

Russia, 1922-1939  
AP World History  
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In 1921 the Russian Civil War came to an exhausted end. To celebrate their victory and to mark that the country had changed, the Bolsheviks changed the name of the country to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This was to be Russia's formal name from 1922 to 1991. The new country had several problems to deal with. Russia lost more than 25 million citizens during the Russian Civil War, leading to problems with having enough labor supply. Workers were also disgruntled because the promises of power-sharing made by the Bolsheviks were never realized. The Bolsheviks took control of the Russian government in 1917 and never allowed the workers to be involved in government decisions. Lastly, Russia suffered through a loss of leadership when Lenin unexpectedly died in 1924.

A power struggle emerged between the two most powerful men in the Communist Party, military leader Leon Trotsky and Secretary General of the Communist Party, Joseph Stalin. Eventually Stalin emerged as the leader of Russia despite Trotsky's ties to the military.

After taking control of Russia, Stalin tried to solve Russia's problems by controlling everything himself. He became a totalitarian leader, meaning that his government controlled every part of the public and private lives of Russia's citizens. To that end Stalin created a command economy, where all aspects of the economy were controlled by the government, created collective farms which were run by the state, and decided to finally build up Russia's industrial strength. Stalin planned to industrialize Russia through three "Five Year Plans."

Unfortunately many were upset with Stalin's ideas and threats of rebellion led to a drastic decision by Stalin. He began eliminating anyone who opposed him. These killings, called his "purges", took place mainly between 1925 and 1935, eventually leading to the deaths of perhaps 20-25 million people. His purges were focused on three groups: communists who were loyal to Lenin and Trotsky, military leaders who supported Trotsky, and a group of rebellious farmers called the *kulaks*. The *kulaks* rebelled against Stalin's idea of collective farming. They thought that they could manage their own farms better than the government and rebelled when the government tried to seize control of their lands. Five million *kulaks* were killed during the purges and thousands more were sent to labor camps in Siberia called *gulags*.