Radical parties (Ch.4)

Tradition of radicalism:
- Forerunner of radical parties within Russia was Populist movement of 1860s and 1870s.
- Following emancipation of serfs in 1861, Populists looked to Russia’s peasants as political basis of future society.
- Populists disliked autocratic rule of Tsars and wanted to replace it with system of govt based on independent peasant communes, a form of very local democracy.
- Believed that in new peasant society strong central govt would fade away.
- This was a unique Russian way to change society and was influenced greatly by a Russian exile, Alexander Herzen, who disliked development of Western society that he witnessed in Paris and London.
- Spread his ideas through a periodical called The Bell, which was printed abroad and smuggled into Russia.
- Leading thinkers in Populism were educated middle class.
- Peter Lavrov and Nikolai Chaikovsky were uni students who wanted their fellow undergraduates to go out into Russian countryside to win support for their ideas among peasantry, but their attempts failed.
- People were not interested and many Populists were arrested and imprisoned.
- Populists adopted more extreme tactics.
- Formed “People’s Will”, which aimed to assassinate leading members of Tsarist state, and their most notable victim was Tsar himself (Alex II) in 1881.
- Populism eventually led to founding of two significant radical parties: Social Democrat Party in 1898 and Social Revolutionary Party in 1901.

Social Revolutionary (SR) Party:
- Like Populists, believed Russia’s future lay with peasantry.
- Led by Victor Chernov, member of educated middle class, who attempted to broaden appeal of his party by winning support from growing number of industrial workers.
- To him, Russia’s future lay with “the people” - a combination of workers and peasants – the discontented elements of Russian society.
- SR promised that all peasants would be given their own land, without compensating the previous owners.
- But party was never a strongly knit group, more a wide variety of factions.
- At one extreme were anarchists who disliked central political authority and were attracted by SR's plan for independent peasant communes.
- Party also contained a terrorist wing, similar to the “People’s Will”, which between 1901 and 1905 were responsible for a wave of political assassinations, including Plehve, the Minister of the Interior, in 1904 and the Tsar’s uncle, Grand duke Sergei, during the early months of the 1905 Revolution.
• Russian population growing rapidly – from 98 million in 1885 to 125 million by 1905.
• Size of peasant landholdings fell in an attempt to provide individual plots for each peasant family.
• Peasants able to survive so long as harvests were good.
• In 1892, 1898 and 1901, there were harvest failures, which caused widespread famine.
• Peasants reacted with violence.
• In jaqueries, peasants attacked govt officials and destroyed govt records on landholdings, especially those documents which referred to unpaid rents on land.
• By 1905 Russian countryside seemed on verge of Revolution.
• While Russian agriculture remained backward compared to rest of Europe, rest of Russian economy went through a period of spectacular growth in 15 years before 1905.
• Under leadership of Finance Minister, Witte, Russia began to industrialise rapidly.
• This led to rapid growth of population in towns and cities as peasants moved from land to find jobs in factories.
• By 1905 cities like St Petersburg and Moscow had slums full of former peasants who had become industrial workers.
• Their working and living conditions were very poor.
• It was this group who demonstrated outside Winter Palace on Bloody Sunday.
• Major cause of resentment against Tsar’s regime was social and economic in origin.
• Both in industry and in agriculture, Russian peasants and workers faced uncertainty of poverty and poor living conditions.
• As a result, demands for political change had a willing audience.

Political causes:
• Jan 1905 Russia was still an autocracy, with Tsar possessing complete political power.
• Unlike other major European states Russia did not have an elected national parliament, only elected bodies being the zemstva.
• By 1905 demand for political reform was growing, but reformers were a mixed group with little in common.
• Most moderate reformers were liberals – lawyers and other professionals – who wanted the Tsar to share political power with a parliament elected by more wealthy members of population.
• More extreme group was Social Revolutionaries.
• Founded in 1901 – wanted to give political power to peasants, and were willing to use violence to achieve their aims.
• In years 1901 to 1905, responsible for over two thousand assassinations which included Interior Minister Plehve, 1904, and Tsar’s uncle, Grand Duke Sergei, 1905.
• Wanted to modernise Russian agriculture to create a more prosperous class of peasants who he believed would be more loyal to tsarist regime.
• From 1906 until his assassination in 1911, Stolypin embarked on a reform programme which transformed Russian countryside.
• Law of 9 Nov 1906 freed peasants from control of the commune.
• To leave a commune, peasant no longer needed permission from majority of its members.
• 15 Nov the Peasant Land Bank was instructed to give loans to peasants who wanted to leave the commune, and as of New Year’s Day, 1907, redemption payments were abolished.
• June 1910 another reform dissolved all those communes where no redistribution of land had taken place since the Emancipation of the Serfs in 1861.
• Stolypin encouraged peasants to move to undeveloped agricultural areas of Siberia with incentive of cheap land financed by govt loans.
• All these reform laid foundations for an independent Russian peasantry.
• These reforms had a considerable impact:
  o 1905 about 20% of peasants had ownership over their own land, but by 1915 this figure had risen to 50%.
  o Agricultural production rose from 45.9 million tonnes in 1906 to 61.7 million tonnes in 1913.
  o Russian agriculture was clearly improving.
  o These developments were disrupted by First World War.
• Stolypin brought great changes to Russian countryside but little done to improve living and working conditions of Russia’s industrial workers.
• Shortly after his assassination, Russia was plagued by another round of industrial unrest, beginning with Lena goldfield massacre of 1912 in Siberia, where strikers were killed by police.
  From 1912 to 1914 Russia was affected by strikes and demonstrations which had many of characteristics of early days of 1905 Revolution.
• June 1914 a general strike was called in Moscow.
• Wave of industrial unrest only came to an abrupt end with outbreak of WW1 in August 1914.

