

LESSON – STALIN AND COLLECTIVIZATION

1928 – Reasons for the Collectivization – “the Second Revolution” – “Revolution from above” – GOSPLAN – FYP – Aim – de-Kulakization – Results - ...

Key dates

1928	<i>Widespread famine in the USSR Collectivization began Start of the first FYP (Five-Year Plan) 1932-3</i>
1933	<i>Start of the second FYP</i>
1938	<i>Start of the third FYP</i>
1941-5	<i>The Great Patriotic War</i>

Problems with Agriculture and problems with NEP:

- The peasants used **old traditional methods** – strip farming with wooden ploughs were common
- **No machinery** – the peasants often used old wood equipment
- The farmers **just worked for their subsistence** – not for anybody else...
- The **farms were too small** for efficient farming – after the revolution land was handed out to the individual peasants. This land was often too small and divided into many different plots. Some of this land had later been subdivided...
- The peasants were very reluctant to deliver grain to the **low fixed prices** the State offered
- Prices of manufactured goods had become high
- Entrepreneurs and rich peasants (“**kulaks**”) – gained from the new system, but most peasants and many workers in the urban areas were under strict state control
- A new group of traders, the “**Nepmen**”, made huge profits from buying food and goods cheaply and selling them more dearly...
- This economy was a capitalistic economy, based on capitalistic methods. This caused a lot of criticism from the leftist Bolsheviks (caused a split within the Party) – NEP was ideologically incorrect!

- **To be able to carry through a major modern industrialization** efficient farming and accurate food supplies were absolute necessary
- **Industrialization demanded capital** – money!!! Russia needed to import foreign machinery and some foreign expertise. The **traditional export article was grain...**
- Efficient **mechanized farming would release peasants** who would be available as workers to the fast growing industries

So in the late 1920s Stalin decided to impose on the USSR a crash program of reform of the Soviet economy. Stalin called this big economic reform “**the second revolution**”. It is also frequently defined as a “**revolution from above**”.

Here is a summary of Stalin's Economic Aim – Motives and Means... in 1928:

AIM

- A Second Revolution to modernize Russia

MOTIVES

- To confirm his authority as a leader by getting rid of the “rightist opposition” ((Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky))
- To be able to meet the **RURAL CRISIS** (Grain shortage, bread shortages and high food prices which led to food riots and forced grain collections) – all problems with NEP
- To get rid of the rural “Class Enemy” - the “KULAKS” (**de-Kulakization**)
- **Modernize Soviet agriculture**
- To enable the Soviet Union **to catch up with the economies of the Western World**

MEANS

- Collectivization (with forced grain procurements)
- Industrialization
 - (“Heavy industrialization” – concentration on Heavy Industries
 - Exploitation of New Industrial Resources
 - Improvement of Communications)

GOSPLAN “*Gosudarstvennyj planovyj komitet soveta ministrov USSR*” – The USSR Economic State Planning Commission that had been established at the Party Congress 1921 became a good instrument for the Collectivization and Industrialization...

COLLECTIVIZATION

AIM

To end all private Land ownership

MEANS

The ant-kulak campaign (de-Kulakization)

RESULTS

- Disruption on the land
- Peasant protests and uprises
- Catastrophic fall in food production
- Reprisals against the peasants
- Hunger and famine – over 5 million people died of starvation

1928 – Stalin presents the idea of Collectivization. He claims that it was “**voluntary**” – a free and eager choice of poor peasants (- 1.7% in December 1928)
He also identified a “**Class Enemy**” – the KULAK (The held back the workers revolution by monopolizing the best land and they employed cheap peasant labor to farm it...). In a speech December 1929 Stalin said: “*We have passed from a policy of confining the exploiting tendencies of the Kulaks to a policy of liquidation of the Kulaks as a class*” (DE-KULAKIZATION)...

In 1929/1930 groups of Party Activists and Party Officials (over 25000) backed by the **OGPU** (before 1924 the **CHEKA**) and sometimes the Army were sent out to the countryside – to organize, with force if necessary, the peasants into collective farms.

The peasants had to sign a register where they expressed a demand to be collectivised! After this animals, equipment and buildings were taken from the more wealthy peasants (the “Kulaks”) and this would form the basis for the new collective farm. There were two basic types of collective farms;

KOLKHOZ and SOVKHOZ

1. KOLKHOZ: Land and equipment was collectively owned by the peasants within the collective. They lived and worked at the farm “rent-free” as long as they delivered a big proportion of the produce to the State. The surplus was divided among the members and each family was allowed to have a small plot for own produce and some animals...

Each Kolkhoz (normally about 70 households) was headed by a Farm Manager. He had to make sure that the State demands were met and that the farm was organized in an appropriate way.

The Kolkhozes did not have any heavy machinery of their own – Special **MTS (Machine Tractor Stations)** were established to supply the collective farms with machinery and to supply seed. These favours had to be paid in grain... Between 1929-1932 over 25000 MTS were built. The Kolkhoz was the most common collective farm.

2. SOVKHOZ: This was a State farm where everything was State property. These collective farms were much larger and much more mechanized. The peasants got paid a regular wage on these farms...

REACTION: To avoid having their land and buildings seized, their animals and equipment confiscated more wealthy peasants burned their own houses, farms and crops and they killed their animals. In some areas riots and armed rebellions broke out (especially in Ukraine, Kazakhstan and North Caucasus).

