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Ivan A. Anfertiev

Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, Russian Federation

J. V. Stalin's Road to Power: From Project of Socialist Control to Heading of the People's Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection

Abstract

The article analyzes activities of J. V. Stalin, member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the RCP (B), while serving as People's Commissar of State Control. The study aims to identify main objectives of the reorganization of the People's Commissariat, which resulted in its gaining supervisory supra-government functions under the decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee in April 1918. The decree rather dubiously attempted to shift the blame for governing bodies' shortcomings to tsarist bureaucrats who cooperated with Soviet authorities and were dubbed 'technical officers with pre-revolutionary experience.' The draft of the decree

of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee 'On State Control' of March 8, 1919 showed the same intention to cover up a dangerous phenomenon — formation of close-knit Soviet bureaucracy which was characterized by incompetence, low standard of culture, irresponsibility, and tendency to feather their own nest. The article reveals cases when crimes of such party and soviet officials could no longer be concealed; control bodies — workers' and peasants' inspectorates — formed spontaneously to unmask and punish them, and yet some of their members, under pressure or from self-interest, tended to show understanding for offenders and petitioned for commutation. To admit publicly (i.e. in a decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee) to the dangerous phenomenon was impossible, since it rose a legitimate question of advantages of the Bolshevik coup in October 1917. And yet it was likewise impossible to ignore malfeasance in office perpetrated by the new Soviet bureaucracy. Neither reorganized People's Commissariat of State Control, nor its successor, People's Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection (formed by incorporation of the Central Control Commission of the RCP (B)), could eradicate this so-called 'bureaucracy.' The author brings into question the popular thesis that J. V. Stalin was an 'accidental' figure to succeed to the Bolsheviks' leader V. I. Lenin.

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Keywords

Source, People's Commissariat of State Control of the RSFSR, People's Commissariat of Workers' and Peasants' Inspection of the USSR, Central Control Commission of the RCP (B), J. V. Stalin, bureaucracy, socialist control, workers' inspectorate, decree of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, archival document.

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About author

Anfertiev Ivan Anatol'evich, PhD in History, associate professor, Russian State University for Humanities, History and Archives Institute, department of contemporary Russian history, professor, Moscow, Russian Federation, +7-916-252-28-22, vestarchive@gmail.com

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