



USSR and Russia in the second half of XXth century

Recovery of the USSR economy in the post-war years

The main tasks of the fourth five-year plan for the development of the national economy (1946-1950) were the restoration of the regions of the country destroyed and devastated by the war, the achievement of the pre-war level of development of industry and agriculture. At first, the Soviet people faced enormous difficulties in this area - a shortage of food, difficulties in rebuilding agriculture, aggravated by a severe crop failure in 1946, problems of transferring industry to a peaceful track, and a massive demobilization of the army. All this did not allow the Soviet leadership until the end of 1947 to exercise control over the country's economy.

However, already in 1948 the volume of industrial production still exceeded the pre-war level. Back in 1946, the level of 1940 for the production of electricity was reached, in 1947 - for coal, in the next 1948 - for steel and cement. By 1950, a significant part of the indicators of the fourth five-year plan had been realized. In the west of the country, almost 3,200 industrial enterprises were put into operation. Thus, the main emphasis was placed, as in the course of the pre-war five-year plans, on the development of industry, and above all, heavy industry.

The Soviet Union did not have to count on the help of its former Western allies in rebuilding its industrial and agricultural potential. Therefore, only their own internal resources and the hard work of the entire people became the main sources of restoration of the country's economy. Massive investments in industry grew. Their volume significantly exceeded the investments that were directed to the national economy in the 30s during the first five-year plans.

With all the close attention to heavy industry, the situation in agriculture has not yet improved. Moreover, one can speak of its protracted crisis in the post-war period. The decline of agriculture forced the country's leadership to turn to methods that had been proven back in the 30s, which concerned primarily the restoration and strengthening of collective farms. The leadership demanded the fulfillment of plans at any cost, which were based not on the capabilities of the collective farms, but on the needs of the state. Control over agriculture was again sharply increased. The peasantry was under heavy tax burden. Purchase prices for agricultural products were very low; peasants received very little for their labor on collective farms. They continued to be deprived of their passports and freedom of movement.

And yet, by the end of the fourth five-year plan, the grave consequences of the war in the field of agriculture were partially overcome. Despite this, agriculture still remained a kind of "pain point" of the entire economy of the country and required a radical reorganization, for which, unfortunately, in the post-war period there were neither funds nor strength.

Foreign policy in the postwar years (1945-1953)

The victory of the USSR in the Great Patriotic War led to a serious change in the balance of forces in the international arena. The USSR acquired significant territories both in the West (part of East Prussia, Transcarpathian regions, etc.) and in the East (South Sakhalin, Kuriles). The influence of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe grew. Immediately after the end of the war, communist governments were formed here in a number of countries (Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, etc.) with the support of the USSR. A revolution took place in China in 1949, as a result of which the communist regime also came to power. All this could not but lead to a confrontation between the former allies in the anti-Hitler coalition. In the conditions of tough confrontation and rivalry between two different socio-political and economic systems - socialist and capitalist, called the "cold war", the USSR government made great efforts in pursuing its policy and ideology in those states of Western Europe and Asia, which it considered objects of its influence ... The split of Germany into two states - the FRG and the GDR, the Berlin crisis of 1949 marked the final break between the former allies and the division of Europe into two hostile camps. After the formation of the military-political alliance of the North Atlantic Treaty (NATO) in 1949, a single line began to take shape in economic and political relations between the USSR and the countries of people's democracies. To this end, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) was created, which coordinated the economic relations of the socialist countries, and to strengthen their defense capability, their military bloc (Warsaw Pact Organization) was formed in 1955 as a counterweight to NATO. After the US deprived of its monopoly on nuclear weapons, in 1953 the Soviet Union was the first to test a thermonuclear (hydrogen) bomb. The process of rapid creation in both countries - the Soviet Union and the United States - of more and more new carriers of nuclear weapons and more modern weapons - the so-called. arms race. This is how the global rivalry between the USSR and the United States arose.

This most difficult period in the history of modern mankind, called the Cold War, showed how two opposing political and socio-economic systems fought for dominance and influence in the world and prepared for a new, now all-destroying war. It split the world in two. Now everything was viewed through the prism of tough confrontation and rivalry.

