Central Asian regions of the USSR, also suffered during the purges. During the 1920s they had been tolerated more than the Russian Christians. But, after Stalin’s rise to power, they were persecuted: many mosques were closed and Muslim women were encouraged to remove their veils. Muslim practices, such as the pilgrimage to Mecca, were forbidden. In some areas there was widespread revolt against the government.

Stalin continued to urge stronger measures. He declared: ‘We must not lull the Party but sharpen its vigilance; we must not lull it to sleep but keep it ready for action; not disarm it but arm it.’
In 1937 thousands of Red Army officers were shot for treason. The victims included the army leader and Civil War hero Marshal Tukhachevsky. The Soviet army was seriously weakened at a critical time just before the war with Germany.

Ordinary victims of the purges disappeared much more quietly. They were killed or sent to labour camps. In 1935 one million people in Moscow and Leningrad alone were executed. Millions of others followed them.

**Over one third of Communist Party members were arrested between 1934 and 1939, and probably two thirds of these were executed.**

**F** Extracts from Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipelago* (1986). Solzhenitsyn himself spent many years in a Stalinist labour camp.

(i) A district party conference was under way in Moscow Province ... A tribute to Comrade Stalin was called for. The small hall echoed with stormy applause rising to an ovation: for three minutes, four minutes, five minutes ... The older people were panting from exhaustion. The applause went on six, seven, eight minutes. The NKVD were watching to see who quit first.

The director of the local paper factory aware of all the falsity [lack of honesty] sat down after eleven minutes. And, oh what a miracle took place, where had all the enthusiasm gone? To a man everyone else stopped dead and sat down.

That same night the paper factory director was arrested. His interrogator told him, ‘Don’t ever be the first to stop applauding.’

(ii) A woman was going home late one night ... she passed some people working to free a truck that had got stuck. It turned out to be full of corpses - hands and legs stuck out from beneath the canvas. They wrote down her name and the next day she was arrested. The interrogator asked her what she had seen. She told him truthfully. She was sentenced to ten years for anti-Soviet agitation.

**G** The secret police.

The secret police was Stalin’s instrument for carrying out the Terror. After the revolution Lenin had created the Cheka. It was replaced by the GPU and the OGPU (United States Political Administration) in 1924. Later this became the NKVD (the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs) – the force which carried out the purges of the 1930s.
Some of the victims may have been guilty of crimes. But most were innocent. The purges created a sense of hysteria. People were encouraged to accuse others in order to demonstrate their own loyalty to the Party. Children were even encouraged to inform on their parents if they seemed unenthusiastic about what Stalin was doing. Some people accused others in order to get their jobs. Even to know a foreign language could get you arrested as an ‘enemy spy’. If someone was arrested, their families and friends automatically became suspects also.

Stalin’s motives

Why did Stalin allow such terror? Some people think he was simply mad. But he was certainly suspicious of possible rivals. Perhaps he wanted Soviet citizens to feel insecure and therefore less likely to challenge him. The purges were also a convenient way of excusing failures and setbacks. For example, failures to achieve targets under the Five-year Plans could be blamed on sabotage rather than faults in the Plans.

Stalin signed many death warrants himself. Stalin appeared to be in complete control and, when he felt more secure in 1939, he relaxed the terror.

H Jokes told in the USSR in the 1930s.

(i) Stalin wanted to get a true picture of what people thought of him, so he went in disguise into a cinema. After the main film, a newsreel was shown with Stalin in every scene. All the audience stood up and loudly applauded. Stalin stayed modestly seated. After a few moments the man next to Stalin nudged him and said quietly, ‘Most people feel the same way as you, comrade. But it would be safer if you stood up.’

(ii) A flock of sheep was stopped by frontier guards at the Russo-Finnish border. ‘Why do you want to leave Russia?’ the guards asked.

‘It’s the NKVD [the Soviet secret police],’ replied the terrified sheep. ‘Beria [head of the NKVD] has ordered them to arrest all elephants.’

‘But you’re not elephants!’ the guards exclaimed.

‘Yes,’ said the sheep. ‘But try telling that to the NKVD!’

