Daniel Stambler Journal 4

Word Count: 392

Terror had a significant role in Stalin’s rule. Paranoid that everyone was a threat to his regime, Stalin used terror to ensure his safety. Under Stalin’s rule, not even his most loyal supporters were safe from his purges. Furthermore, the “Great Terror” extended to the ordinary population and claimed the lives of many innocents, who were given show trials.

Until the very end of his reign, Stalin used terror to control both the party and the common people of Russia. The party purges and the “Great Terror” of the 1930s are the largest examples of Stalin’s paranoia. Klevniuk states (p 134) that following Kirov’s murder, Stalin purged the government of almost all Bolsheviks who participated in the Revolution. He feared that they knew too much about his rather limited involvement in the October Revolution, which according to Brooks (p 84), the media completely exaggerated.

A cornerstone of Stalin’s terror policy was how he effectively purged both the Communist party and the secret police. Klevniuk states (p 144) that once Stalin promoted young party members to high positions, he constantly rotated and overworked them to ensure that no one got too comfortable with their situation. Brooks states (p 128) that this type of terror made his younger subordinates submissive, as they knew that any misstep would cost them their lives. Stalin also controlled the secret police and military through purges**.** In addition, he scapegoated Yezhov, then chief of the NKVD to deflect blame from himself.

Terror played a large role in Soviet culture. Ilf and Petrov write (p 217) how several of their characters pretend to be insane because they are afraid of being purged outside the confines of the asylum. Furthermore, Ilf and Petrov show the impact of Stalinist rule on Soviet writers. As Brooks (p 132) states, artists and writers who criticized the government and its policies risked their lives. Therefore, if Ilf and Petrov had been allowed to criticize the government, their book could have ended with Zosya and Bender getting back together or with Bender successfully leaving the country with his millions.

Because of the terror, the Soviet populace lived in fear that the government would eventually come for them. Even high ranking members of the government weren’t spared. Therefore, terror was Stalin’s perfect tool to wage psychological warfare on his subjects, and an essential part of Stalinist rule.