The Dumas 1906-1914
• According to British historian, Orlando Figes, the period from 1906 to 1914 was a battle between parliamentary and royalists forces.
• After 1905 Revolution supporters of Tsar attempted to regain control.
• Others wanted to use changes made during Revolution to build a truly parliamentary system of govt.
• Oct Manifesto of 1905 offered support to both sides.
• Royalists saw it as a final change in political system, while those on the let of Russian politics saw it as beginning of more change.
• This conflict was played out in State Duma.

The First Duma:
• At start of war, Union of Zemstva provided medical facilities for army, and Congress of Representatives Industry and Trade helped coordinate war production.
• July 1915 Central War Industries committee was created under the Octobrist, Guchkov.
• This was created by businessmen to help stimulate production of weapons and ammunition – something Russia badly needed.
• These organisations were immensely successful and proved critical to Russian war effort.
• However, to many people, the success of these organisations only served to highlight the incompetence of the govt by comparison.
• Being an autocracy, Tsar’s govt didn’t know how to effectively incorporate these groups and political parties into its own war effort.
• June 1915 the zemstva and town dumas formed ZEMGOR, the All-Russian Union of Zemstva and cities to aid the care of war casualties.
• Govt failed to use the organisation officially, hence ZEMGOR became a centre of liberal discontent against shortcomings of Russian war effort.
• Frustrated at being unable to take an active part in Russian war effort, 236 out of 422 State Duma deputies formed themselves into the “Progressive Bloc”, comprising mainly Kadets, Octobrists and Progressivists.
• Progressive Bloc called for a “govt of public confidence” in which ministers would be responsible to the duma.
• Although not a direct challenge to Tsar and his authority, PB became the centre of political opposition.
• Nicholas did not deal with this opposition effectively and only made things worse.
• Would not listen to demands of PB and refused their requests for change.
• As a result most ministers who had campaigned for reform either resigned or were dismissed when Nicholas went to the Front in Sept 1915.
• With Tsarina Alexandra in charge, there was even less hope of change.
• Tsarina distrusted PB and thought that organisations like ZEMGOR and War Industries Committee were disloyal.
• From then on, only ultra-conservative tsarists were appointed to ministerial positions.
• Result was Tsar and govt became even less popular.

Role of Rasputin:
• Siberian Orthodox Monk and mystic who became involved with Royal Court in 1907.
• Tsarevich Alexei had been diagnosed with haemophilia after his birth in 1904 and Rasputin was initially called in because he was believed to have power of healing (and there is evidence that he did).
• By 1914 Rasputin was a regular and significant member of court and a personal confidant of Tsarina Alexandra.
• His main influence on Russia’s performance in WW1 came after Tsar went to Front in Sept 1915.
• His train was stopped at Pskov because anti-govt soldiers had gained control of the railway line.
• In a siding at Pskov, Tsar Nicholas II was visited by members of the State Duma and was asked to abdicate.
• Tsar agreed and also abdicated throne on behalf of the Tsarevich, his haemophiliac son Alexei, whom he feared would be too ill to serve as Tsar.
• Passed throne on to his own brother, Grand Duke Michael.
• 3 March Grand Duke Michael refused the offer and by this act Russia ceased to be a monarchy.
• Romanov dynasty, which had ruled Russia since 1613, had come to an abrupt end.
• On same day, Prince Lvov was announced prime minister in charge of Provisional Govt.
• In space of two weeks unplanned demonstrations had resulted in political revolution.

The Provisional Government (Ch. 9)
• March 1917 Russia ceased to be an empire – Tsar had abdicated and Russia became a republic.
• In place of Tsar’s govt there was now a Provisional Govt made up of members of the State Duma.
• As its name suggests this was an interim govt which was to rule Russia until a new constitution could be drawn up,
• Yet the new Prov Govt was warmly welcomed by Russia’s wartime allies, Britain and France, and WW1 now became a war between a German military dictatorship and a group of democratic countries.
• From the outset, however, the Prov Govt faced enormous problems.
• Had taken over the govt of Russia in middle of a world war and a major economic and political crisis.
• For almost eight months the Prov Govt grappled with these problems, but by Oct 1917 it had lost much of its authority within Russia and it faced the prospect of replacement by more radical elements in Russian politics.

Problems faced by Prov Gov in March 1917:

