Daniel Stambler Journal 3

Word Count: 396

Khleviuk, Brooks, and Brooks and Chernyakskiy all agree that if Lenin had lived for another decade, Soviet Russia would have developed similarly to the way it did. Khleviuk suggests that Lenin was more ideologically driven than Stalin, who had no problem changing his ideals to achieve his desires. In contrast, Brooks, and Brooks and Chernyakskiy claim that Lenin tweaked Marxist ideology to justify gaining power. After all, Lenin created the Bolsheviks because he believed that an elite party of intellectuals should rule.

Brooks and Chernyakskiy (p 65) claim that Lenin, after taking power, began to establish Bolshevik party rule. This contradicted his revolutionary slogan, which called for giving all power to the Soviets. Lenin went after the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionary party. He expelled leaders of these parties, and cracked down on other groups like the intelligentsia. During the civil war, his secret police, the Cheka, brutally executed all “enemies of the people.” At least that’s the terminology Lenin used to attack those who opposed him and his party.

Brooks and Chernyakskiy argue that had Lenin stayed alive, he would have abolished the NEP like Stalin did. Lenin was at first hesitant to implement the NEP and viewed its implementation as an ideologically strategic retreat. However, Lenin’s reasoning for this action would have been more ideologically driven than Stalin’s. As Khleviuk (p 105) states, Stalin created a leftist opposition to the NEP in order to remove Bukharin from power. Furthermore, Lenin might have tried to instate a plan like Stalin’s Five Year plan, but would have retracted it before Stalin did, who partially saw the Five Year plan as a war against the peasants.

Khleviuk (p 134) claims that Lenin, despite showing a similar power hunger to Stalin, would probably have dealt with party members differently. In 1934, Stalin led a great purge of party members who he feared knew too much and were plotting against him. Lenin would not have needed such purges. Brooks (p 89) concurs and also points out that Stalin favored having a cult of himself, while Lenin did not.

All three authors largely agree that Lenin laid the groundwork for the rise of Stalinism. However, they differ on how much Lenin was committed to the Marxist ideology. Given the similarity of the two leaders, the Soviet Union under Lenin would have probably developed similarly to how it did under Stalin.