

Russia in the period 1855 – 1964 in dealing with opposition essay sample

[Politics](#), [Marxism](#)



Stalin was more effective than any other ruler of Russia in the period 1855 - 1964 in dealing with opposition. How far do you agree? During the second half of the 1920s, Joseph Stalin set the stage for gaining absolute power by employing police repression against opposition elements within the Communist Party. The machinery of coercion had previously been used only against opponents of Bolshevism, not against party members themselves. The first victims were Politburo members Leon Trotskii, Grigorii Zinov'ev, and Lev Kamenev, who were defeated and expelled from the party in late 1927. Stalin then turned against Nikolai Bukharin, who was denounced as a "right opposition," for opposing his policy of forced collectivization and rapid industrialization at the expense of the peasantry. Stalin had eliminated all likely potential opposition to his leadership by late 1934 and was the unchallenged leader of both party and state. Nevertheless, he proceeded to purge the party rank and file and to terrorize the entire country with widespread arrests and executions. During the ensuing Great Terror, which included the notorious show trials of Stalin's former Bolshevik opponents in 1936-1938 and reached its peak in 1937 and 1938, millions of innocent Soviet citizens were sent off to labour camps or killed in prison. Stalin did face opposition from his own party about the conduct of the Five-Year Plans. A possible rival was Sergei Kirov, the Leningrad Party boss who was assassinated in 1934. Kirov's death was used as justification for the existence of counter-revolutionary plots. By the time the terror subsided in 1939, Stalin had managed to bring both the party and the public to a state of complete submission to his rule. Soviet society was so atomized and the people so fearful of reprisals that mass arrests were no longer necessary.

Stalin ruled as absolute dictator of the Soviet Union throughout World War II and until his death in March 1953. Opposition to the tsars was ultimately more successful than the opponents of the communist regime. The abdication of Nicholas II in 1917 and the reasons why the Romanov dynasty fell can be compared to other key events such as the assassination of Alexander II and the 1905 revolution. Comparisons can be made with the way the communist regime secured control in the period 1917-20, successfully defeating the counter-revolutionary opposition during this period. Why the opponents of the Stalinist regime, even from within the Communist Party, were so unsuccessful is also another way in which opposition was unsuccessful.

Comparisons can be made between the effectiveness of the rulers eg. Why Nicholas II was a much less efficient autocrat than Alexander III, or why Lenin, Stalin and Khrushchev were ultimately more efficient in crushing opposition than the Tsars had been. Following the assassination of Alexander II a new Division for the Protection of Order and Social Security was set up. In Russian this was shortened to Okhrannoe Otdelenie (security division) and thence to Okhrana or Okhranka. Its aims were spying, data collection on political offenders and infiltration of terrorist organisations. The Okhrana was abolished after the February revolution in 1917. Instead Lenin quickly set up his own secret political police, the Cheka, again having as its aim state security. Unlike his predecessors, Nicholas was forced to proclaim political concessions in the 1905 October Manifesto which promised a national parliament. The Tsar promised freedom of speech, press, association and

conscience. There was to be an end to arbitrary arrest and a wide franchise was promised for the election of a new state Duma.

Gulag was the name given to the prison/labour camps which spread throughout the Communist USSR, particularly under Stalin. Often situated in cold and remote regions, they housed millions of prisoners, especially in the late 1930s. Conditions were inhumane and death rates were high for the prisoners. They were still heavily used after 1945 though fell into disuse after Stalin's death. Narodniks were socially conscious members of the middle class who aimed to achieve better conditions for the working classes. They tried to convert the people to socialism however this failed as they were persecuted by the state and quickly decimated. Land and Liberty relied on terrorism and murder. They evolved into the People's Will group which assassinated Alexander II in 1881. Started around Lavroks ideals and frustration around the failure of the Narodniks. The state then exiled, killed and imprisoned them. Perhaps one of the biggest challenges facing Alexander III was political violence. Not only his predecessor, Alexander II, but also other leading political figures across Russia during the 1870s had been assassinated. People's Will was a terrorist organisation that hoped to bring political change to Russia through revolutionary violence.

They attacked leading members of local and national government. The assassination of Alexander II was merely the culmination of a nationwide campaign of violence. The immediate cause of revolution was the demonstration in St Petersburg in January 1905, which resulted in Bloody Sunday. The demonstrators were primarily industrial workers, many from the

Putilov engineering works. They were demonstrating in a bid to persuade the Tsar to intervene in order to improve their working and living conditions. So in conclusion it can be argued that Stalin was the most effective leader at dealing with opposition as he didn't face any serious opposition and most of it was of his own creation. But this was after Lenin's rule in which he mixed reform with repression which left no opposition to communism and its leaders. So this left Stalin in a safe position as he inherited a state with no organised opposition. However Stalin showed that he could defeat opposition in his own party to gain control by playing each side of the party off the other. This is similar to how Krushchev gained power after Stalin's death. But all this parts considered no opposition formed against Stalin over the period of his rule showing that he was the most successful where as all other leaders had some sort of organised opposition rise up against them.