Political authority:
• Comprised members of State Duma who had formed a Provisional Committee to demand reform from the Tsar.
• Once Tsar abdicated, the Prov Govt became the replacement govt of Russia.
• Dominated by members of the Octobrist and Kadet parties which, in terms of popular following, were a minority group.
• Only representative of a radical party was a lawyer called Alexander Kerensky.
• Neither Menshevik or Bolshevik factions of the Social Democrats or the Socialist Revolutionaries were included.
• PG faced a rival for political power.
• During Feb Revolution, soviets of workers, soldiers and sailors had developed spontaneously and then quickly formed themselves into a united Petrograd Soviet.
• By June 1917 the Petrograd Soviet developed into an All-Russia Soviet.
• Like the PG, the All-Russia Soviet claimed the right to issue laws for Russia.
• One of its early decisions had a profound effect on the army.
• “Order Number 1” of the Petrograd Soviet had required all officers in the army to be elected by their own troops.
• This had the effect of undermining the authority of officers.
• Unpopular and/or enthusiastic officers were dismissed.
• By end of June Offensive the Russian Army on Eastern Front was not in a position to launch a successful offensive against the German and Austro-Hungarian armies.
• From Feb to Oct 1917 the PG shared political power with the Soviet, with major areas of policy having to be agreed by both.
• Some links between the two e.g. in May 1917 six members of the Soviet were included in the Provisional Govt including Skobelev (Minister of Labour).
• Politician with best links between the two bodies was Kerensky and from July 1917 he became prime minister and head of PG.
• Yet both bodies viewed each other with suspicion.
• PG remained a mainly liberal body.
• Soviet was dominated by left-wing groups, such as Socialist Revolutionaries and Social Democrats.
• Contrast became more pronounced as this went on with more radical groups gaining an even greater share of influence in Soviet.
• By Oct 1917 dominant Social Democrat group in Soviet was Bolsheviks.
• Order Number 1 also stated that military orders of PG would only be recognised if they were agreed by Soviet.
• This tipped balance of power away from PG as Soviet had effective control over army.

The war:
• Biggest problem facing Prov Govt.
• By March 1917 Russia had already lost territory in Poland and western Russia.
• Millions of Russian soldiers had been killed, wounded or taken prisoner.
• Morale within armed forces was low, and mutinies by soldiers and sailors had contributed to collapse of Tsarist govt in Feb Revolution.
• Russia’s wartime allies hoped with tsar gone, Russia’s commitment to fighting Ger would improve.
• Within weeks of Feb Revolution, PG was visited by Br and Fr politicians and bankers to ensure Russia’ continued participation in war.
• Many within PG also believed Russia had a duty to stay in war e.g. foreign minister Milyukov.
• For a time morale in the armed forces continued – soldiers and sailors now fighting for democracy rather than the tsarist autocracy.
• This was home of Revolutionary Baltic Fleet whose sailors participated in takeover of 25 Oct 1917 and in Civil War.
• However, this group had now become completely disillusioned with Lenin’s rule.
• By March 1921 a large proportion of Kronstadt sailors were conscripted Ukrainians rather than the men who had assisted Lenin into power in 1917.
• None of them happy with situation and demanded an end to special position of Communist Party, a relaxation of economic controls and restoration of freedom of speech.
• Their demands led directly to open rebellion against Lenin’s regime, and Trotsky was given task of putting it down.
• Using elite troops of Red Army, he attacked naval base, which was on Gulf of Finland, by crossing the frozen sea.
• Over three weeks, the rebellion was put down, with great ferocity, and those rebels who were not killed were sent to the gulags which were forced-labour camps.

The Tenth Party Congress, March 1921:
• Kronstadt Rebellion, together with all other problems mentioned above, meant that Tenth meeting of the Communist Party, held at end of March 1921, was always going to be a significant event.
• But Lenin astonished delegates by his announcements.
• Announced the end of War Communism.
• Said it had only been a temporary measure brought on by needs of Civil War, and it would not be replaced by a “New Economic Policy”.
• Under this new policy, requisitioning of foodstuffs was abandoned.
• Instead, peasants only had to give part of their produce to the govt, and rest could be sold on open market – and peasants had to pay tax.
• To increase availability of goods, private trading was allowed.
• This led to growth of new class – the “Nepmen” – private traders who were able to buy and sell goods.
• By 1922, only one year after introduction of NEP, nearly three-quarters of all trade was conducted by this group.
• To assist these economic changes, new currency was introduced in 1922, which helped bring an end to high level of inflation.
• Lenin announced his plan was a “tactical retreat” in order to preserve Communist power, and that he was giving Russian economy “breathing space”.
• Despite these changes, majority of workers still worked in state-run enterprises, and the govt kept under its control what it called “the commanding heights of the economy” – banking, heavy industry, transportation and foreign trade.

“Democratic centralism” and the ban on internal factions:
• NEP was a radical departure.
Now, an important issue with which Lenin had to deal was how to build a new state, made up of different nationalities.

The creation of the USSR, 1922:
- 29th Dec 1922 Lenin oversaw creation of a new state: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).
- The new state would comprise the Russian Soviet Federate Socialist republic (RSFSR), the Ukrainian Social Republic, the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Transcaucasian Soviet Socialist Republic.
- This new state still contained the aspiration of worldwide revolution.
- The USSR was the only state without a geographical limitation in its name.
- Until 1921 Lenin ruled the area called the RSFSR.
- By end of Civil War the communists had extended their rule over much of old Russian Empire.
- However, in Peace Treaties after WW1 Russia had lost control of Finland, Poland and Baltic States.
- Yet territory left under Communist control was still made up of many nationalities.
- Creation of USSR was Lenin’s solution of creating a multi-national Communist state, in which each republic would possess its own govt, as part of a federal structure.
- At federal level, the individual republics would send representatives to a Congress of Republics which, with the Congress of Soviets, constituted the national parliament of the USSR.

