

Key Term

Collectivisation: the abolition of private ownership of land and its replacement by a system under which the peasants of a village or several villages owned the land jointly, though under the Communist Party's tight control.

How was Stalin able to secure the leadership of the Communist Party? (continued)

- **Major policy disagreements within the Party.** The Party was split over whether to continue with NEP or not. From 1923, those on the Left of the Party (e.g. Trotsky and Zinoviev) believed NEP should be replaced by rapid industrialisation and a move towards **collectivisation** of agriculture, whereas those on the Right (chiefly Bukharin) argued that NEP was working and should be maintained.

The other key policy dispute was over the issue of promoting worldwide revolution. The Left, particularly Trotsky, favoured 'Permanent Revolution', seeing international revolution as essential to the survival of socialism in Russia. By contrast, the Right adopted the slogan 'Socialism in One Country', arguing that, having witnessed the suppression of communist revolutions in Germany and Hungary, international revolution was not possible for the foreseeable future and so the Russian Communist Party must focus on establishing a socialist economy at home.

Stalin began by supporting the Right against the Left on the question of NEP and he used the support of the Right to remove the Left from the *Politburo* in 1926. Then from 1928, Stalin turned on the Right and attacked NEP, urging the Party to adopt rapid industrialisation and forced collectivisation. In 1929–1930, the Right (Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsky) were removed from the *Politburo* and replaced by supporters of Stalin.

4. **Stalin was also much better than his rivals at gauging the mood of the ordinary Party members.** He realised that in the mid-1920s the Party had little interest in exporting revolution abroad, weary as it was after the upheavals of 1917–1921, and that most of the Party thought that NEP was a success in permitting economic recovery. Equally, Stalin judged correctly that most Communists had, by 1928–1929, begun to have serious reservations about NEP because economic growth was slowing down and the peasants were withholding grain from the markets in an attempt to force prices up. By the late 1920s, many in the Party were impatient to launch more socialist economic policies, such as collectivisation of agriculture, and wanted to transform the USSR into a modern industrial state.
5. **Stalin was able to outmanoeuvre Trotsky by appearing as the chief mourner at Lenin's funeral** (having misled Trotsky about its date) and then by promoting himself as the true heir of Lenin.
6. **Trotsky's health was poor** in 1924–1925, just when he needed to be at his strongest as the power struggle developed.
7. **Stalin was fortunate in that, following Lenin's death in January 1924, the Central Committee decided not to publish Lenin's *Political Testament*** in which Lenin had been deeply critical of Stalin (and somewhat less so of other leading Communists) and had recommended Stalin's dismissal as General Secretary.
8. **Stalin was able to use the Resolution on Party Unity (1921) to silence his opponents** within the top tiers of the Party by branding them as factions seeking to undermine Party unity. So, first Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev were branded the 'Left Opposition' and later Bukharin, Tomsky and Rykov were labelled the 'Right Opposition'.

4.1 The *Politburo* (1924–1926)

