

History coursework – stalin and trotsky essay



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1. Lenin knew that sooner or later he was going to die, and after his death had a fair idea that either Stalin or Trotsky would succeed him. Source A extracts parts of Lenin's testaments that show his opinion of these two powers at this point. He obviously liked Trotsky and in most aspects saw him as the best candidate for his position by calling him 'the most able man in the party'. However he does point out that he is over confident suggesting he is arrogant, and that he isn't interested in all aspects of the job.

According to Lenin he was more interested in 'administrative aspects of affairs'. Lenin seems to think that Stalin has too much power in the position of General Secretary for him to use responsibly with enough 'caution.' He also foresees a possible split as their ideas and personalities conflict with each other. Although I think Lenin preferred Trotsky to Stalin I still think he was undecided as to who should replace him as both showed faults. 2. Lenin wrote the postscript as a reaction to Stalin's rudeness towards his wife.

After the first original testament was written where already we can sense that Lenin is weary and already detects worrying aspects in Stalin's personality by saying he doesn't know how to use his 'concentrated power.... with sufficient caution' Stalin insulted Lenin's wife - Krupskaya. He did this through a telephone call and I think Lenin saw this as the final straw in a line of things.

This I think not only struck a personal chord for Lenin by insulting the women he loved but, confirmed his suspicions that Stalin was too 'rude' and not suitable for such an important job. At this point Lenin simply didn't want Stalin in power and could see the consequences if he did rise to become

leader of the communist party. This postscript was one way he hoped he could prevent Stalin from succeeding him. Source B was written partly as a reply to Stalin's rudeness towards his wife, and partly as this as the final straw and he didn't want Stalin to rise to power. 3. Sources C, D and E show little, or even no evidence that Stalin is trying to keep his promise to unite the party as he promised in source F.

Source C says 'there is a terrible fear of a split,' Stalin in his middle ground, yet powerful position could probably help unite the party preventing this feared division, but it seems from what Bukharin and Kamenev have said that he has made no effort to unite so far. In fact it appears he has done quite the opposite. By being middle ground he has managed to enhance hatred between the left and right rather than preventing it, this done by such acts as the source D. Perhaps he hasn't brought the party together partly, as if he did it would also be harder for him to take control as he would not be able to ally with one side to dispose of another.

'He is only interested in his own power' Bukharin informs Kamenev, so we can tell that in source C he is not looking to the future of the party, but rather the next person he 'needs to get rid of.' Source D also gives us no evidence that Stalin is uniting the party, this also suggests otherwise. This political cartoon it is likely was allowed or more so approved by Stalin as it reflected his ideas. The cartoon depicting Trotsky as the organist - churning out his ideas, Zinoviev singing along with them and Kamenev as the parrot repeating everything said.

I also noticed that in the background half of it is black, and half white. I think the black (often associated with wrong or wicked things) is meant to represent the left of the party being evil and bad especially as the black half of the background is on the left and how the right is good (being white - pure clean good etc). This would definitely make the 'left' of the party look unfavourable, not exactly a very unifying, uplifting cartoon issued, or at least authorised by Stalin. This cartoon may have been seen by millions of Russian citizens, influencing them to support the other half of the party.

So Stalin by releasing this was doing the exact opposite to trying to keep the party together - he was splitting it up. Apart from all of those facts the point that there is already a 'left opposition' shows the party cannot be united as there must also be a right side, and that already there is a divide within the party and that Stalin is doing nothing about it except supporting various sides which he frequently changes, and not trying to stop press releases that will have a damaging effect on some fellow communists, they may even have been part of a campaign against the left. Source E is more propaganda than anything else aimed at discrediting Trotsky. It is a photograph showing Trotsky as the head mourner at Lenin's funeral.

This coupled with the fact that Trotsky was not there, and a moving speech made by Stalin would damage Trotsky's reputation greatly. Trotsky's failure to attend was most likely to be Stalin's fault as Trotsky maintained, Stalin however denied this and nothing could be done. If Stalin had really had the party's best interests of unity at heart I doubt he would really have let his 'comrade' be seen in such a bad light, rather than creating the situation purposely to discredit him. From these sources we can clearly see that Stalin

did not keep his promise but instead did the reverse creating more friction between 2 already disagreeing sides. 4.

Source I is very closely related to the real events as George Orwell intended them to be based around the actual political history of Russia through that period. Both Stalin and Trotsky have their counterparts, Stalin being represented by Napoleon, and Trotsky by Snowball. Stalin's ideas on how the country should be run were called 'socialism in one country'. He thought that Russia should work within the country to create a socialist society that was strong enough to defend itself as described in source H.