Lenin’s dictatorship:
- Even though the USSR was a federal state, political power was firmly in the hands of the Communist Party.
- From 1921 no other political parties were allowed in the USSR.
- Only Communists could stand for the Soviets so, in reality, the communist Party controlled the govt.
- The most senior committee of USSR was Council of People’s Commissars (Sovnarkom).
- However, main policy-making body of USSR was the Politburo, the senior committee of the Communist Party.
- By time of first serious illness, in 1922, Lenin ruled Russia in a way that would be envy of any Tsar.
- He possessed complete control over Communist Party and Govt.
- As founder of Bolshevik/Communist Party – and its major political thinker – he had enormous prestige.
- Communist propaganda effectively exploited Lenin as the father of the nation.
- From 1921 the doctrine of democratic centralism ensured that decisions made by Lenin and the Politburo would be followed by the entire Party.
- Lenin also controlled the media.
During 1920s it became common for Chairman of local Communist Party to be elected Chairman of local soviet.

Lenin occupied unique role in Party and state.

As Head of State he was most powerful figure in Soviet govt.

His real power was based on his personal influence within Communist Party.

Lenin’s initiative had created Communists, his theories inspired them and his uncompromising determination during 1917 had won them power.

He alone could therefore unite different factions and rival personalities that dominated Party Congress, Central Committee and Politburo.

When difficult decisions threatened to split Party and undermine govt, Lenin was able to reconcile opposing views and create unity.

Conclusion:

Period from 1900 to 1924 was a period of enormous upheaval for people of Russia.

Great deal changed in name only.

In 1900 Russia was controlled by a single man supported by a ruthless secret police force and a state army.

Russia’s people were denied civil rights, press was censored, and opposition to Tsar was severely punished.

During 1917 there was a brief period of liberation.

By start of Civil War, Russian govt had reverted to controlling its people through repression and terror.

Lenin justified this by asserting that Lenin’s vision must be protected from its enemies at all costs.

By time of Lenin’s death in 1924, although internal and external threats had been removed, there had been no relaxation of Communists’ tyranny.

Personalities and powerbases (Ch. 3)

Conclusion:

At time of Lenin’s death there was no obvious leader amongst senior figures in party.

Govt of Russia passed to an alliance of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin, known as Triumvirate.

Kamenev took Lenin’s official position as Chair of the Politburo.

Between 1923 and 1924 Zinoviev was recognised as unofficial head of Triumvirate.

Yet Triumvirate had only come into existence to oppose Trotsky, who seemed to many to be obvious choice as Lenin’s successor.

Real power of Triumvirate lay within Stalin, who was master of party bureaucracy.

However at this stage few in Party recognised his influence or considered him a real contender for power.

Bukharin should not be overlooked – in late 1920s Trotsky predicted he would shortly “hunt down Stalin as a Trotskyist” and take supreme power.
Ideological conflict (Ch. 3)

- Five contenders for power in USSR all agreed that important changes brought about by Revolution had to be preserved.
- Wanted to build a modern socialist society in which people worked for the common good and were free from exploitation.
- All believed history was moving towards a socialist and then a communist society.
- Passionate believers that one day revolution would spread to Europe and then to whole world.
- Recognised difficulties they faced creating this society in a war-ravaged peasant country, as they all agreed that socialism was only possible in an advanced industrial society.
- In spite of common ground, leaders and Party were split over how this vision would be achieved.
- Hence contenders used ideology as a tool in their struggle for power.
- Winner would have to convince Party that he alone had correct strategy to protect Revolution at home and build socialism in Russia.

Rival interpretations of Leninism:
- Lenin was visionary who had led Communists to power, and it was his ideas that shaped Communist govt until his death.
• In addition, the strike demonstrated the fact that the peasant could effectively hold the govt to ransom and slow down the process of industrialisation.
• Strike also demonstrated fact that peasant ideology was essentially capitalist and therefore in conflict with that of the govt.
• Finally, Stalin used the crisis as evidence of the NEP’s failure, and in so doing undermined Bukharin’s position on the right of the party.

The course of collectivisation
• Soviet govt moved towards mass collectivisation in a series of stages.
• In many cases a radical policy was adopted, then reversed, only to be reintroduced later when Stalin had no grand plan, but adopted extreme measures as a practical response to Russia’s economic difficulties.

Emergency measures:
• Stalin’s response to the Grain Procurement Crisis was to increase the power of the govt over the economy.
• First, in winter of 1928-1929, in response to a scarcity of bread and sugar, Stalin reintroduced rationing to the cities.
• Second, at end of 1928, the state resumed grain requisitioning.
• Under Article 107 of the Soviet Criminal Code, grain hoarding could be punished, and Stalin rewarded poorer peasants who informed on their richer neighbours by giving them the land that had belonged to the kulaks.
• These policies created huge resentment among the peasants, and Bukharin persuaded the Party to abandon the policy.
• However as Stalin’s power grew the policy was restarted.
• In spring of 1929 the govt started to requisition meat, and in middle of same year they revised Article 61 of the Criminal Code, giving the police powers to send kulaks to labour camps for up to two years for “failure to carry out general state instructions”.

The liquidation of the kulaks:
• Mass collectivisation began in Dec 1929 with Stalin’s instruction to “liquidate the kulaks as a class”.
• Stalin’s instruction was significant for two reasons.
• First “dekulakisation” marked the end of capitalism and independent farming in the countryside.
• Secondly, it vastly increased the speed of collectivisation.
• Initially, Stalin had proposed that only 30% of Russia’s farms would be collective by 1934.
• However, the call to liquidate the kulaks entailed immediate collectivisation of all farming in Russia.
• Stalin appealed to the poorest peasants to lead the way.
• The new collective farms would control all of the land in the local area, and the peasants would pool their resources.
• The First Five-Year Plan was introduced in response to the NEP’s failure to industrialise Russia.
• Even the NEP’s supporters acknowledged that the policy could only industrialise the country “at a snail’s pace”.
• For example, the amount of iron, steel and copper produced under the NEP never exceeded the amount produced in the last years of Tsarism.
• Equally, improvements in production of commodities such as crude oil and coal still left Russia significantly behind Germany, France and other western nations.
• Clearly, the NEP was not producing results fast enough - and a new approach was needed.