In March 1930 the Party Officials announced that **58%** of the peasant holdings had been collectivised. This number was most likely wrong – historians have estimated the actual number to be around **20%** (from **1.7% in December 1928**). A minor halt of the collectivisation came in March 1930. The Party Officials were afraid that the harsh way the collectivisation had been carried out so far would destroy the harvest of 1930. After the harvest was secured the collectivisation continued. **By 1936 over 90% of the peasant holdings had been collectivised!!!**

Catastrophic fall in food production:

Table 3.1: The fall in food consumption (in kilograms per head)

	Bread	Potatoes	Meat and lard	Butter
1928	250.4	141.1	24.8	1.35
1932	214.6	125.0	11.2	0.7

Table 3.2: The fall in livestock (in millions)

	Horses	Cattle	Pigs	Sheep and goats
1928	33	70	26	146
1932	15	34	9	42
1934	16.5	33.5	?	36.5

1935 – Grain production exceeded the pre-collectivisation figures

1940 – Grain production at the 1914 level

The livestock numbers did not exceed the pre-collectivisation levels until 1953!

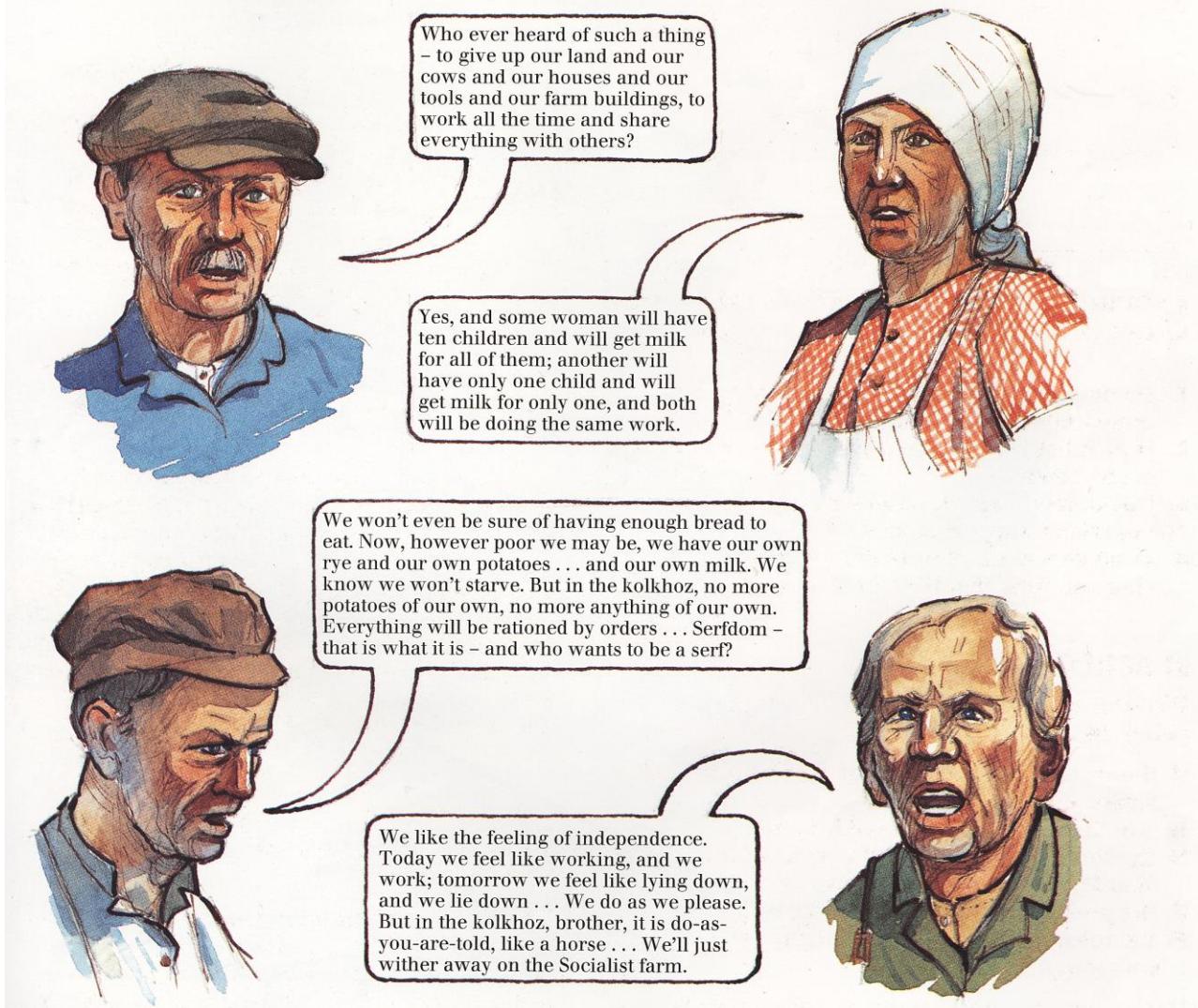
Reprisals against the peasants:

By the end of 1929 and the beginning of 1930 16 million tons of grain had been collected (in some areas over 30% of the entire crop was taken). In February 1930 a Decree gave local committees the power to apply necessary measures against the Kulaks. Several of the Kulaks were accused of being “counter-revolutionaries” and “exploiters”. For them existed two punishments; **execution or deportation?**

Hunger and famine:

- Government failed to deal with the famine which led to the loss of millions of life (starvation especially in Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Northern Caucasus – over 5 million people died of starvation)
- Loss of expertise – the more prosperous farmers (“Kulaks”) were usually also the more skilled farmers
- Inexperienced collective farm Managers made the situation much worse...

So – who was it that gained???



Peasant objections to collective farming – From the book “Read Bread” by Maurice Hindus (1931)- The author lived in this village in 1929 – before the Collectivization...



Peasants protesting against the Kulaks...



Poster that says "Come and join our kolkhoz, Comrade!"



Modern machinery on a collective farm – a harvester



Tractors were the key to modern agriculture according to the Party



1932 famine – collecting the dead in Ukraine...