The cult of personality

The Terror went hand-in-hand with a cult of personality. Soviet propaganda presented Stalin as a god-like figure. His name and picture were everywhere. Streets and cities were named after him, poems and plays were written about him. History books were re-written to make Stalin seem the most important man in Russia after Lenin, even at the time of the revolution.

1. What did it mean to be ‘purged’ in the USSR in (i) the 1920s and (ii) the 1930s?
2. Why was Kirov’s murder in 1934 important?
3. a) What was a show trial?
   b) Why were some important Communists given show trials?
4. Why was source C altered by the Soviet government?
5. The historian in source D shows Stalin as a ruthless murderer but source I shows him to be popular with the people. How can you explain this difference in interpretation?
6. What message is the cartoonist in source E trying to get across?
7. What can you learn from sources G and H about life and attitudes during the purges? Are they reliable evidence? Can jokes be useful evidence?
8. What was Stalin’s cult of personality? Why do you think he encouraged it?
9. Use all the evidence in this chapter to decide why Stalin carried out the purges. Did he achieve what he wanted?
What was life like for citizens of the USSR in the 1930s? Had their lives improved since the revolution?

Earlier chapters have shown how life for most people in the Soviet Union in the 1930s was difficult and insecure. How did ordinary people cope?

The Communist Party

Almost everybody would have known someone who suffered in the purges, even if they escaped themselves. But some people actually did quite well. They would have belonged to the Communist Party. It was necessary to have the support of the Party to do well in any job. The Party had a list of over one million approved members, considered reliable. The list was called the Nomenklatura.

When an important job became vacant, somebody from this list would be appointed. Although many Party members were purged during the 1930s, there was always somebody to take their place.

In order to join the Party, you had to be approved by at least two other existing members. Then you had to serve a trial period before becoming a full member. Being a Party member carried responsibilities. For example, you had to give up spare time to attend meetings and explain Party policy to your workmates.

Some Party members became full-time officials. Those who reached a certain level got special privileges, such as being able to buy things in shops which were not open to the general population.

The soviets were elected by the whole population in regular elections. But there was usually no choice between candidates, who were often Communist Party members. The soviets had very limited powers. Real power lay with the Party. Party members were not elected, but were chosen to attend committees and congresses. Important decisions were made by the Central Committee and the Politburo, but at the height of Stalin's power, not even the Politburo met regularly. Important decisions were made by Stalin and his appointed advisers.

Women in the USSR

The lives of some groups of people had been considerably altered since the revolution. One such group was women. Traditionally in Russia they had always been second-class citizens, with few rights. The Communist Party declared that they were equal to men. In parts of the Soviet Union, particularly the Muslim republics in Asia, women received more personal freedom than ever before.
However, life remained very hard for most Soviet women. Some took on jobs like engineering which had once only been done by men. But there was a shortage of workers, and most women were expected to work full time as well as looking after homes. Less than 20 per cent of the Communist Party was made up of women. Very few women rose to high positions in the Party or government.

Women were also encouraged to have more children. Because there was a shortage of workers, those who had large families received special rewards. In the 1920s the government had made divorce easy. A law in 1936 changed this. Abortion was also made illegal, and more benefits were given to families.

**Children**

Children gained from the revolution in some ways. Before 1917 a large number never attended school. After the revolution many schools were built. But schools were very disciplined, especially after an education law in 1935. Teachers were expected to teach only the Communist view, and there was no free discussion. School uniforms were brought back and pupils had to learn by heart rules such as that in source C. Many children joined Communist Party youth organisations.

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*Courtesy of the author*

It is the duty of each school child to acquire knowledge persistently so as to become an educated and cultured citizen and to be of the greatest possible service to his country.

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**Religion**

Religion had always been important in Russia. But all organised religions suffered in the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s. As well as churches being closed, religious worship was condemned as taking people’s attention away from what was important: life in the here and now. Over five million members of the League of Militant Atheists spread anti-religious propaganda and tried to prevent people attending those churches that survived.

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**Censorship**

All books, newspapers, the radio and films were censored. Only the official Communist Party viewpoint was allowed. The Party preached that it was service to the state, not freedom of the individual, that was all important. Since it was claimed that the Party ran things for the benefit of everybody, anyone who was suspected of acting ‘individually’, or who criticised the state or Party, was thought to be committing treason.