The nature of the First Five-Year Plan:
• The First Five-Year Plan was essentially a series of targets, drawn up by govt officials working for an organisation known as Gosplan – the State Planning Committee.
• Gosplan employed almost half a million bureaucrats, who set targets for every factory, workshop, mill and mine in Russia.
• The Plan was so extensive that when it was published it comprised three large volumes.
• All of the targets were set centrally, and in most cases, the officials who set them had only a sketchy knowledge of the factory they were dealing with.
• The Plan went through a series of drafts.
• The Plan was continually revised during its operation.
• The first version of the Plan was drawn up in 1927 and set ambitious targets for industries such as coal, iron and steel.
• In 1932, Stalin revised the targets upwards, producing two new versions of the Plan.
• Each revision made fulfilling the Plan more unrealistic.
• Consequently, as historian Alec Nove has argued, the Five-Year Plans do not deserve the title “Plans” at all.
• An economic plan, properly defined, carefully matches raw materials to production, and production to consumption.
• The first Five-year Plan, and its successors, made no attempt to do this.
• The govt demanded production with no clear idea of how it was to be achieved or what was to be done with the materials produced.
• In this sense it is more appropriate to refer to Stalin’s economy as a “command economy” – a system based on a series of central orders – rather than as a “planned” economy.

The priorities of the First Five-Year Plan

• The First Five-Year Plan explicitly favoured heavy industry – iron, coal, steel and oil – over consumer goods such as textiles and food.

Stalin’s priorities:
Stalin’s understanding of industry was as unsophisticated as his understanding of agriculture.

In his mind, industrialisation equated to the creation of heavy industry.

While he only visited farmland once in his entire career, he regularly visited iron foundries and steelworks.

He described coal, steel and oil as the “basic, decisive branches of industry”.

For Stalin, these industries were “decisive” because they were the first industries developed in the nineteenth-century industrial revolution.

Therefore, Stalin believed that if he was to take Russia down the path of industrialisation, he had to start with these heavy industries.

Additionally, Stalin prized physical and mental strength and had little time for the “bourgeois luxury” of an easy life.

This aspect of his character is clearly reflected in his adopted name – Stalin literally means “man of steel”.

His obsession with heavy industry was bound up with his desire to create a strong Russia, a country of iron and steel.

Foundational industries:

Focus on heavy industry was partly an attempt to lay foundation for future industrial development.

All industries needed raw materials such as coal, steel and iron in order to develop.

Mass production of raw materials was also foundational in a second sense.

The majority of Stalin’s industrial workforce were unskilled peasants who had only recently left the countryside following collectivisation.

Unskilled peasants were poorly suited to the production of complex consumer goods, but they were well matched to the production of large quantities of raw materials.

Stalin’s planners believed that, over time, working in heavy industry would allow peasants to gain the skills necessary to work in more sophisticated industries, such as textiles.

Thirdly, heavy industry would lay the foundation for rearmament in the case of war.

While Stalin was not intending to create a war economy during the First Five-Year Plan, he was undoubtedly concerned that Russia should be ready to defend itself in the event of invasion.

Successes of the First Five-Year Plan

In Dec 1932, Stalin announced that the First Five-Year Plan had been such a success that it was to finish a year early.

Certainly, there were some successes.

The production of raw materials had increased substantially, and in some ways, Russia was a more dynamic society.
• However, the focus on scale meant that much of what was produced was unusable.
• Ambitious targets were increased to the extent that they became fantasies which bore no relation to reality.
• What is more, record production was accompanied by a decline in living standards and further restrictions in personal freedom.
• Ultimately, Stalin’s “gigantomania” led to the sacrifice of a generation of Soviet workers in the pursuit of ever-growing, but meaningless, production.

Shifting priorities – the Second and Third Five-Year Plans (Ch.7)

• In 1935, Stalin attended the first All-Russian Conference of Stakhanovites.
• Surrounded by happy workers, he uttered the immortal words “life has become better, and happier too”.
• Stalin’s words were so inspiring that they soon became the basis of a popular song, entitled Song about Stalin.
• In the song, the people of Russia promise:
  "We will build happiness with unyielding will,
   The road has been shown us by the Leader.
   Having raised red banners high,
   We will follow Stalin to Communism.
• However, according to statistics issued by Gosplan, life was significantly worse under Stalin.
• In 1937, the diet of Russian workers was worse than it had been ten years previously, during the last years of the NEP.
• Labour discipline in Russia’s new factories was increasingly harsh.
• Nonetheless, as this song reflects, many workers felt that the hardships they endured under the Second and Third Five-Year Plans were essentially for building socialism in Russia, and defending the Revolution from capitalist enemies abroad.

The Second Five-Year Plan

• Introduced in 1933 and differed considerably from the First.
• Production targets were more realistic and there was a greater attempt to develop the economy in a more rounded way.
• Generally, there was some attempt to learn from the problems of the First Five-Year Plan and to develop the economy more effectively.

