The Right adopted the notion of “Socialism in one Country”. They believed Russia was a unique country with a great people and a mass of resources. Therefore they could survive alone. This was appealing to many people because it was a very patriotic view.

**The Future of the Revolution**

The **Left** said the Revolution had become a government of bureaucrats who had no link with the ordinary people. This view was advanced by Trotsky and was popular with the Left – however, it alienated the mass of people who had jobs working within the bureaucracy.

The **Right** on the other hand said that there was a danger of Trotsky using the Red Army to seize power. They pointed out that a similar thing had happened in the French Revolution when Napoleon Bonaparte used the army to become Emperor of France. This accusation of Bonapartism made Trotsky a figure of suspicion.

**Stalin’s personal strengths:**

- Stalin had a number of things on his side that made it likely he would emerge as leader.
- His reputation for being a “grey blur” – he was so boring and apparently on the margin that some did not take him seriously until it was too late.
- The Bolshevik’s view of revolutionary history made Stalin appear safe. The Bolsheviks believed that strong figures were likely to threaten the Revolution in the way Napoleon had done in France in the 19th.
- Stalin was a shrewd politician who managed to outmanoeuvre his opponents. He managed to ensure that he moved in the right direction at the right time.
- Stalin was an opportunist who would change his opinions when needed. This allowed him to adapt and survive the struggle for power.
- He was also ruthless in exploiting situations and his opponents’ weaknesses.
- Stalin knew when to stay out of arguments. He let his rivals do the arguing while he stood aside and kept his reputation clean.
- Stalin kept his ideas simple. He appealed to the mass of the party by keeping his ideas simple and understandable. This set him apart from the more intellectual members of the Politburo.

**Trotsky’s personal Weaknesses:**

- Conversely, Trotsky had a number of weaknesses that made it unlikely he would emerge as leader.
- His strengths, particularly his role as Head of the Red Army, made him appear as a threat to the other contenders. They feared him and were keen to crush him early in the struggle. The accusations of Bonapartism and dictatorship were damaging to Trotsky.
- Trotsky advocated world revolution – but this was a complete failure. No other country went along the communist route and this made Trotsky appear to be a failure.
- Likewise, his insistence that the future of Communist Russia could not be guaranteed without a world revolution made him appear to be unpatriotic.
- Trotsky would not simplify his ideas – he felt it was beneath him to explain things simply.
- He also lacked political skill – he would not compromise or take part in arguments or intrigues. He failed to make alliances and was left isolated.
- Trotsky attacked the Party bureaucracy and the peasants. These were two large groups that he needed to keep on side.
The First Five Year Plan

Target Setting

Under the Five Year Plans a central government agency, known as Gosplan, set targets. 500,000 bureaucrats set these targets for every mine, mill, factory and workshop in Russia. These targets were set without any real understanding and most Gosplan employees knew nothing about the practicalities of working in industry. Gosplan was under pressure to achieve great things and they set high targets. Stalin then increased targets to totally unrealistic levels.

What were the Plan’s aims?

Basically, a complete focus on the basics of an industrial economy. The development of coal, iron and steel. Heavy industry was all that mattered and textiles and food production were ignored. Consumer goods were not a consideration during the plan as all resources were needed to produce the raw materials of industrial growth.

Did the economy improve?

The Russian economy grew by an astounding 14 per year. Individual industries grew at an enormous rate. However, the targets set by Gosplan were not met.

Local managers were often so afraid of being sacked, arrested and sent to a labour camp that they lied about their output. They also hoarded resources so they would not run out and miss a day’s production. The quality of what was made was often so poor that it was either unusable or completely unreliable. The whole system became chaotic.

Electricity and engineering did grow dramatically as Russia developed a system of industrial centres specialising in various aspects of the economy. For example, Stalingrad and Kharkov became the centre of tractor production in Russia.

However, consumer goods, food, the chemical industry and textiles all suffered and failed to grow. The standard of living for ordinary Russians was not fantastic and even the better of workers lagged behind their counterparts in the west.

The transport system was inadequate and could not cope with the demands of the rapid expansion in industry. The trains could not move the products around and raw materials and finished goods sat idle waiting for transport.

The wrong things were made – finished steel sat around as too much was produced. The wrong spare parts and machines were produced as factories simply made enough of something to meet a target. Spare parts were generally hard to come by.

Overall, the first Five Year Plan lacked a real “plan”. Russia was not a planned economy, it was too chaotic. Rather it was a command economy – the centre gave out commands and the various parts of industry tried to meet these orders in a rather random way.
Stalin believed that collectivisation was needed to increase efficiency and introduce mechanisation. All of this would lead to a rise in output. Higher output would lead to lower prices and a better standard of living for urban workers. It would also create a surplus to sell abroad and so facilitate wider economic development. In short, the countryside was overpopulated and the factories needed labour – collectivisation would correct this.

