

Rise of stalin



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Essay Topic: “ People can be swept along by events, whilst others use events to their advantage” How accurate is this statement in relation to the rise of power of either Joseph Stalin or Benito Mussolini? Joseph Stalin’s rise to power in relation to the statement “ People can be swept along by events, whilst others use events to their advantage” is that of the latter when taking a look at how he was able to rise to the position of dictator of the Soviet Union.

Stalin meticulously plotted his way into power using influential events, such as the occurrence of his promotion to General Secretary in which he displayed political skills to manipulate political situations, and also the influential post of liaising between Lenin and the Politburo with great success. Though his ascent to the leadership of the Soviet Union was neither easy nor inevitable, Stalin’s success was not an accident. He had tactics in place to gain the position, and Lenin’s death was the most major of all events that Stalin used to his advantage to take power.

Relative to the statement, Stalin climbed the political ranks by being a loyal supporter and member to the Bolshevik party. Stalin, born in Georgia, and educated at Tiflis Theological College until he was expelled in 1899 for his revolutionary ideas, had joined Lenin's party as early as 1903 and thus was one of the Old Guard among Bolsheviks. To begin with, Stalin was one of Lenin’s favourites, and in 1912, Lenin, appointed him to serve on the first Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party. SparkNotes, 27/2/13) Stalin worked his way up the political ranks of the communist Bolshevik Party, gaining respect for doing many of the dirty jobs that no-one else wanted such as robbing banks to fund the Bolshevik Party . Between 1917 and 1922,

Lenin gave Stalin three key jobs, People's Commissar for Nationalities, Head of Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, and Liaison Officer which gave him a position of some importance amongst the party. However, in 1922, what can now be described as his most influential appointment to occur, Stalin was chosen to be General Secretary of the Communist Party. (JohndClare, 27/2/13) His appointment to General Secretary was the most important occurrence in the buildup to Stalin's battle for power as was the view of British Marxist Historian Edward Carr, who believed the rise of Stalin was due to the Party and the post as General Secretary. At the time this event appeared insignificant, most members in the party saw the job as quite dull and unimportant, but Stalin used it to his advantage with great success. (JohndClare, 1/3/13) The position gave him benefits which allowed him to influence the direction of the Communist Party.

The General Secretary position gave Stalin the power to expel or appoint people to posts, and control membership, therefore allowing Stalin to surround himself in the party with his supporters and remove those loyal to his enemies. He had accumulated enormous power into his hands. However, by 1923 Lenin's thoughts had differed, he had become worried about Stalin, describing him as too brutal and self-serving "... I am not sure that he will always know how to use that power with sufficient caution. " Fortunately for Stalin, he remained General Secretary until and beyond Lenin's death.

Without the post, Stalin would have found it near impossible to gain enough supporters and authority in order to rise to the heights of power. (Reed, 1967) Stalin was an opportunist, and the deterioration and then death of Lenin surfaced the important question as to who would succeed him. When

Lenin died, it created a confused and uncertain atmosphere to the party, however, Stalin was ready. Not only had Stalin claimed to be the true heir of the master's legacy at Lenin's funeral, but he also used Lenin's death to emulate the glow of Lenin's achievements by skilfully manipulating the dead leader's legacy for his own ends. Suite101, 4/3/13) This event provided the chance for Stalin to ride on the movement of popular enthusiasm for Lenin and his accomplishments. Though, despite having an accomplished political position, and having effectively executed his tactics of surrounding himself with his supporters, Stalin's quest for power was hampered by the revelation in Lenin's Testament " I suggest the comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that post and appointing another man. " Through this revelation, Lenin's death was the time for Stalin to put his plans into practice.

Succession of Lenin would be achieved at the defeat of his insufficient political rivals. He would do this by out-manoeuving them through political brilliance and ruthlessness. Everybody expected Trotsky the incredible leader of the Red Army would take over the leadership. (Reed, 1967) Stalin and Trotsky were therefore in competition for leadership as Trotsky was his main challenge. Their rivalry moved from relatively minor antagonisms and jealousies to bitter competition for the role of Lenin's successor. (Pereira, 1992) Stalin furthermore used his additional jobs such as networking between Lenin and the Politburo when Lenin was ill.

This meant that he controlled access to Lenin, and in doing so was able to send Trotsky the wrong date for Lenin's funeral. Trotsky's noted absence from Lenin's funeral resulted in him being depicted as an arrogant character,

and consequently Trotsky's colleagues overlooked his excellent leadership for his big-headed attitude. Stalin therefore formed an alliance with left wing Zinoviev and Kamenev to cover up Lenin's testament and get Trotsky dismissed in 1925. He then jumped ships to rightist side and encouraged 'Socialism in one country' as opposed to 'World Socialism' which resulted in the dismissal of Zinoviev and Kamenev.

Lastly, he used the General Secretary position to argue that the New Economic Policy was against communism, leading to the dismissal of the right wing Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky. (JohnDClare, 5/3/13) Stalin's political cleverness was the difference between him and his rivals as viewed by historian Chris Ward, "Trotsky and Bukharin might win the argument, but Stalin invariably won the vote". Stalin had longed to be a hero and leader, (Reed, 1967) so he used everything he had to his greatest advantage "He's not an intellectual like the other people you will meet ... but he knows what he wants.

He's got willpower, and he's going to be on top of the pile someday" as viewed in Author John Reed's seemingly accurate prediction on the outcome of Stalin. (Reed, 1919, 96) Stalin gained office after office, as he climbed the political ladder, though not until 1929 had he consolidated his position as head of the Communist Party. His ambition and highly calculated approach was a major factor to securing power. Though most importantly, his ascent to leadership was based on the various positions he held in the party and his ability to use them as an edge over his opponents with great skill at the death of his predecessor.

His desire to become leader of the Soviet Union was developed by his appointment to General Secretary. However, the death of Lenin opened the door for opportunity. Stalin was an opportunist. He was able to rise to the power how he did because he recognised the importance of each event as they came, and used them to his own advantage. Bibliography: Internet * Stalin Takes Power, accessed 28. 2. 13 <http://www.johndclare.net/Russ9.htm> * Brett Reed, European History, 1967, accessed 28. 2. 13 http://www.johndclare.net/Russ_Rev_Brett.htm Infoplease, The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, Copyright © 2011, Columbia University Press, <http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/people/stalin-joseph-vissarionovich-rise-to-power.html> * SparkNotes Editors. " SparkNote on Joseph Stalin. " 2005. <http://www.sparknotes.com/biography/stalin/> accessed February 27. 2. 13 * Moreorless, Joseph Stalin, Last modified 21 January 2013, accessed 4. 3. 13 <http://www.moreorless.au.com/killers/stalin.html> * Alan Kinghorn, Suite101, January 30 2011, accessed 4. 3. 13 <http://suite101.com/article/stalin-and-the-battle-to-succeed-lenin-a340177> * Norman Pereira, HistoryToday, Stalin and the communist Party in the 1920s, Published 1992, Viewed 9. 3. 13, <http://www.historytoday.com/norman-pereira/stalin-and-communist-party-1920s> Books * Josh Brooman, 1994, Russia and the USSR: Empire of Revolution, Longman Group Limited, Essex * John Reed, 1919, Ten Days that shook the World, 1919, Boni & Liveright, New York * Dean Smart, 1998, Russia under Lenin and Stalin, Stanley Thornes, Ellenborough * Steve Phillips, 2000, Lenin and the Russian Revolution, Heinemann