The priorities of the Second Five-Year Plan:
• Like the First, it evolved during its lifetime.
• Initially, Stalin promised the workers that their standard of living would improve.
• However, famine in the countryside meant that rationing continued until 1934.
• The Soviet authorities recognised the important contribution made by women to Russian industry and therefore increased the allocation of places in higher or technical education available to women, from 20 per cent in 1929 to 40 per cent in 1940.
• Nonetheless, the Soviet authorities continued to pay women less than their male counterparts.
• Throughout this period the income of women was only 60-65 per cent of the income of men doing the same job.
• Women were also important in the agricultural economy.
• By 1945, 80 per cent of collective farm workers were women.
• Women were also represented in the Stakhanovite movement in the countryside.
• The most celebrated rural Stakhanovites were both female.
• Pasha Angelina gained national fame as organiser of the first Women’s Tractor Brigade.
• In 1936 Maria Demchanko was also the subject of a great deal of publicity due to her pledge to harvest four times the average yield of sugar beet.
• In the same year, 62 per cent of delegates from cattle and dairly farms to the Stakhanovite Livestock Workers’ Conference were milkmaids.

Making babies:
• Trauma of industrialisation and collectivisation led to a dramatic decline in the birth rate in the early 1930s, and the Communist govt introduced policies to try to reverse this trend.
• First, rewards were introduced for mothers who had large families.
• Women who had more than six children qualified for state help.
• Mothers with seven children received 2,000 roubles a year for five years. This figure rose to 5,000 roubles for mothers with eleven children.
• Immediately after the law was passed the govt proclaimed it a success.
• The support within the first month of the new policy – 2,730 from families with eight children, 1,032 from families with ten children, and 160 from families with more than 10 children.
• In 1936, the Soviet authorities also discouraged abortion, making it all but illegal.
• The new law banned terminations except where they were necessary to save the life of a pregnant woman.
• Doctors who performed abortions on “undeserving” women could also be sentenced to two years imprisonment.
• Husbands who put pressure on their wives to terminate a pregnancy would face the same penalty.

Making homes:
• In addition to working on collective farms or in Soviet industry, women were expected to be responsible for household chores, such as cooking, cleaning and childcare.
• But at the end of 1934 Stalin launched a wave of political terror that claimed a million lives and resulted in twelve million people being sent to forced-labour camps.
• Stalin had a variety of reasons for pursuing such an extreme policy.
• First, events inside the Communist Party persuaded him that many of his so-called comrades could no longer be trusted.
• Secondly, Stalin’s paranoia was fed by his secretive police system, finally renamed the NKVD.
• Thirdly, the purges were bound up with his economic goals.
• Finally, the purges allowed Stalin to remove his political rivals.

The Congress of Victors:
• The “Congress of Victors” was intended to be a celebration of Stalin’s economic achievements.
• However, the Congress worried Stalin for several reasons.
• First, when the Congress voted to elect the Central Committee, Kirov rather than Stalin topped the poll.
• Kirov received 1,225 votes, compared to Stalin’s 927 votes.
• The result indicated that Kirov was more popular with the Communist Party than Stalin.
• Finally, a group of old Bolsheviks approached Kirov following the vote and tried to persuade him to stand as General Secretary.
• Although Kirov refused, Stalin quickly found out about the plan.
• For Stalin, these events were evidence that he had to purge the Party, because it could no longer be trusted.

Paranoia:
• Stalin’s paranoia led to the Great Terror, because he felt unable to trust many within the Communist Party and therefore acted to remove those he saw as potential threats.
• Although Stalin was the unchallenged ruler of Soviet Russia, he believed that he still had many enemies.
• Recent history made Stalin anxious.
• Trotsky, Zinoviev and Bukharin had all held leading positions in the Party, and then fallen from power.
• Stalin felt it was entirely possible he could suffer the same fate.
• He also distrusted his former rivals and did not believe that they were truly converted to his version of socialism.
• He was also fearful of old Communists, who had been members of the Party since before the Civil War.
• They knew the truth about his rise to power and Lenin’s view that he did not deserve to be General Secretary, let alone leader of Soviet Russia.
• Additionally, Stalin feared that the Red Army and the secret police had too much power.
• His lack of control of these bodies led him to fear assassination attempts.
The state charged them with Kirov's murder, as well as plotting to disrupt the Five-Year Plans and conspiring with foreign powers to overthrow the govt.

Whilst in prison, Zinoviev and Kamenev pleaded their innocence.

Zinoviev, in a letter to Stalin, stated "in no way, in no way, in no way, am I guilty before the Party, before the Central Committee, or before you personally... I beseech you to believe my honest word".

Nonetheless, Zinoviev and Kamenev were "persuaded" to confess.

It is believed that Stalin promised that Zinoviev and Kamenev would be pardoned following a full confession.

Stalin broke his promise, and neither of them was pardoned.

The trial judge, Andrei Vyshinsky, summed up: "Shoot the mad dogs, every last one of the,!

Following his sentence, Kamenev and Zinoviev were both shot.

Zinoviev begged for mercy until the very last moment, and had to be carried to his execution, weeping.

Forty-three other high-ranking Communists and former allies of Zinoviev and Kamenev also disappeared - without trial - around this time.

The Trial of the Seventeen (1937):

The second show trial dealt with Trotsky's former allies.

Once again, the charges included plotting with foreign powers, terrorism, sabotage and contact with Trotsky.

The Trial of the Seventeen was the first product of Nikolai Yezhov's "conveyor belt system" of investigation.

Essentially, torture, sleep deprivation and questioning were continued relentlessly until the defendants confessed.

Thirteen of the seventeen on trial were executed.