Mechanisation of agriculture would lead to a fall in demand for labour in the countryside. The surplus agricultural workers could then be moved to the towns to work in the factories and so help boost industrial production.

**Ideological Factors**

In 1917 the Bolsheviks had seized all land and distributed it amongst the peasants. However, the Bolsheviks did not intend to let the peasants actually own the land, only use it for the good of everyone. This would fit with the communist ideology. However, the peasants, especially the richer ones (known as kulaks), had started to run their farms like capitalists. The NEP had encouraged them to do this. Stalin and the Left of the Party had become concerned that the peasants had never really embraced the Revolution. They operated their farms like traditional capitalist – they grew food to feed themselves and to make a profit; but they had no interest in helping the wider society. The peasants had withheld grain under War Communism and did the same in the years 1927-29. After 1927, in order to further push up prices and so to make higher profits, the kulaks refused to hand over what grain they had. This “Grain Strike” and general lack of support for the Revolution worried the communist. They felt that the journey to communism would be much slower, and maybe even endangered, if the peasants were not brought on board. For Stalin, collectivisation was a way of breaking this capitalist mentality and allowing the Revolution to move on.

**Political Factors**

Many ordinary Party members (especially those on the left) were keen to see an end to the kulaks. They wanted the Revolution to be taken to the countryside and they were putting pressure on the leadership to act.

Collectivisation was popular with the Left of the Party and Stalin knew it would boost his popularity. Collectivisation would also make Russia self-sufficient in terms of food and so avoid having to depend on foreign grain imports. This would also be popular as it would make Russia appear stronger and save money which could be used to improve living conditions. If Stalin could deliver this he would be much safer in his new leadership role.

Stalin wanted to collectivise to help his battle against Bukharin and the Right. Bukharin was keen to promote the NEP and Stalin needed to make sure it was discredited. Stalin was able to claim, with some justification, that collectivisation was the answer to a failing NEP.

Stalin also knew that he had to solve the problem of food shortages in the cities. Bread rationing was causing grumbles and Stalin was worried. The urban workers were keen to see action against the peasants and were calling for the government to speed up change in the countryside.
2. Stalin on the Fringes:

A) The Soviet system caused the Purges:

- Stalin delegated his power to the wider party system. Internal security was delegated to NKVD who took things too far.
- Below this many minor local officials drove the purges on.
- Collectivising agencies were particularly keen to carry out their work and resorted to terror.
- Political rivalries were also important—party officials and local politicians saw the terror as a way of getting rid of opponents.

B) Terror was natural in Russia:

- The Tsarist system had used terror—the secret police, trial without arrest, executions, harsh prisons etc. The new regime after 1917 carried this on.
- Lenin had formed the Cheka and from 1921 banned all opposition within the party. There was precedent for purging the party.

C) The Purges were driven on by the people:

- Genuine mistakes were made, but the educated middle-class engineers were so mistrusted by the ordinary workers and they were not given the benefit of the doubt. The whole Communist ideology said that the workers should not trust the educated middle classes. Stalin may not have intended this to happen. The climate of mistrust took on a life of its own.
- The Stakhanovite Movement whipped up fervour among the young. When their superiors were unable to provide the goods, the young zealots were keen to point the finger and have them purged.
- The people had become followers of the system. They have a genuine idea of enemies of the state and they wanted to stop them. They keenly sought out the "criminals".
- People betrayed rivals for housing and jobs—betraying a superior would clear the way for your own promotion.
- Recent evidence from social historians making use of sources that have become available since the collapse of the Soviet Union, has focused on the pressures exerted on Stalin and the leadership from rank and file party members. Party members were concerned about the continuing threat from enemies at home and abroad, and pushed for policies that would strengthen socialism in the USSR. Thus, Stalin was merely following the wishes of rank and file party members in bringing about the rapid industrialisation of the country.
- There is also evidence of the purges at local level resulting from conflict between local party members and regional authorities. Stalin may have directed the purges at the top but their scale at local level was determined by local pressures over which Stalin found it difficult to exercise control. Local studies have shown the situation on the ground, away from Moscow, to be far more chaotic than the traditional view of a dictatorship has indicated.

D) Yezhov and the NKVD created the momentum:

- In 1936 Yezhov became the head of the NKVD. He soon became known as the "Bloody Dwarf". In the first six months in office he killed 3000 of his own officers who were suspected of crimes against the state.
- He fabricated evidence and set targets for arrests. If officers failed to find enough suspects, they in turn became suspects. This led to more arrests.
- Stalin had ordered the avoidance of witchunts, but the NKVD ignored this. Stalin later blamed Yezhov for the excesses of the purges and had him executed in 1940. Stalin reigned in the NKVD when he realized it was getting out of hand and damaging the system itself.