

Candidate 2 evidence (Field 8)

ABSTRACT INTRODUCTION

“If there is a person, there is a problem: no person no problem”. – Joseph Stalin¹

The Great Terror, a key characteristic of Stalinist Russia between 1932 and 1939, provokes great historical debate as to its cause. It would be fair to state that there may never be a definitive answer to the question of what the true purpose was or the proposed intention of the Great Terror.

Recent research has provided rich sources of information. Memorial established by Orlando Figes and Naumov and Getty’s *The Road to Terror* are examples of such primary evidence as are collections by Edward Acton, Richard Sakwa and Phillip Boobyer. Scholarship from Robert Conquest, Robert Service, Wendy Goldman, Ian Thatcher, Moshe Lewin and Sheila Fitzpatrick helps give perspectives to the debate.

However, there is no questioning the effect which it had on everyday life in Russia, as Wendy Z. Goldman states, the whole of society contributed in the hunt for “*masked*” enemies by exposing members of their communities and families.

“whereby the country began to resemble a body in the throes of

1 https://www.azquotes.com/author/13993-Joseph_Stalin

some terrible autoimmune disease, attacking and destroying its own organs, nervous system, flesh, and blood.”²

With the support of the NKVD, Russian society became a terror state whereby friends and family members would ‘denounce’ others. Economic problems leading to social issues was a massive difficulty, although, Historian Ian Thatcher strongly argues that, *“Stalin was the architect of terror”³*. Many historians merely conclude that it is down to Stalin and his obsessive behaviour, relating it to his past life in his early years with the death of his loved ones. As Robert Conquest contends, *“Stalin seems to have been deeply affected by Nadezhda’s death.”⁴* There is no doubting that perhaps Stalin was hurt by his loved one’s behaviour towards him however, historically, there is no clear evidence to suggest that this was his motive for instigating the Great Terror 1934-1939. It would be impossible to put blame on the purges solely on one man. As Getty and Naumov argue

“Stalin was not sure exactly what kind of repression he wanted or how to get it until rather late in the story.”⁵

Arguably, there were a multitude of factors which prompted the Great Purge.

However, there are three consistent factors which emerge from all the research:

2 Wendy Z. Goldman, *Inventing the Enemy: Denunciation and Terror in Stalin’s Russia*. Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 297

3 Ian Thatcher, *Stalin’s Russia: Society and Culture* part 1. (youtube video)

4 Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror. A Reassessment*. Plimco, 2000, p. 58.

5 Getty, J. A and Naumov, O, V. *The Road to Terror: Stalin and Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932,1929*, Yale University Press, 1999, p. xiii,

Stalin's determination to have political control, socio-economic difficulties and unease, and the role of the NKVD. This dissertation will examine these three areas in order to gain a greater understanding of what were the main causes of Stalin's Great Purge. The Terror was indeed the main instrument in creating Soviet society and clearly Stalin's political determination underpinned it.

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