

## Joseph Stalin & the Soviet Union

### Central Historical Question:

Should Stalin be known as a hero for transforming Russia into a feared industrial and world power, or a villain for his ruthless use of power?

#### **Doc #1 A. O. Avdienko, *The Cult of Stalin, Pravda, Communist Newspaper 1936***

Thank you, Stalin. Thank you because I am joyful. Thank you because I am well. Centuries will pass, and future generations will think of us as the luckiest of men, because we lived in the century of centuries, because Stalin is our great leader. Yes, we do believe we are the happiest of people because our leader is a man who never had an equal in world history.

The men of all ages will call on Stalin's name, which is strong, beautiful, wise and marvelous. Stalin's name is engraved on every factory, every machine, every place on the earth, and in the hearts of all men.

#### **Document #2 Speech by Stalin to industrial managers, February, 1931**

We must increase the tempo of our work as much as possible out of our obligations to the workers and peasants of the USSR and our obligations to the working class of the whole world. Now that we have overthrown capitalism and the power is in our hands, the hands of the people, we will defend it. Do you want to lose our freedom? If not, we must build up our socialist economy. As Lenin said "Either perish, or overtake and outstrip the advanced capitalist countries."

### **Document #3 Lenin's Secret Testament on Joseph Stalin, released in 1922**

Comrade Stalin, having become general secretary, has unlimited authority concentrated in his hands, and I am not sure whether he will always be capable of using that authority with sufficient caution.

Stalin is too rude and this problem, although we and other members of the Communist party may tolerate it, many others cannot. I suggest that the comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that job and appointing another man who, in comparison with Comrade Stalin, is more tolerant, more loyal, and less unpredictable. I fear the relationship between Stalin and Trotsky could cause a split in our revolution. We need to solve this problem and because of its risk and importance take it seriously.

### **Document #4 Remark by one of Stalin's Lieutenants on 1933 Famine in Ukraine**

The famine was a great success. It showed the peasants "who is the master here. It cost millions of lives, but the collective farm system is here to stay."

### **Doc #5 Milovan Djilas, Yugoslavian Communist, *Conversations with Stalin***

His country was in ruins, hungry, exhausted. He knew that he was one of the cruelest, most despotic figures in human history. But this did not worry him a bit, for he was convinced that he was carrying out the will of history. His conscience was troubled by nothing, despite the millions who had been destroyed in his name and by his order, despite the thousands of his closest collaborators whom he had murdered as traitors because they doubted that he was leading the country and people into happiness, equality, and liberty.

Source: Djilas, Milovan, and Joseph Stalin. *Conversations with Stalin*. Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962.