The remaining four were sent to gulags, Soviet prison camps, where the soon perished.

As in the first show trial, the evidence provided was concocted and forged by the NKVD, but this time the deceit was more obvious.

One of the defendants, for example, "confessed" to murdering Kirov at a time when he was already in prison.

The doctrine of "sharpening class struggle":

Many within the Communist Party, including senior figures in the Central Committee and the Politburo, were reluctant to try Zinoviev and Kamenev.

This reluctance turned into outright opposition when it was rumoured that Stalin's next victim would be Bukharin.

Stalin dealt with this opposition by persuading his opponents that Bukharin would not be a defendant at a show trial.

Indeed, on 10 September 1937, Pravda published an article stating that Vyshinsky had closed his investigation into Bukharin.

Nonetheless, Stalin was still planning Bukharin's trial and execution, and therefore in order to persuade the Party of the necessity of further terror, he proposed a bold new theory.
Stalin argued that as socialism advanced, the class struggle intensified. This theory provided the ideological justification for ever-increasing terror. The Communist Party officially adopted this doctrine of "sharpening class struggle" in the February-March Central Committee meeting of 1937. However, in spite of their loyalty, 70 per cent of those present at the meeting would be executed within three months.

The Trial of the Twenty-One (1938):
- The trial of Bukharin, Rykov and their "accomplices" was the last of the great Moscow show trials.
- Once again, the defendants were accused of attempting to overthrow socialism and of the murder of Kirov.
- However, in this final trial Stalin went further, and Bukharin was personally charged with attempting to assassinate Lenin.
- Prior to the trial, Bukharin tried to prove his loyalty to Stalin.
- But Bukharin's efforts were futile.
- In contrast to previous defendants, he was never tortured.
- Rather, Stalin threatened to execute his wife and his newborn baby.
- The trial was extraordinarily dramatic.
- Bukharin confessed to "political responsibility" for the crimes of which he was accused.
- However, he refused to actually admit guilt for any of the actual events that had happened.
- Additionally, Bukharin never confessed to trying to assassinate Lenin.
- Vyshinsky accused Bukharin and his co-defendants of being "a foul-smelling heap of human garbage", and he described Bukharin specifically as "a damnable cross of a fox and a swine".
- Bukharin was sentenced to death, but continued to hope for mercy.
- He wrote to Stalin volunteering to go to America where he "would smash Trotsky's face in".
- But his pleas fell on deaf ears and soon after his trial, Bukharin was shot.
- According to contemporary reports, "Bukharin and Rykov died with curses against Stalin on their lips. They died standing up - not grovelling on the cellar floor, weeping for mercy, like Zinoviev and Kamenev."
- With the execution of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin, Stalin had shown that there would be no mercy for those who opposed his power.
- The trials also eliminated the last surviving Communists who could claim to have been close to Lenin and therefore had an authority that was independent of Stalin.

Radicalisation of the NKVD:
Purges and mass murder under Yezhov:

- The show trials targeted the previous generation of the Communist Party.
- The purges of 1937 wiped out younger members of the Party, and dealt with "unreliable elements" within the army.
- In its final phase, the Great Terror targeted minority groups.
- Collectively, the period of the purges and mass murder of 1937-1938 were known as "Yezhovshchina".

Purges of the Party and the army:
- In the spring of 1937, Stalin argued that the conspiracy against the Soviet people was not restricted to the forty or so people involved in the show trials.
- Memos were circulated demanding that Party officials increase their efforts to root out spies and traitors.
- The NKVD set targets for the numbers of arrests.
- In the spirit of the Five-Year Plans, these targets were "over-fulfilled".
- Indeed, Yezhov argued that it was "better to overdo it than not to do enough".
- The effects on the Party were dramatic.
- Between 1934 and 1938, some 330,000 Party members were convicted of being enemies of the people.
- The Red Army did not escape Stalin's murderous attention.
- Stalin had never fully trusted the Red Army because the majority of its senior officers had been appointed by his arch-rival, Trotsky.
- For this reason Stalin feared that the military might try to seize power.
- In June 1937 eight Generals were tried.
- Following their brutal torture at the hands of the NKVD, the Generals confessed to treason.
- In the following eighteen months, 34,000 soldiers were purged from the army.
- Historian Donald Rayfield comments that "the death toll was comparable to that of a major war".

Mass murder:
- The show trials had provided "evidence" that there was an anti-Soviet conspiracy, involving large numbers of people across Russia.
- In response, the Politburo issued NKVD Order No. 00447, demanding the removal of "anti-Soviet elements" from Russian society.
- The NKVD produced a list of over 250,000 people who were believed to be involved in anti-Soviet activity.
- It is commonly assumed that the NKVD kept large numbers of people under surveillance and chose its victims.
- However, in reality, the Russia people themselves collaborated enthusiastically with the state-sponsored persecution.
Secondly, Russian art was revolutionary in the sense that it celebrated modern industrial technology.

Pictures were made up of abstract geometric shapes that recalled factory buildings.

In music, Alexander Mosolov wrote pieces such as “The Iron Foundry” and a ballet entitled “Steel”.

Finally, Russian art in the 1920s was revolutionary because it promoted the revolutionary govt.

Sergei Eisenstein, for example, made a trilogy of films celebrating the struggle of the workers against the Tsar.

Reconstructing the arts:

In 1930, Stalin expressed discontent with Soviet art.

In an article in The Bolshevik, he argued that revolutionary art, properly understood, should express govt opinion rather than individual creativity.

