

# The struggle to succeed Lenin, 1924-1929

By the end of this spread you should be able to:  
1 describe the struggle to succeed Lenin  
2 explain why Stalin rather than Trotsky emerged as leader

## The Left Opposition

Leon Trotsky  
Grigori Zinoviev  
Leon Kamenev

- 1 Opposed continuation of the NEP because it favoured profit-making peasants
- 2 Wanted the Government to
  - a take over the land and force peasants to produce enough food for the towns
  - b turn the USSR into an industrial country immediately
  - c return to full Socialist principles.

## A divided Politburo

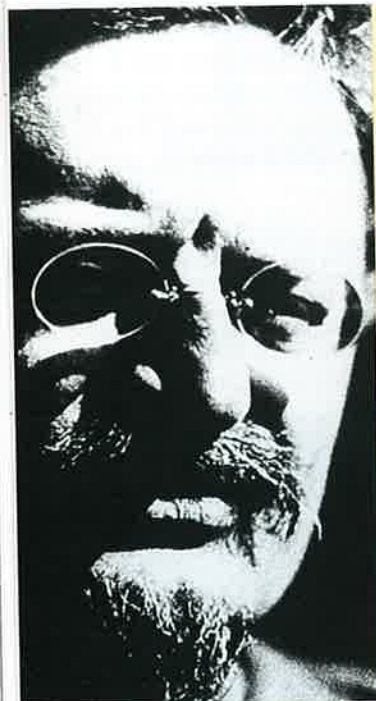
Before Lenin died in 1924 six of the seven members of the Politburo (page 123) had split into two groups. They were divided about the best way of improving the USSR's economy. The seventh member, Joseph Stalin, was not a passionate believer in either of the two points of view:

## The Rightists

Nikolai Bukharin  
Andrei Rykov  
Mikhail Tomsky

- 1 Wanted to continue Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP) for at least twenty more years.
- 2 Hoped to return to Socialist principles once the USSR was strong again.

Fig. 1 Rivals for the succession



**Leon Trotsky**  
Commissar for War

### Advantages

- 1 The most obvious choice to follow Lenin because of his
  - a strong personality
  - b intelligence
  - c powerful leadership qualities shown during the October Revolution and Civil War
- 2 Popular with the army

### Disadvantages

Unpopular in Politburo



**Joseph Stalin**  
General Secretary of the Communist Party  
Commissar of Nationalities  
Member of the Orgburo (committee responsible for Party organization)

### Advantages

- 1 As General Secretary held the key post in the Party
- 2 Could command support because many Party officials owed their position to him

### Disadvantages

Thought of as a dull, hardworking administrator

Fig. 2 How Stalin achieved power

### Step 1 Lenin's man, 1924

After Lenin's death Stalin  
1 encouraged the cult of Lenin, e.g. the embalming and permanent display of his body  
2 presented himself as Lenin's close follower, e.g. he was chief mourner at his funeral.

### Step 2 Surviving Lenin's Testament, 1924

- 1 Lenin's Testament was a letter he wrote to the Party Congress to be read out after his death.
- 2 In it Lenin recommended Stalin should be replaced as Party Secretary.
- 3 Stalin was saved when the Central Committee decided to keep the letter secret because
  - a it did not want to provoke disunity
  - b Kamenev and Zinoviev defended Stalin. They wanted his help to prevent Trotsky becoming leader.

### Step 3 The dismissal of Trotsky, 1925

- 1 In the debate about future policy Trotsky argued for 'Permanent Revolution'. He wanted to protect Communism in the USSR by promoting Communist revolutions abroad.
- 2 Stalin argued for 'Socialism in one Country'. He wanted Communists to concentrate on building up the USSR's strength.
- 3 Trotsky's ideas proved unpopular with the Party.
- 4 Kamenev and Zinoviev allied with Stalin and the Rightists in the Politburo to dismiss Trotsky as Commissar of War.

### Step 4 Attacking the Left, 1926-27

- 1 With three of his allies elected to the Politburo, and Rightist support, Stalin had Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev dismissed from the Politburo.
- 2 Trotsky and Zinoviev were then expelled from the Party.

### Step 5 Attacking the Right, 1928-29

- 1 In the Politburo, Stalin now argued against the NEP and in favour of expanding industry.
- 2 When the Rightists opposed this, Stalin used his majority to vote them down.
- 3 In 1929, Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsky resigned.

## Why did Stalin and not Trotsky emerge as leader?

### Stalin

- 1 successfully presented himself as Lenin's loyal disciple (Fig. 2)
- 2 exploited his strong powerbase within the Party (Fig. 1)
- 3 supported the popular idea of 'Socialism in one country' (Fig. 2)
- 4 successfully played off Left and Right in the Politburo (Fig. 2).

### Trotsky

- 1 was unpopular in the Politburo
- 2 suffered from the rivalry of Kamenev and Zinoviev who agreed with him politically, but disliked him personally and so allied with Stalin to block his succession
- 3 supported the unpopular idea of 'Permanent Revolution' (Fig. 2)
- 4 failed to use his popularity in the army to help his cause.

- 1 Why was Trotsky not Stalin the favourite to succeed Lenin?
- 2 List the factors which caused Stalin rather than

Trotsky to become leader. Use the headings:  
a Stalin i his qualities ii his actions  
b Trotsky i his qualities ii his actions