Lenin’s death & the rise of Stalin

War Communism → New Economic Policy → Lenin’s death → Who will become the next leader? → Splits in the party → STALIN
• Bolsheviks seize power Oct 1917.
• Lenin undisputed leader – ‘Majority of one’
  • Driving force of revolution + leader post-rev.
• Attempts to implement ideology = War Communism = controversial
• New Economic Policy = Controversial
• No one would challenge Lenin while alive.
• Factions / splits in the party re: direction of the Communist Party and the economy.
  • After Lenin’s death we need to remember there was a party behind him, not simply one anointed leader to take over.
Lenin

• Admitted in 1921 that NEP = ‘retreat’
  • Said that had War Communism not been abandoned, the Communist govt. would have been overthrown.
  • Said NEP a temporary measure – a sort of ‘state capitalism’.
    • Important thing = strengthen Russia & make it easier for country to be socialist in the future.
    • Important also peasants + workers cooperate.

• Nobody prepared to challenge Lenin. However,

• After his death, leading people in party argued more & more re: NEP. Two main worries:
  • Could Russia ever be a socialist country whilst NEP encouraged minority to become rich at expense of minority?
  • Could Russia go on risking situation in which the govt. & people in towns depended on goodwill of peasants to produce enough food?

• Worries & arguments became mixed up with quarrels re: who would become leaders after Lenin’s death in 1924.
  • Opponents of NEP eventually won.
We are returning, going back as it were, but we are doing this so as to retreat first and then run and leap forward more vigorously. We retreated on this one condition alone when we introduced our New Economic Policy...so as to begin a more determined offensive after the retreat.
• Survived assass. attempt by Soc. Rev. 1918.
• 1922 – first stroke.
  • Continued as leader but severely disabled.
• Jan 1924 – died – 54 years old.

• Funeral:
  • Millions came (Trotsky tricked into not attending).
  • Body embalmed in a tomb in Moscow’s Red Square.
  • Petrograd renamed Leningrad.
  • Some genuine grief

• Lenin’s adult life = trying to bring about rev. in Russia then keeping Communists in power.
  • Disliked attention & near-worship he received post-1917.
  • Without his leadership, Communists prob. would not have won power.
  • Post-1917 – acted ruthlessly to keep Communists in power.
  • Trotsky = Great speech-maker & Red Army leader BUT Lenin alone had respect of all other leading Communists.
Leadership after Lenin

• Nobody challenged Lenin’s leadership.
• Towards end of his life, he did worry re: succession.

• Lenin some ways responsible for some things he claimed to dislike / worry about:
  • Communist Party became more rigid in its views.
  • Ordinary party members lost chance to have real say.
  • Party dominated by Central Committee.
  • 1919 – Lenin created the ‘People’s Commissariat of State Control’ – used to keep Party members in line – made Stalin in charge – regretted.
  • CHEKA
Leadership after Lenin – a divided Politburo

• After Lenin’s death, Politburo publicly stated they would collectively lead the Party, however, even before Lenin’s death divisions developed – 6 of 7 Politburo members split into two groups. Divided about best way of improving USSR’s econ.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A divided Politburo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Left Opposition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leon Trotsky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grigori Zinoviev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leon Kamenev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Opposed cont. of NEP bec. If favoured profit-making peasants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Wanted govt. to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Take over land &amp; force peasants to prod. enough for towns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Turn USSR into industrial country immediately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Ret. to full Socialist principles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 out 7...???

• Seventh member of Politburo in 1924 = Joseph Stalin.
• Not passionate believer in either view.
• Presented himself as a moderate.
• All the time promoting his followers within Party.

• Triumvirate of Stalin, Kamenev & Zinoviev emerged.
Members of the Soviet Politburo in 1924 – Stalin is at the top and, from left to right, are Zinoviev, Trotsky, Kamenev, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky.
Who will succeed Lenin?

Leon Trotsky
2/1 favourite

He had organised the successful Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and led the Red Army to victory in the Russian Civil War. He was very intelligent and Lenin's choice as his successor.

Gregory Zinoviev
15/1 outsider

He had helped Lenin to set up the Bolshevik Party in 1903. During Lenin's government he was made the Bolshevik Party boss in Petrograd and was head of the Comintern, the organisation through which Soviet Russia tried to bring about Communist revolutions in other countries.

Lev Kamenev
20/1 outsider

Although he angered Lenin by opposing the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, he was made the leader of the Bolshevik Party in Moscow.

Nikolai Bukharin
25/1 outsider

He was a leading Bolshevik who had opposed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk by which Russia lost much land to Germany in March 1918. He was a firm supporter of Lenin's New Economic Policy.

