

# Stalin's position as general secretary essay sample



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In this essay I will discuss whether Stalin's position as General Secretary was the most important factor in his seize of power. Stalin's position as General Secretary was very important as it gave him control over the whole party machine. But there were also other factors that proved to be very important. This essay will attempt to assess the relative importance these factors. Stalin's position as General Secretary proved to be very important in his seize of power for many reasons. One reason for this is that it gave him the ability to control party membership which was extremely beneficial as it meant he could bring people that supported him into the party and also he could kick out those who did not agree with his ideology. Another reason is that it allowed him to undermine his rivals' power bases meaning he could sway the opinions of others into supporting him over the other competitors in the running for power. However, there were many other factors that contributed to Stalin's seize of power. One example of this is that the Bolsheviks made many errors, both general and individual. An example of a general error is the underestimation of Stalin.

This was beneficial as it allowed Stalin to make moves without anyone suspecting him of doing anything particularly damaging to their success. Another example is the failure to publish Lenin's testament. This was a mistake as the opinions Lenin voiced about Stalin's inabilities were the last real opportunity to stop Stalin. There were also individual errors that all the contenders made that benefitted Stalin. Trotsky made many errors in his attempt to seize power. One example of this is his failure to attend Lenin's funeral as it made him seem disrespectful to the previous leader, and allowed Stalin to give the speech. Another of Trotsky's mistakes was leaving

himself vulnerable to a factionalism charge after the 13th party congress, which was a negative as it left him unable to voice his opinion and disagreements without coming under the label of factionalist. The other contenders in the power struggle also made mistakes. Zinoviev and Kamenev allowed Stalin to pack committees with his own supporters which weakened their own chances.

They also tarnished their image when they publicly slandered Trotsky as it made them look unprofessional. Also, they later took their struggle with Stalin to the street which played directly into Stalin's hands as it meant he could both make them look petty and also use force against them which was exactly what he needed to remove them from the powers struggle. Finally, their alliance with Trotsky later having previously publically slandered him made them lose almost all of their remaining credibility as it made them seem like they would follow anyone who would give them a chance of gaining power. One more mistake made by Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy is that they all think that Stalin and his ' Socialism in One Country' speech is pro-NEP. This was a failing of theirs as Stalin was in fact anti NEP and this allowed him to gain their trust before denouncing the NEP and leaving them with nowhere to turn. Another contributing factor to the success of Stalin was the growing disillusionment with the NEP.

This was caused as the NEP started to stall in 1926 making it an unpopular policy within the party. This also made anyone who supported the NEP such as Bukharin lose credibility as it made them look short sighted and unable to support the future Russia. Stalin had always stayed on the fence about the NEP as it was a controversial policy and now as it started to weaken, he was

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able to say that he had always been against it and make himself look like he had foreseen this series of events. Stalin's success in this particular event was somewhat aided by his position as General Secretary as it allowed him to realise the lack of popularity with the NEP and give him enough time to distance himself from it. In conclusion, I believe that all of the factors I have mentioned contributed greatly to Stalin's victory in the power struggle, but I think his position as General Secretary was the most important as it allowed him to seemingly allow in any supporters to the party, but also to get rid of any particularly strong opposition as he was in control of party memberships. Also, it gave him the ability to sense any movement in popularity with both members of the party and policies, giving him the chance to adapt his speeches and his support to fit the current opinions of the rest of the party.