
The Exploits Of Leon Trotsky

DESCRIBE THE RISE TO PROMINENCE OF THE PERSONALITY YOU HAVE STUDIED

Leon Trotsky was born into a 'rich peasant' family in the Ukraine in 1879, where he was immediately met with prejudice due to his family originating from a Jewish background. As a result of Trotsky developing his political ideologies under the incompetent tsarist rule of Nicholas II, his radical Marxist beliefs led him to a rise to prominence throughout the fall of the Romanov dynasty and the Bolshevik rule that followed. There were a number of significant events and political positions that assisted him in his increase in status.

Throughout the Twentieth Century and specifically the 1917 Revolution in Russia, Leon Trotsky's importance grew significantly due to his revolutionary ideas and actions against the Tsarist regime. During this time, he became famous for his revolutionary speeches that he conducted to factories and workers to inspire them to revolt against their government. As he began to organise the Military Revolutionary Committee and write and deliver speeches to the public, it was evident that his role in the Revolution was growing at a rapid pace. From this period onwards, "Leon Trotsky burst upon the international stage as the brain behind the Russian Revolution." Historian Paul Le Blanc, has usefully highlighted the significance of Trotsky arriving in Russia during the revolution and the impact he had. This secondary source is an extract from the book, 'Leon Trotsky' (2015), where both the negatives and positives of his life are depicted, which indicates there is no bias. His revolutionary actions continued to increase his popularity and eventually Trotsky became the incentive to uprising. After the Revolution had been won, Stalin gave Trotsky recognition through, "All practical work in connection with the organisation of the uprising was done under the direction of comrade Trotsky". This primary source given by Stalin is a clear indication of the prominence of Trotsky's contributions to the Revolution, and is useful when assessing his rise to prominence. However, during this period, Stalin was a Bolshevik who wanted Trotsky to align himself to their party, which may indicate a bias. Trotsky's rise to prominence was set to increase rapidly after his knowledge and skills were displayed in the 1917 revolution.

After the 1917 revolution, Trotsky's popularity was confirmed when the Bolsheviks, lead by Lenin, called for his election to the Executive Party. The Bolsheviks wanted to align themselves with Trotsky due to his newly gained prominence in the St Petersburg Soviet, his alignment with the Kronstadt Naval Base and the fact that his actions before and during the revolution were vital to the success of the Bolshevik regime. As Historian H. William stated, "To Lenin, Trotsky

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was a valuable ally. It was Trotsky whose oratory could sway crowds.” Historian Huntston Williams, through this secondary source, has usefully emphasised a reason why the Bolsheviks would want Trotsky to align with their party. From his newly gained alignment with the Bolsheviks, Trotsky was able to convince Lenin to postpone the revolution to October in order to capitalise on the All Russian Congress of Soviets. From actions like these it was clear that, “It was Trotsky who provided the necessary theoretic basis upon which Russian Revolution could resurrect itself from the defeat of 1905 and go on to victory.” This extract originates from the introduction by Alan Wood, in Leon Trotsky’s book ‘My Life’, where the role of Trotsky in the Bolshevik revolution is highlighted. However, this source contains bias towards Trotsky as it is a part of his own biography. From Trotsky’s ability to sway Lenin’s actions, it is evident that his influence and opinion is one that is valuable to Lenin. From the success of his plan and his growing prominence in the Bolshevik party after this period, it is clear that his importance was growing rapidly.

Once aligned with the Bolsheviks, Trotsky’s prominence was heightened as he was quickly integrated into the party where he took on a number of political roles, including the Commissar of Foreign Affairs and later the Commissar of War. As a result of his previous successes and support, Trotsky was given a number of important roles due to the fact that “Within a few months of his arrival in Petrograd, Trotsky became one of the stars on the revolutionary circuit and his presence was in huge demand.” This quote from Volkogonous (a close colleague of Trotsky’s), gives reason to why Trotsky had become such a significant figure while also depicting his rise in status. Although this primary source may contain some bias, it is very helpful in understanding why Trotsky was given high-ranking political positions. Although Trotsky had failures under the position of Commissar for Foreign Affairs, he had significant successes under the Commissar for War, where he created the Red Army. During the creation of the Red army, where he reverted to traditional army structure, and gave moral and physical support during the civil war, Trotsky’s prestige grew considerably. Under this role, Trotsky’s legacy grew widely as “An impressive Red Army, was put together from almost scratch...by 1920, they had silenced major threats to Bolshevism.” Albert Lindermann has emphasised this significance of Trotsky’s Red army to shed light on importance of his role and does not have clear indication of bias. Throughout this period, Trotsky’s variety of political roles shaped his image substantially and consequently his prominence was increased.

As a result of Trotsky’s role in the 1917 revolution, the Bolshevik regime, and a number of political positions, he had a rapid increase in prominence. From a number of major historical events surrounding the Bolshevik regime, Leon Trotsky became one of the most recognised figures in Russia’s history.

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