Joseph Stalin
100/1 rank outsider

He had played little part in the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Moreover, Lenin, himself, did not want Stalin to succeed him and, in his last testament, tried to warn other leading Bolsheviks about him (see Source A on page 90).
Lenin’s views on Stalin in his testament, 1923

Comrade Stalin, having become Secretary, has unlimited authority concentrated in his hands and I am not sure whether he will be capable of using that authority with sufficient caution. Comrade Trotsky, on the other hand, is perhaps the most capable man in the present Committee. Stalin is too rude and this fault is not acceptable in the office of Secretary. Therefore I propose to comrades that they find a way of removing Stalin from his post.
Main leadership rivals:

Trotsky v Stalin
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leon Trotsky</th>
<th>Joseph Stalin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commissar for War</strong></td>
<td><strong>General Secretary of Communist Party Commissar for Nationalities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Most obvious choice to follow Lenin because of...</td>
<td>1. As General Sec. = key post in Party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Strong personality.</td>
<td>a. Appointed &amp; removed officials = able to build supporter base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Intelligence</td>
<td>2. Could command support because many Party officials owed position to him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Powerful leadership qualities shown in Oct Rev &amp; Civil War.</td>
<td>3. Presented himself as Lenin’s close follower.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pop. with army.</td>
<td>a. Chief mourner at funeral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disadvantages</strong></td>
<td>b. Propaganda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Unpopular in Politburo &amp; with ‘Old Bolsheviks’</td>
<td>4. Clever tactics – played off one group against the other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Failed to use pop. with army.</td>
<td>5. ‘Socialism in one country’ – more popular with Party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Did not appeal to many Russians – war weary.</td>
<td><strong>Disadvantages</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Underestimated Stalin.</td>
<td>1. Thought of as dull, hardworking administrator.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So, who was Stalin?
So, who was Stalin?
So, who was Stalin?

- Born 1879 – Georgia.
- Poor family.
- Educated religious college – expelled for rev. activity – soon active member of B Party.
  - Org. bank raids to get money for Party.
  - Time in Tsarist prisons.
- In Russia Feb 1917, editor of *Pravda*, not as well known as Trotsky or Lenin.
- After Oct Rev, promoted by Lenin.
  - Good at organizing.
  - 1922 – Lenin made him General Secretary of Communist Party – made him very powerful.
- Distrusted Trotsky – first quarreled during Civil War. Trotsky dismissed him as a ‘mediocrity’.
How Stalin achieved power

• Step 1 – Lenin’s, 1924
• Step 2 – Surviving Lenin’s Testament, 1924
• Step 3 – The dismissal of Trotsky, 1925
• Step 4 – Attacking the Left, 1926-27
• Step 5 – Attacking the Right, 1928-29
Why did Stalin win the leadership contest?

• By 1929 Stalin was the unquestioned leader of the USSR, no one dared challenge him.

• Stalin’s opponents had failed to prevent his rise.
  • Underestimated him.
  • Did not have same levels of support.
  • They argued amongst themselves.
Why did Stalin and not Trotsky emerge as leader?

• Stalin:
  1. Successfully presented himself as Lenin’s loyal disciple.
  2. Exploited strong power base within the Party.
  3. Supported pop. idea of ‘Socialism in one country’
  4. Successfully played off Left & Right in the Politburo.
     1. 1925 – Worked with Kamenev & Zinoviev against Trotsky.
     2. Then worked with Bukharin to have Kam & Zin expelled.
     3. Finally, turned on Bukharin & had him removed.

Trotsky:
  1. Unpop. in Politburo
  2. Suffered from rivalry of Kamenev & Zinoviev who agreed with him politically, disliked him personally & so allied with Stalin to block his succession.
  4. Failed to use pop. army to help his cause.
### Step 1
**Lenin's man, 1924**

After Lenin's death Stalin
1 encouraged the cult of Lenin, e.g. the embalming and permanent display of his body
2 presented himself as Lenin's close follower, e.g. he was chief mourner at his funeral.

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### Step 2
**Surviving Lenin's Testament, 1924**

1 Lenin's Testament was a letter he wrote to the Party Congress to be read out after his death.
2 In it Lenin recommended Stalin should be replaced as Party Secretary.
3 Stalin was saved when the Central Committee decided to keep the letter secret because
   a it did not want to provoke disunity
   b Kamenev and Zinoviev defended Stalin. They wanted his help to prevent Trotsky becoming leader.

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### Step 3
**The dismissal of Trotsky, 1925**

1 In the debate about future policy Trotsky argued for 'Permanent Revolution'. He wanted to protect Communism in the USSR by promoting Communist revolutions abroad.
2 Stalin argued for 'Socialism in One Country'. He wanted Communists to concentrate on building up the USSR's strength.
3 Trotsky's ideas proved unpopular with the Party.
4 Kamenev and Zinoviev allied with Stalin and the Rightists in the Politburo to dismiss Trotsky as Commissar of War.

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### Step 4
**Attacking the Right, 1926-29**

1 With three of his allies elected to the Politburo, Stalin now argued against the NEP and in favour of expanding industry.
2 When the Rightists opposed this, Stalin used his majority to vote them down.
3 In 1929, Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsky resigned.
After Trotsky's defeat, Stalin had all references to him removed. Above is a photograph of Lenin making a speech in Moscow in 1920. It was later altered to remove Trotsky (see the photograph on the right).
Inquiry 16

• Lenin wrote letter to Congress assessing quality of leaders in the party.
• Intended it be read at next Congress after his death.
• On eve of Congress, Politburo members discussed it & decided criticism of Stalin & others personal not ideological.
  • Decided not to make public.
  • Only leading delegates informed.
  • See Source 16.2 – p.177
• Stalin promised to correct his faults & eliminate any shortcoming.
Inquiry 16

• ‘Socialism in one country’ v ‘Permanent Revolution’.

• Stalin’s ultimate victory was not just over Trotsky but other potential rivals.
  • His victory not based on ability, or policies and principles, but on understanding the basics of party politics.
  • Stalin used his party machinery to est. power base before he launched his attack on Trotsky.
  • Stalin = political animal – understood what was needed for political survival and had surrounded himself with supporters who literally owed allegiance to him.