Moreover, according to Stalin, much Soviet art meant nothing to the average peasants or worker.

Abstract shapes, films with no plot, and music with no melody, were simply incomprehensible to the Soviet masses.

Reorganising Soviet literature:

Soviet literature was officially reorganised in April 1932, following the “Decree on the Reformation of Literary-Artistic Organisations”.

The Decree established the Union of Soviet Writers, which attempted to define the style appropriate for Russian authors.

In 1932, Ivan Kulik, President of the Ukrainian Writers' Union, argued that all Soviet writers who were genuinely behind the revolution should adopt a style that he described as “Socialist Realism”.

When the first All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers met in 1934, they officially adopted Socialist Realism as the new Soviet style.

They praised works such as Fyodor Gladkov’s Cement – a novel telling the story of a cement factory worker – as the epitome of the new style.

Socialist Realism:

At the first All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, the phrase “Socialist Realism” was used 228 times.

Nonetheless, it proved tricky to define.

Kulik described it as mixing art that aims to provide “a true reflection of reality” with art that “tries to participate in the building of socialism”.

Others believed that Socialist Realist art had to be full of Partynost (Party spirit), Narodnost (national spirit) and Ideinost (art that reflected the new thinking).

In practice, it was difficult to see what Socialist Realism would actually mean.

Nevertheless, following the Congress, Soviet artists set about enthusiastically “educating the workers in the spirit of communism”.

The emphasis on “art for the workers” led to a shift from art that was experimental to a more traditional approach.
• The foundations of Russia’s victory in the Second World War were laid in the 1930s.
• It was during these years that Russia industrialised and developed economic planning techniques.
• It was also during the 1930s that the American company Hormel Foods Corporation launched SPAM, a canned meat product.
• SPAM’s role in Russia’s victory is often overlooked.
• Nonetheless, Nikita said “we should not have been able to feed our army”.
• American assistance, particularly the provision of foodstuffs such as SPAM, was one of the essential ingredients which, along with the Soviet economy and sacrifices on the Home Front, ensured the Allied victory.

Russia’s war economy

• Soviet economic preparation for the Second World War was imperfect.
• However, when Russia entered the war, it was better prepared than either Britain or France in the same situation.
• This was largely a result of the economic progress made during the first two Five-Year Plans.
• The Soviet economy also compared favourably with the Nazi system, which was unable to produce armaments on the scale necessary to defeat Russia, and unable to capitalise on the resources won through conquest.

Gosplan at war:
• The Soviet economy used similar methods to fight the war as it had under the Five-Year Plans.
• There were, however, some innovations.
• For example, in the early years of war, Stalin initiated a new policy of relocating industry to the east in order to stop it falling into enemy hands.
• Indeed, by November 1941, 1,523 factories had been taken apart and reassembled in Russia’s eastern regions.
• Central planning was highly effective during the Second World War.
• By 1942, 56 per cent of Russia’s national income was devoted to the war.
• This was a much higher figure than in Britain, Germany or America.
• The production of armaments almost doubled between 1941 and 1944.
• This was a remarkable achievement, given the fact that, for this entire period, a great deal of Russian territory and industry was in German hands.

The Nazi war economy

• In theory, the Nazis had been preparing for war since 1933.
• In practice, however, the Nazi economy lacked direction.
• Senior Nazis had a series of competing priorities which hampered the effective preparation for war.
• For example, Hitler and the Nazi economic boss, Hermann Goering, insisted that living standards should be kept high in order to ensure popular support.
Gosplan estimated that, in total, Lend-Lease accounted for only 4 per cent of the industrial goods used during the Second World War.

Lend-Lease was of more significance in terms of food and transport.

The Red Army was dependent on American and Canadian wheat and tinned goods such as SPAM.

By 1943, approx. 17 per cent of the calorie intake of the Red Army was supplied by the Americans.

By the end of the war, it was estimated that the 12 million soldiers in the Red Army were receiving about 200 grams of US food every day.

Secondly, the Red Army was highly dependent on American-produced transport.

For example, of the 2,000 trains used by the Russians during the Second World War, over 1,900 were American.

Equally, American “jeeps” – produced by Dodge and Studebaker – formed two-thirds of all those used by the Red Army.

Overall, in terms of food and transport, Lend-Lease was critical to Russian success.

It was also important for providing specialist products, such as aluminium and high-quality steel.

Nonetheless, in terms of the production of armaments, Lend-Lease was less significant.

Finally, it is worth noting that Stalin was highly suspicious of Lend-Lease.

His concern stemmed from the fact that American goods were clearly superior to those made by the Red Army.

In this sense, they proved the superiority of capitalist forms of production and revealed the inadequacies of Russia’s planned economy.

For this reason, the praise of foreign technology was officially criminalised in 1942.

**Conclusion:**

- The Second World War highlighted the inadequacies of the Soviet system: Stalin’s communism could not count on the support of the Russian people, and Stalin was forced to turn to more traditional forces, such as nationalism and religion, to inspire people.
- Additionally, socialist agriculture, which had been reformed by Stalin, proved inadequate without the help of capitalist nations.
- Only Soviet industry, against huge odds, was able to meet the needs of the war.
- The war effort placed an enormous burden on Russia’s people and infrastructure.
- As many as 10 per cent of Russia’s population died during the war, employees of Soviet factories were expected to work double and triple shifts throughout the war, without a single day off, and the Soviet economy suffered billions of dollars’ worth of damage.
- Stalin presented Russia’s victory as a triumph for socialism.