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**Russians and non-Russians**

Non-Russians in other republics of the USSR had particularly difficult lives. Stalin distrusted national groups which might be disloyal to his regime. He tried to make people see themselves as ‘Soviet citizens’ rather than Russians, Ukrainians and so on. Non-Russian languages and traditions were often discouraged. But it was mostly Russians who had the top positions in the Party and the government.

Some people certainly did well out of Stalin’s changes in the economy, the Party and life generally. There were new jobs to be had, and some people were able to make good from very ordinary backgrounds. All citizens were certainly told that their lives were better than ever before. But there were also many shortages, and living conditions in both the overcrowded towns and the collectivised countryside were hard for most people.

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1. Why was membership of the Communist Party important in Stalin’s USSR?

2. Look again at the evidence in this chapter and Chapters 16, 17 and 18. For each of the following groups, decide whether their lives had improved or not during the 1930s:
   - Party members
   - women
   - children
   - farmworkers
   - factory workers
   - members of churches
   - non-Russian citizens of the USSR.

   It is important to remember that many people would have belonged to more than one group.
How were the arts and propaganda used in the Soviet Union to put across the Communist point of view?

Communists believed that most things, including art and literature, had reflected the interests of the ruling class before the revolution. Therefore they assumed that new forms of art would develop after 1917. Many artists, writers and musicians did try out new ideas after the revolution. But much of the new art and films were used as propaganda to get across a political message. Propaganda ships and trains were sent across the USSR to spread new ‘proletarian culture’.

**Socialist realism**

All art had to have a political purpose. Even before Lenin’s death, the freedom of artists, writers and musicians to experiment was restricted. But this became far more severe under Stalin. Famous composers like Prokoviev were told to write music that could be easily understood by ordinary people.

Stalin favoured ‘socialist realism’. This meant that writers and artists were expected to show happy and heroic workers, working for the victory of Communism. The bad side of life was never shown.

The sources in this chapter all show examples of propaganda.

**A** A worker and a woman collective farmer — an example of socialist realist sculpture from 1937.

**B** Lenin on the Tribune, 1930.

**C** An ode to Stalin on his sixtieth birthday by the composer Prokoviev (1939).

Never have our fertile fields such a harvest shown,  
Never have our villages such contentment known.  
Never life has been so fair, spirits been so high,  
Never to the present day grew so green the rye.  
O'er the earth the rising sun sheds a warmer light,  
Since it looked on Stalin's face it has grown more bright.  
I am singing to my baby sleeping in my arms,  
Grow like flowers in the meadow free from all alarm.  
On your lips the name of Stalin will protect from harm.  
You will learn the source of sunshine bathing all our land.  
You will copy Stalin's portrait with your tiny hand.
J V Stalin is the genius, the leader and teacher of the Party, the greatest strategist of Socialist revolution, helmsman of the Soviet State and captain of armies ... His work is extraordinary for its variety; his energy truly amazing ... everyone is familiar with the invincible force of Stalin's logic, the crystal clarity of his mind, his iron will, his devotion to the Party, his ardent faith in the people, and love for the people. Everybody is familiar with his modesty, his simplicity of manner, his consideration for people, and his merciless severity towards enemies of the people ... Stalin is the worthy continuer of the cause of Lenin, or, as it is said in the Party: Stalin is the Lenin of today.

E 'All of Moscow is building the Metro' – a poster from 1934. Kaganovich, the head of the Moscow Party organisation, is pictured at the top. The Moscow underground system was one of the great building achievements of the 1930s.

F A poster from 1935 showing Stalin and Voroshilov, head of the armed forces. It reads 'Long Live the Red Workers and Peasants' Army, Loyal Guardians of the Soviet Frontiers.'

1 What was 'socialist realism'?
2 Look at sources A to F. They are all examples of propaganda from the Stalin period. Decide in each case:
   (i) what messages are being put across, and
   (ii) how the messages are put across.
3 What was the purpose of this propaganda?
   How effective do you think it would have been? Remember that most people only saw or heard what the government wanted them to.