19.3 Stalin’s First Five Year Plan

In 1933, Stalin spoke to the Central Communist Party about the objectives and results of the first Five Year Plan. His immediate audience, which owed complete obedience to Stalin, was well aware of the loss of human life that occurred during those five years, since they had been charged with carrying out his purges and harsh measures. This speech was then distributed more widely. Source: “The First Five Year Plan, Stalin’s Speech to the Central Communist Party in January 1933”; reprinted in Primary Source Document Workbook to Accompany World Civilizations, by Philip J. Adier; prepared by Robert Welborn, (New York: West Publishing Company, 1996), pp. 92–93.

What was the fundamental task of the five-year plan?

The fundamental task of the five-year plan was to transfer our country, with its backward, and in part medieval, technology, on to the lines of new, modern technology.

The fundamental task of the five-year plan was to convert the U.S.S.R. from an agrarian and weak country, dependent upon the caprices of the capitalist countries, into an industrial and powerful country, fully self-reliant and independent of the caprices of world capitalism.

The fundamental task of the five-year plan was, in converting the U.S.S.R. into an industrial country, to completely oust the capitalist elements, to widen the front of socialist forms of economy, and to create the economic basis for the abolition of classes in the U.S.S.R., for the building of a socialist society....

The fundamental task of the five-year plan was to transfer small and scattered agriculture on to the lines of large scale collective farming, so as to ensure the economic basis of socialism in the countryside and thus to eliminate the possibility of the restoration of capitalism in the U.S.S.R.

Finally, the task of the five-year plan was to create all the necessary technical and economic prerequisites for increasing to the utmost the defense capacity of the country, enabling it to organize determined resistance to any attempt at military intervention from abroad, to any attempt at military attack from abroad....

The main link in the five-year plan was heavy industry, with machine building as its core. For only heavy industry is capable of reconstructing both industry as a whole, transport and agriculture, and of putting them on their feet. It was necessary to begin the fulfillment of the five-year plan with heavy industry. Consequently, the restoration of heavy industry had to be made the basis of the fulfillment of the five-year plan....

But the restoration and development of heavy industry, particularly in such a backward and poor country as ours was at the beginning of the five-year plan period is an extremely difficult task; for, as is well known, heavy industry calls for enormous financial expenditure and the existence of a certain minimum of experienced technical forces.... Did the Party know this, and did it take this into account? Yes, it did. Not only did the Party know this, but it announced it for all to hear. The Party knew how heavy industry had been built in Britain, Germany, and America. It knew that in those countries heavy industry had been built either with the aid of big loans, plundering other countries, or by both methods simultaneously.

The Party knew that those paths were closed to our country. What, then, did it count on? It counted on our country’s own resources. It counted on the fact that, with a Soviet government at the helm, and the land, industry, transport, the banks and trade nationalized, we could pursue a regime of the strictest economy in order to accumulate sufficient resources for the restoration and development of heavy industry. The Party
2. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from...

I. List three things the author said that you think are important...

...and the Government, together with the United States masses, has achieved a mass of defense construction; a country capable of producing on a mass scale all modern means of defense, unprepared for defense, into a country mighty in defense, a country prepared for every emergency as a result of all this the Soviet Union has been converted from a weak country...

First...

In output of oil products and coal we were last on the list. Now we rank among the first.

In output of electrical power we were last on the list. Now we rank among the first.

We did not have an aircraft industry. Now we have one.

We did not have a machine-tool industry. Now we have one.

We did not have an armament industry. Now we have one.

We did not have an electrical industry. Now we have one.

We did not have an agricultural industry. Now we have one.

We did not have a chemical industry. Now we have one.

We did not have a food industry. Now we have one.

We did not have a textile industry. Now we have one.

We did not have a coal industry. Now we have one.
3. List two things the document tells you about life at the time it was written.

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4. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document.

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in the case of a person, consists of bringing something before the attention of the crowd as in the case of a prophet, consists of bringing something before the attention of the crowd.
and not in the instruction of those who are scientifically trained or are seeking education and insight, its efficacy must always be oriented more to the emotions and only in a very restricted way to the so-called "intellect."

All propaganda has to appeal to the people and its intellectual level has to be set in accordance with the receptive capacities of the most-limited persons among those to whom it intends to address itself. The higher the mass of men to be reached, the lower its purely intellectual level will have to be set . . .

The art of propaganda lies precisely therein, that, comprehending the great masses' world of emotions and imagination, it finds the way, in a psychologically correct form, to the attention and, further, to the hearts of the great masses.

The receptive capacity of the great masses is very restricted, its understanding small. On the other hand, however, its forgetfulness is great. On account of these facts all effective propaganda must restrict itself to very few points and impress these by slogans, until even the last person is able to bring to mind what is meant by such a word . . .

In general the art of all truly great popular leaders at all times consists primarily in not scattering the attention of a people but rather in concentrating it always on one single opponent. The more unified this use of the fighting will of a people, the greater will be the magnetic attractive force of a movement and the more powerful the force of its push. It is a part of the genius of a great leader to make even quite different opponents appear as if they belonged only to one cate-gory, because the recognition of different enemies leads weak and unsure persons only too readily to begin doubting their own cause.

When the vacillating masses see themselves fighting against too many enemies, objectivity at once sets in and raises the question whether really all the others are wrong and only one's own people or one's own movement is right.

Therewith, however, appears already the first weakening of one's own force. Consequently, a number of intrinsically different opponents must always be comprehended together, so that in the view of the masses of one's own adherents the fight is only being carried on against one enemy alone. This strengthens the faith in one's own cause and increases the bitterness toward the aggressor against this cause.

In all cases in which there is a question of the fulfillment of apparently impossible demands or tasks, the entire attention of a people must be concentrated only on this one question, in such a way as if being, or non-being actually depends on its solution. Only in this way will one make a people willing and capable of really great accomplishments and exertions.

1. For what audience was the document written?
2. Why do you think this document was written?