

# Stalin and the Struggle for Power



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# Why Did Stalin Win The Struggle For Power?

The Communist Party in the  
1920's, Stalin's Rise to Power and  
the Defeat of His Rivals.

# Stalin's Role in the Bolshevik Party

- 1912 invited onto the Central Committee because there was a shortage of working class leaders.
- 1917 - was the editor of Pravda and was given a seat on the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet.
- He always followed Lenin and almost never disagreed. He played no major role in the October Revolution.
- After the Revolution, he was made Commissar for Nationalities where his office was located close to Lenin's.
- He was sent to Tsaritsyn to organize food and supplies and defend this area during the Civil War.
- Lenin was forced to look to Stalin when Sverdlov died of the Spanish flu.
- Stalin was appointed the head of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate and later in 1919 Lenin put him in charge of the Orgburo; later he was elected to the Politburo.
- In 1922, he was appointed to the general organizational position of General Secretary of the party. At first, this position seemed a typical administrative job for Stalin, but later came to be a rather powerful position.

# Weaknesses of Stalin's Competition

- Trotsky - did not like the business of political in-fighting, making deals and alliances. He preferred debate and writing as a way of disagreeing. He suffered from undiagnosed fever.
- Zinoviev - Seen by others as vain, incompetent and a coward.
- Kamenev - As Carr says, "[He] had neither the desire nor capacity to lead men; he lacked any clear vision..."
- Bukharin - did not have the political skills and cunning of Stalin.

# The Communist Party in the Early 1920's – What Factors Influenced the Power Struggle?

- When Lenin died he left no clear successor to lead the Communist Party.
- Lenin's Testament criticised all the leading candidates e.g. he described Stalin as 'not being able to use power with sufficient caution' and Trotsky for 'excessive self assurance'.
- A group of leaders emerged; a 'collective leadership'.
- By 1929 one of these leaders, Stalin had become a dominant force.
- His success was the result of a power struggle.

# Factor 1: The Ban on Factionalism.

- In 1921 a resolution was passed banning all groups within the party from putting forward ideas that disagreed with the official party policy.
- Those who showed a tolerance to factionalism could be expelled from the party.

# Factor 1: The Ban on Factionalism.

- Consequences:
- This ban caused a lack of debate within the party.
- It also resulted in many expulsions: during the power struggles of the 1920s those who succeeded in getting their ideas accepted were quick to accuse their opponents of factionalism.

## Factor 2: A Centralised Party Machine.

- Traditionally Communists did not believe in bureaucracy. However, dealing with the complexities of government forced the party into becoming more centralised.
- The party decided to have a General Secretary to organise matters.
- Who do you think got this job???



## Factor 2: A centralised Party machine.

- Consequences:
- This position and the growing centralisation of the party put Stalin in a unique position to influence job appointments.

## Factor 3: The growth in Party membership.

- By 1933 there were 3 and a half million members.
- Many members were young, inexperienced and uneducated.

## Factor 3: The growth in Party membership.

- Consequences:
- These were easy to control people who became new elite because of Stalin. They were much more likely to obey instructions than some older party members.

# Factor 4: No one clear Leader.

- Stalin
- Trotsky
- Zinoviev
- Kamenev
- Bukharin

# Leon Trotsky

- Trotsky was the man most feared by the other senior members.
- BUT.....
- Trotsky refused to compete for leadership. He was absent at Lenin's funeral saying that Stalin had told him the wrong date (hummmm). In reality he seems to have lacked the political will to fight.
- This left the door open for.....

# Leon Trotsky

- Trotsky was exiled to Turkey. 1 down.....3 to go.
- Stalin played the other members of the politburo off against each other until they lost their government posts.

# Stalin's Victory.

- Stalin's victory was not inevitable, nor was it a result of his political skills alone.

# Stalin's Victory

- The centralised nature of the party made it relatively easy to control. This had begun under Lenin.
- The opposition to factionalism established by Lenin led other leading members to their political death as they were seen to not be towing the party line.
- Poorly educated new party members were easy to dominate.
- Stalin's own political skills aided his rise. By shifting allegiances, using the secret police and putting his people in key jobs there was no opposition for him to encounter.