This was because he believed that if the country could not support itself it would have no hope as it could not function independently. Trotsky however had completely different ideas, he thought that if they spread working-class revolution throughout neighbouring countries then they would have many allies and would be safe that way (described in source G). Looking back now to source I we can see that these ideas are represented here. Napoleon's thoughts that the animals should 'get firearms and train themselves in the use of them' echoes Stalin's idea of the 'working class taking power' and that they 'do not need the working class revolution in other countries.' However 'According to Snowball, they must send out more and more pigeons and stir up rebellions amongst the animals on other farms', this mirrored Trotsky's view that revolution should be encouraged in other countries because 'without direct support of the European working class [they] cannot remain in power'. The 'windmill' in the passage represents Stalin and Trotsky's differing views on industrialisation, the 'windmill' being originally Trotsky's ideas.

This extract also tells us that 'the animals were somewhat surprised to hear Napoleon announce that the windmill was to be built after all.' This refers to the way that Stalin at first dismissed Trotsky's idea of 5 year plan but once firmly in power embraced it as his own. This shows how 2 faced Stalin could be, and the book -Animal Farm illustrates this. Source I definitely shows the disagreements of Stalin and Trotsky by ideas being represented differently but using the same thought process, it is on a different scale. 5.

I think that sources C, J and K all both support and contradicts the impression of Stalin (Napoleon) given in source I. Of all the sources the one which fits George Orwell's impression the best is source C. In source I as Napoleons 'nine enormous dogs' came after Snowball the 'unprincipled' quote from source C seems highly relevant. It also shows that George Orwell thinks that Stalin is very ruthless and unpredictable, as by no means the animals expected this, the animals were 'amazed at the expulsion of snowball.

'This is also reflected in source C as they say Stalin is an 'intriguer' and a 'monster.' In the private conversation it is also said the Stalin 'changes his theories' which is certainly does at the end of source I. Source I supports the impression of Stalin given further as they say 'Stalin has made it difficult for us to attack him,' in source I he most certainly has, nine ferocious dogs are on his side, who would want to attack them? Source J gives us less scope to explore whether it supports or contradicts Orwell's description of Stalin. However, Trotsky describes Stalin as a 'mediocrity' which is similar to source K as they are both saying there wasn't anything 'striking' about him. This we have to consider though as Trotsky has much reason to hate Stalin,

and source K was during the cold war, a time when a western writer wasn't likely to be sympathetic towards a Russian leader.

However in Animal farm Stalin isn't depicted as an average kind of man, he is shown as cunning and harmful, and in that way they contradict the description of Snowball, and this one of Stalin. Yet the sources still support Orwell's character of Stalin in that Snowball was pictured as a bad speaker compared with Snowballs 'brilliant speeches', and Napoleons ideas were quite boring compared with Snowballs daring inventive ones, in that way he was not 'striking'. These sources in some ways support and in some ways do not the impression of Stalin given in source I. 6. Stalin came out of the power struggle victorious partly because he was practical as the interpretation states, but this was not the only reason, it was more a mixture of contributing facts that lead to Stalin's rise to power. Stalin first gained advantage over Trotsky when he failed to attend Lenin's funeral.

This was set up by Stalin, he had sent a telegram to Trotsky telling him that the funeral was on the 26th and considering he wouldn't be able to get back in time he should carry on travelling south, when in actual fact the funeral was on the 27th leaving enough time for him to return. When Trotsky didn't go to the funeral it was thought he hadn't been bothered to go. Whether you call that 'practical' thinking or not is a matter of opinion but my personal opinion is that it was more cunning than practical. Another way that Stalin helped his ascend to leading the communist party was by the way 'he changes his theories according to whom he needs to get rid of.

' He played different groups of communists off one at a time, constantly changing his ideas and supporting different people in order to dispose of them. For example when he wanted to get rid of Trotsky he sided with Bukharin and the right. By doing this he put him in a position where he would have enough power to remove his foes from seats of power and eventually the party. He also placed his supporters in important positions and dismissed those likely to support Trotsky before Lenin was even dead using the fact that he was General Secretary to his advantage. These acts were in some ways practical, but again devious and cunning. Stalin's ideas were regarded as a lot less extreme to Trotsky's ' permanent revolution.

' This middle ground that Stalin stood in was used to great affect and is a very practical way of doing things so we can definitely start to build up a picture of a man who used his practical thinking to full affect. In sources G and H the difference between Trotsky's and Stalin's ideas is plain. As I have just said the more practical of the 2 ideas is Stalin's. This is because to they were a lot more appealing to people, they were less dangerous and had a more definite outcome. Trotsky's ideas had more scope to flop - if revolutions didn't happen in other countries then Russia would be in big trouble.

Stalin's only depended on people working and could be introduced more gradually. Other factors also helped Stalin, Lenin's testament wasn't published. If had have been Stalin would have been seriously set back as the testament contained strong criticism of him, saying he was ' too rude' and that they should ' remove Stalin from that position'. The fact that wasn't published (because it contained criticism of other leading communists who

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didn't want that to be seen) helped him greatly. Still Stalin's ideas were practical, I think that many other things played a big part in his success, and he did seem to have an overriding interest ' in increasing his own power.' However I definitely feel that Stalin was a practical man and that his ideas being more practical than Trotsky's helped him but it was not solely this that won him power.