

Stalin's Five-year Plan

Stalin's chief aim was to expand industrial production. For this, he developed three Five-year Plans between 1928 and 1938. Gosplan, the state planning agency, drew up targets for production for each factory. The first two plans concentrated on improving heavy industry – coal, oil, steel and electricity.

Some keen young Communists, called Pioneers, went into barren areas and set up new towns and industries from nothing. There were champion workers called Stakhanovites, named after a coal miner who broke the record for the amount of coal dug up in a single shift. Education schemes were introduced to train skilled, literate workers.

At the same time, many of the workers were slave workers and kulaks from the gulag. Strikers were shot, and wreckers (slow workers) could be executed or imprisoned. Thousands died from accidents, starvation or cold. Housing and wages were terrible, and no consumer goods were produced for people. The sole aim was to expand industry, and resources were taken away from other competing demands such as agriculture – so much so that it led to famine in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

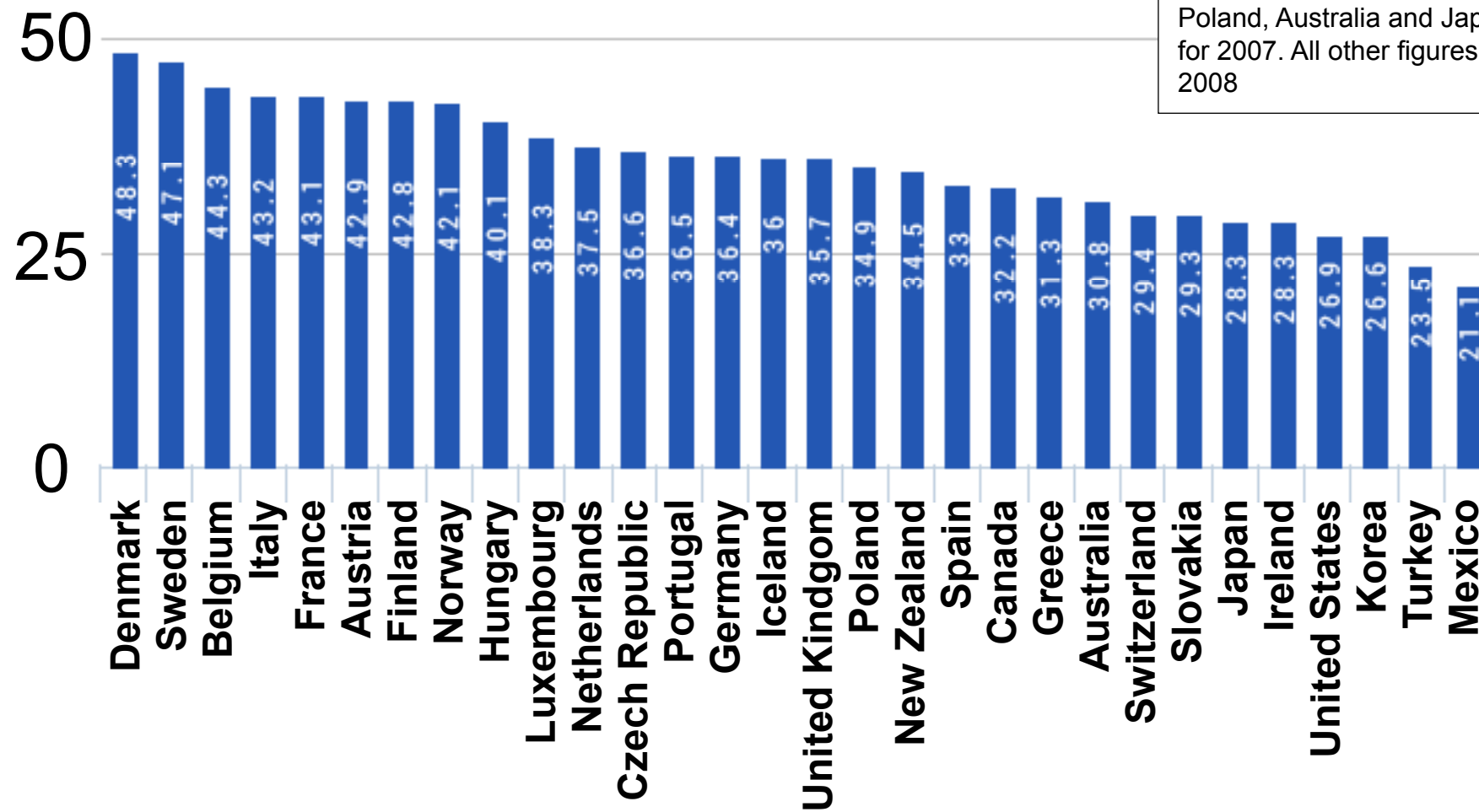
But the improvements in production between 1928 and 1937 were phenomenal:

- Coal – from 36 million tonnes to 130 million tonnes
- Iron – from 3 million tonnes to 15 million tonnes
- Oil – from 2 million tonnes to 29 million tonnes
- Electricity – from 5,000 million kilowatts to 36,000 million kilowatts

The quality of the actual 'end product' is a matter of debate too – historians have largely discredited most of the regime's own records on the output. And there does not seem to be the same level of technical innovation in Russia at this time when compared with other countries such as the USA either.

Tax revenues as a percent of Gross Domestic Product

Source: Data from the World Bank



Note: Numbers for Netherlands, Poland, Australia and Japan are for 2007. All other figures are for 2008