Industrialization USSR

Thesis: Industrialization was used successfully to strengthen Stalin’s position within the party by removing political and social opposition and achieving necessary economic progress which was, however, unbalanced. In spite of chaos in planning and application of the policy, it had an enormous human cost.

What is Industrialization?

“Industrialization is the overall change in conditions accompanying a society’s movement population and resources from farm production to manufacturing production and other associated services.” *(dictionary.com)*

Reasons to Industrialization

- **Fear of Foreign Invasion**
- **Economic Reasons**
- **Political Reasons**

Fear of Foreign Invasion:

- USSR was producing less coal and steel than France in the 1920s. If USSR was ever to face an attack from the capitalist powers it would need a much stronger industrial base.
- Stalin 1931: “We are 50 to 100 years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in 10 years or else we will be crushed.”
- Industrialization was seen as the Soviet’s victory in an impending war.
- Played a great part in ‘Socialism in One Country’ *(Steve Phillips)*

Economic Reasons

- Under the NEP industrial production remained disappointing to many in the Communist Party. WWI and civil war caused a disruption that damaged Russia’s industrial infrastructure.
- Since the Communists took over in 1917, the international trading market was greatly reduced.
- State control under the Five Year Plan would enable to government to direct the economy and ensure the adequate production and distribution of essential materials including food needed to support industrial and urban growth. USSR had to rely on its own resources. *(Josh Brooman)*

Political Reasons

- To all Communist Party members industrialization was seen as a necessary development in order to ensure the survival of the revolution.
- Industrialization would create many more members of the proletariat, the backbone of the revolution. Industrialization was therefore seen as a form of social engineering. *(Del Taylor)*
The Five Year Plan would get rid of the detested Nepmen (private business owners and traders).

The Nepmen were seen as the class enemies who presented the capitalist society

Aims

USSR had to modernize at such a fast rate that it could make up the 50 years gap in 10 years. The country had been dependent on agriculture, yet had to change to become dependent on industry.

- USSR needed to invest in materials like coal, iron, steel and power to defend itself properly.
- Efficiency needed to be increased
- Getting rid of the NEP
- Removing Opposition

Five Year Plans

- First Five Year Plan (1928-1932)
- Second Five Year Plan (1932-1937)
- Third Five Year Plan (1938-1941)

This plan was used to reinforce the Industrial Revolution in the Soviet Union. Stalin applied this plan in order to catch up with the technologies of the European countries in ten years. Nevertheless, this plan decreased the living conditions of the workers:

“I have driven around several collective farms [kolkhozes] and consider it necessary to inform you about a few items. I was in various kolkhozes—not productive and relatively unproductive ones, but everywhere there was only one sight—that of a huge shortage of seed, famine, and extreme emaciation of livestock.” (Letter from Feigin to Sergo in April 1932)

First Five Year Plan

- The first Five Year Plan was aimed at expanding and modernising existing industries, establishing news ones, and relocating those in the west further to the east so that they would be more protected if Russia were to be attacked by the West.
- There was to be a 250% increase in total industrial output and a 350% increase in heavy industries, which were unrealistic aims.
- Stalin felt that developing industries was extremely important since these factories could then change their products into war machinery, thus increase the security.
- Rapid industrialization had to become more efficient since a large supply of food had to be produced for the workforce. This lead to Collectivisation.
- The First Five Year Plan was aimed at raising agricultural output by 130%.  

(Gustav Klutsis)
Second Five Year Plan

- It focused primarily on heavy industries making USSR, Germany’s closest competitor in steel production.
- Railways were given priority in order to increase the communication network.
- It was uniformly successful, barring a dip in the prescribed production levels of coal and oil. The living conditions worsened during time period.

(Michael Lynch)

Third Five Year Plan (1938-1941)

- It focused on the USSR’ role in World War II.
- Due to the problems in assembling troops in World War I, special effort was made to ensure that Russia's transportation systems were efficient.
- This plan allowed the USSR to hold their ground during the Nazi invasion and be self-sufficient after the war.

(Michael Lynch)

Implementation

- Industrialization was to be directed by Gosplan (state planning authority).
- Targets were set for those industries which the government saw as having priority in terms of modernization and resources were allowed accordingly.
- Used the ideas of Preobrazhensky (economist)
- Consumer industries were neglected, heavy industry was concentrated on.
- The built up of an industrial infrastructure was used as a justification
- In theory, the workers had been consulted about the planning of their factory’s work, but in practice this was always done by Gosplan
- Worker’s meetings called to approve the plans were packed with Communist Party members, who made speeches in favor of the target they had been set and voted to support it.
- The workers’ book system of the War Communism period was brought back
- No worker could be employed without it and he had to hand it over to each new employer, who would inspect it for endorsements showing the ‘crimes’ of lateness, absenteeism and bad workmanship
- Hours of work were increased, but many workers’ wages went down because most of them were paid on piecerates fixed according to the production of the most skilled and strongest
- There was no relief from misery and hardship outside the factory
- Food and goods of every kind were rationed and scarcer than they had been before the Five Year Plans began.
- There was a terrible shortage of housing, particularly in the new towns where workers lived in tents and barracks.

(John Robottom)

‘You well-fed devils have sucked the juices out of us enough. For twelve years you have drivelled and agitated and stuffed our heads . . . the factory owners did not force us to work in four shifts and there was enough of everything in the shops. Now we work in four shifts . . . If you go to a shop now and want to buy something the shops are empty.’

(An OGPU agent reported angry criticism of the Party at a factory meeting within the first Five Year Plan)
Results

Economic Results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(million)</th>
<th>1927 Actual</th>
<th>1932 Actual</th>
<th>1932 Goal</th>
<th>1937 Actual</th>
<th>1937 Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wool cloth</td>
<td>97.0</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>270.0</td>
<td>108.3</td>
<td>226.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>128.0</td>
<td>152.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>46.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity (100m kwh)</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig Iron</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steel</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Emphasis on heavy industry
- Decline in textile production
- Neglect of consumer industries
- Chaotic implementation and increased corruption
- Building of large industrial centres (Steve Phillips)

Political Results:

- Increases strength in position in Stalin as the leader of the party
- Control of the Communist Party strengthened through the organisation of industrial workers
- Isolated opposition from communist party
  - Non-supporting party members were excluded from the party
- Not only did it bring a ‘Revolution from above’ but also a ‘Revolution from below’, meaning that the enemies of the communist state were exiled (such as Kulaks, Nepmen and ‘bourgeois experts’). (Steve Phillips)

Social Results:

- Huge growth in the industrial proletariat which grew by 38% in between 1929-1933.
- Rapid extension of the state’s power over the economy.
- Due to the highly unrealistic targets, factory managers began using a wide range of enterprising methods including bribery which lead to corruption.
- Decline in working conditions
- Low levels pay
- Worker discontent at poor conditions
- Introduction of passport system to prevent workers leaving jobs
- Use of slave labour to overcome labour shortages
- Huge growth in the number of industrial workers (John Robottom)
**How was Stalin’s dictatorship maintained?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How it did</th>
<th>How it didn’t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengthens Stalin’s position by isolating political opposition and class enemies.</td>
<td>Criticism within the party was created due to the harsh measures and highly unrealistic goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence and strictness created fear in order that no one dared to oppose him (i.e. passport system)</td>
<td>Living conditions decreased thus the discontent among the workers increased, decreasing Stalin’s popularity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totalitarian system was implemented since he now controlled over every citizen's aspect in comparison to what previously was under control of the NEP</td>
<td>Failure to develop the consumer industry, misallocated resources and costs of human lives (famine, bad working conditions, kulaks exportations,... )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Bibliography**