Soviet Union in the 50s

The death of JV Stalin became a milestone in the development of our country. The totalitarian system created in the 30s, which was characterized by the features of state-administrative socialism with the domination of the party-state nomenklatura in all its links, had already exhausted itself by the beginning of the 50s. It required a radical change. The de-Stalinization process, which began in 1953, developed in a very complex and contradictory manner. In the end, it led to the coming to power of N.S. Khrushchev, who in September 1953 became the de facto head of the country. His desire to abandon the previous repressive methods of leadership won the sympathy of many honest communists and the majority of the Soviet people. At the 20th Congress of the CPSU, held in February 1956, the policy of Stalinism was sharply criticized. Khrushchev's report to the delegates of the congress, later, in milder terms, published in the press, revealed those perversions of the ideals of socialism that Stalin made during almost thirty years of his dictatorial rule. The process of de-Stalinization of Soviet society has been highly inconsistent. It did not touch upon the essential aspects of the formation and development of a totalitarian regime in our country. Khrushchev himself was a typical product of this regime, only realizing the potential inability of the previous leadership to preserve it in an unchanged form. His attempts to democratize the country were doomed to failure, since in any case, the real activity to implement changes in both the political and economic line of the USSR fell on the shoulders of the former state and party apparatus, which did not want any radical changes.

At the same time, however, many victims of Stalin's repressions were rehabilitated, some of the country's peoples, repressed by Stalin's regime, were able to return to their former places of residence. Their autonomy was restored. The most odious representatives of the country's punitive authorities were removed from power. Nikita Khrushchev's report to the 20th Party Congress confirmed the country's previous political course, aimed at seeking opportunities for peaceful coexistence of countries with different political systems, at defusing international tension. It is characteristic that it already recognized various ways of building a socialist society.

The fact of public condemnation of Stalin's arbitrariness had a tremendous impact on the life of the entire Soviet people. Changes in the life of the country led to the undermining of the system of state, barracks socialism, built in the USSR. The total control of the authorities over all areas of life of the population of the Soviet Union was a thing of the past. It was these changes, already uncontrolled by the authorities, in the former political system of society that aroused their desire to strengthen the authority of the party. In 1959, at the 21st Congress of the CPSU, the entire Soviet people were told that socialism had won a complete and final victory in the USSR. The statement that our country had entered the period of "extensive construction of communist society" was confirmed by the adoption of a new program of the CPSU, which set out in detail the tasks of building the foundations of communism in the Soviet Union by the beginning of the 80s of our century.

The collapse of the Khrushchev leadership. Return to the system of totalitarian socialism

N.S. Khrushchev, like any reformer of the socio-political system that had developed in the USSR, was very vulnerable. He had to change her, relying on her own resources. Therefore, the numerous, not always well-thought-out reformatory undertakings of this typical representative of the administrative-command system could not, to a significant extent, not only change it, but even undermine it. All his attempts to "cleanse socialism" of the consequences of Stalinism were unsuccessful. Having ensured the return of power to the party structures, returning the party-state nomenclature to its significance and saving it from potential repressions, N.S. Khrushchev fulfilled his historic mission.

The aggravated food difficulties of the early 60s, if not turned the entire population of the country into dissatisfied with the actions of the previously energetic reformer, then at least determined indifference to his future fate. Therefore, the removal of Khrushchev in October 1964 from the post of leader of the country by the forces of the highest representatives of the Soviet party and state nomenklatura passed quite calmly and without incidents.

The growing difficulties of the country's socio-economic development

At the end of the 60s - in the 70s, a gradual slide of the USSR economy to stagnation of almost all of its branches took place. A steady decline in its main economic indicators was evident. The economic development of the USSR looked especially unfavorable against the background of the world economy, which at that time was significantly progressing. The Soviet economy continued to reproduce its industrial structures with an emphasis on traditional industries, in particular on the export of fuel and energy resources. This undoubtedly caused significant damage to the development of high technologies and sophisticated technology, the share of which has significantly decreased.

The extensive nature of the development of the Soviet economy significantly limited the solution of social problems associated with the concentration of funds in heavy industry and the military-industrial complex, the social sphere of life of the population of our country during the period of stagnation was out of sight of the government. The country was gradually plunging into a severe crisis, and all attempts to avoid it failed.

An attempt to accelerate the country's socio-economic development

By the end of the 70s, for a part of the Soviet leadership and millions of Soviet citizens, it became obvious that it was impossible to preserve the order that existed in the country without changes. The last years of Leonid Brezhnev's rule, who came to power after the removal of N.S. Khrushchev, passed against the background of a crisis in the economic and social spheres in the country, the growth of apathy and indifference of the people, and the deformed morality of those in power. The symptoms of decay were clearly felt in all areas of life. Some attempts to find a way out of the current situation were undertaken by the new leader of the country - Yu.V. Andropov. Although he was a typical representative and a sincere supporter of the previous system, nevertheless, some of his decisions and actions had already shaken the previously indisputable ideological dogmas that did not allow his predecessors to carry out, although theoretically justified, but practically failed reformist attempts. The new leadership of the country, relying mainly on tough administrative measures, tried to stake on establishing order and discipline in the country, on eradicating corruption, which had hit all levels of government by this time. This gave a temporary success - the economic indicators of the country's development improved somewhat. Some of the most odious functionaries were removed from the leadership of the party and government, criminal cases were opened against many leaders in high positions.

