Stalin And The Ussr Essay, Research Paper

Stalin, Joseph Vissarionovich

1879-1953, Russian revolutionary, head of the USSR

(1924-53). A Georgian cobbler’s son named

Dzhugashvili, he joined the Social-Democratic party

while a seminarian and soon became a professional

revolutionary. In the 1903 party split (see BOLSHEVISM

AND MENSHEVISM) he sided with LENIN. Stalin

attended party congresses abroad and worked in the

Georgian party press. In 1912 he went to St. Petersburg,

where he was elected to the party’s central committee.

About this time he took the name Stalin (man of steel).

His sixth arrest (1913) led to four years of Siberian exile.

After the RUSSIAN REVOLUTION of March 1917, he

joined the editorial board of the party paper Pravda.

When the Bolsheviks took power (Nov. 1917) he became

people’s commissar of nationalities. He also played an

important administrative role in the civil war (1918-20). In

1922 Stalin was made general secretary of the party.

Lenin, before he died in 1924, wrote a testament urging

Stalin’s removal from the post because of his arbitrary

conduct; but in the struggle to succeed Lenin, Stalin

was victorious. By 1927 he had discarded his erstwhile

allies BUKHARIN, KAMENEV, and ZINOVIEV; in 1929

TROTSKY, his major rival for the succession, was exiled

from the USSR. Forcible agricultural collectivization and

breakneck industrialization began in 1928. The state,

instead of withering away, as Marx had foreseen, was

glorified. Nationalism was revived as socialism in one

country. The military was reorganized along czarist lines.

Conservatism permeated official policy on art,

education, and the family. Political repression and terror

reached a height in the 1930s. In a public trial Bukharin,

Kamenev, Zinoviev, and others were charged with

conspiring to overthrow the regime; they confessed and

were executed. Enormous numbers of ordinary citizens

also fell victim. Stalin’s foreign policy in the 1930s

focused on efforts to form alliances with Britain and

France against NAZI Germany; the 1939 Russo-German

nonaggression pact marked the failure of these efforts.

In 1941 Stalin took over the premiership from

MOLOTOV. The German invasion (June 22) found him

unprepared; at war’s end (1945) 20 million Russians were

dead (see UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS).

At the TEHERAN CONFERENCE and the YALTA

CONFERENCE Stalin gained Western recognition of a

Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. The

paranoia of his last years led to a period of terror

reminiscent of the 1930s. On his death (1953) his body

was placed next to Lenin’s. In 1956, at the 20th Party

Congress, KHRUSHCHEV denounced Stalin’s tyranny,

but destalinization has never been thoroughgoing

Bibliography

Wolfson

Lowe