The change in the political leadership after the death of Yu.V. Andropov in 1984 showed how great the power of the nomenklatura is. The new general secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, the terminally ill K.U. Chernenko, seemed to personify the system that his predecessor was trying to reform. The country was still developing as if by inertia, the people indifferently watched Chernenko's attempts to return the USSR to the Brezhnev order. Numerous undertakings of Andropov were curtailed to revive the economy, renew and purge leading personnel.

In March 1985, M.S. Gorbachev, a representative of a relatively young and ambitious wing of the country's party leadership, came to the country's leadership. On his initiative, in April 1985, a new strategic course for the country's development was proclaimed, aimed at accelerating its socio-economic development on the basis of scientific and technological progress, technical re-equipment of mechanical engineering and the activation of the "human factor". At first, its implementation was able to somewhat improve the economic indicators of the development of the USSR.

In February-March 1986, the 27th Congress of Soviet Communists took place, the number of which by this time amounted to 19 million. At the congress, held in a traditional ceremonial setting, a new version of the party program was adopted, from which the unfulfilled tasks of building the foundations of a communist society in the USSR by 1980 were removed. Instead, a course was proclaimed to "improve" socialism, the issues of democratizing Soviet society, the system elections, plans were outlined to solve the housing problem by 2000. It was at this congress that a course was put forward for the restructuring of all aspects of the life of Soviet society, but the specific mechanisms for its implementation had not yet been worked out, and it was perceived as an ordinary ideological slogan.

The collapse of perestroika. The collapse of the USSR

The course of perestroika, proclaimed by the Gorbachev leadership, was accompanied by slogans of accelerating the country's economic development and glasnost, freedom of speech in the field of social life of the population of the USSR. The economic freedom of enterprises, the expansion of their independence and the revival of the private sector have resulted in rising prices for the majority of the country's population, a shortage of basic goods and a drop in living standards. The policy of glasnost, at first perceived as a sound criticism of all negative phenomena of Soviet society, led to an uncontrollable process of denigrating the country's entire past, the emergence of new ideological and political trends and parties, alternative to the course of the CPSU.

At the same time, the Soviet Union is radically changing its foreign policy - now it was aimed at easing tensions between the West and the East, settling regional wars and conflicts, expanding economic and political ties with all states. The Soviet Union ended the war in Afghanistan, improved relations with China, the United States, promoted the unification of Germany, etc. The disintegration of the administrative-command system generated by the perestroika processes in the USSR, the abolition of the previous levers of government in the country and its economy significantly worsened the life of Soviet people and radically affected the further deterioration of the economic situation. Centrifugal tendencies were growing in the union republics. Moscow could no longer tightly control the situation in the country. The market reforms proclaimed in a number of decisions of the country's leadership could not be understood by ordinary people, since they further worsened the already low level of well-being of the people. Inflation intensified, prices rose on the "black market", there was a shortage of goods and products.

Workers' strikes and ethnic conflicts have become frequent occurrences. Under these conditions, representatives of the former party and state nomenklatura attempted a coup d'état - the removal of Gorbachev from the post of president of the collapsing Soviet Union. The failure of the August 1991 putsch showed the impossibility of reviving the old political system. The very fact of the attempted coup d'état was the result of Gorbachev's inconsistent and ill-considered policies leading the country to collapse. In the days following the putsch, many former Soviet republics declared their full independence, and the three Baltic republics won recognition from the USSR as well. The activity of the CPSU was suspended. Gorbachev, who lost all levers of government and the authority of a party and state leader, left the post of President of the USSR.

Russia at a turning point

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to the fact that in December 1991 the American president congratulated his people on the victory in the Cold War. The Russian Federation, which became the legal successor of the former USSR, inherited all the difficulties in the economy, social life and political relations of the former world power. Russian President Boris Yeltsin, with difficulty maneuvering between various political currents and parties in the country, made a bet on a group of reformers who took a tough course towards carrying out market reforms in the country. The practice of ill-considered privatization of state property, the appeal for financial assistance to international organizations and major powers of the West and East have significantly worsened the general situation in the country. Non-payment of wages, criminal clashes at the state level, uncontrolled division of state property, falling living standards of the people with the formation of a very small stratum of super-rich citizens - this is the result of the policy of the current leadership of the country. Great trials await Russia. But the whole history of the Russian people shows that their creative powers and intellectual potential will in any case overcome modern difficulties.