

UNIT 1 - EXERCISE 16
KULAK HANGING ORDER
(Primary Source)

August 11, 1918

Send to Penza: To Comrades Kuraev, Bosh, Minkin, and other Penza communists,

Comrades! The revolt by the five kulak volost's must be suppressed without mercy. The interest of the entire revolution demands this, because we have now before us our final decisive battle "with the kulaks." We need to set an example.

1. You need to hang (hang without fail, so that the public sees) at least 100 notorious kulaks, the rich, and the bloodsuckers.
2. Publish their names.
3. Take away all of their grain.
4. Execute the hostages in accordance with yesterday's telegram.

This needs to be accomplished in such a way, that people for hundreds of miles around will see, tremble, know, and scream out: let's choke and strangle those blood-sucking kulaks.

Telegraph us acknowledging receipt and execution of this.

Yours, Lenin

P.S. Use your toughest people for this.

Vladimir Illyich Lenin (1870-1924): *Hanging Order for Kulaks, November 8, 1918*

1. Write a definition of *kulak*.

2. This hanging order was written in November 1918, during the implementation of War Communism. What inferences can you make from this message about why Lenin thought that it was in "the interest of the entire revolution" that the kulaks "be suppressed without mercy"?

3. By 1921, Lenin realized that War Communism was not resulting in economic recovery. He introduced a new economic plan under which the kulaks were again allowed to flourish. Describe this new plan.

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4. Explain what makes this a primary source and not a secondary source.

5. The fate of the kulaks would change once more in 1928 under Stalin. What finally happened to the kulaks?

6. Consider why Lenin and Stalin both sought to eliminate the kulaks, and answer whether or not the ends justified the means (the elimination of the entire class).

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STALIN'S PURGES

(Secondary Source)

In 1936, Stalin began to attack his political opponents in a series of "purges" aimed at destroying the vestiges of political opposition to him. What follows is the official explanation from textbooks published before Stalin's excesses were repudiated by his successors.

The achievements of Socialism in our country were a cause of rejoicing not only to the Party, and not only to the workers and collective farmers, but also to our Soviet intelligentsia, and to all honest citizens of the Soviet Union.

But they were no cause of rejoicing to the remnants of the defeated exploiting classes; on the contrary, they only enraged them the more as time went on.

They infuriated the lickspittles of the defeated classes - the puny remnants of the following of Bukharin and Trotsky.

These gentry were guided in their evaluation of the achievements of the workers and collective farmers not by the interests of the people, who applauded every such achievement, but by the interests of their own wretched and putrid faction, which had lost all contact with the realities of life. Since the achievements of Socialism in our country meant the victory of the policy of the Party and the utter bankruptcy of their own policy, these gentry, instead of admitting the obvious facts and joining the common cause, began to revenge themselves on the Party and the people for their own failure, for their own bankruptcy; they began to resort to foul play and sabotage against the cause of the workers and collective farmers, to blow up pits, set fire to factories, and commit acts of wrecking in collective and state farms, with the object of undoing the achievements of the workers and collective farmers and evoking popular discontent against the Soviet Government. And in order, while doing so, to shield their puny group from exposure and destruction, they simulated loyalty to the Party, fawned upon it, eulogized it, cringed before it more and more, while in reality continuing their underhand subversive activities against the workers and peasants.

At the Seventeenth Party Congress, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky made repentant speeches, praising the Party and extolling its achievements to the skies. But the congress detected a ring of insincerity and duplicity in their speeches; for what the Party expects from its members is not eulogies and rhapsodies over its achievements, but conscientious work on the Socialist front. And this was what the Bukharinites had showed no signs of for a long time. The Party saw that the hollow speeches of these gentry were in reality meant for their supporters outside the congress, to serve as a lesson to them in duplicity, and a call to them not to lay down their arms.

Speeches were also made at the Seventeenth Congress by the Trotskyites, Zinoviev and Kamenev, who lashed themselves extravagantly for their mistakes, and eulogized the Party no less extravagantly for its achievements. But the congress could not help seeing that both their nauseating self-castigation and their fulsome praise of the party were only meant to hide an uneasy and unclean conscience.

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However, the Party did not yet know or suspect that while these gentry were making their cloying speeches at the congress they were hatching a villainous plot against the life of S. M. Kirov.

On December 1, 1934, S. M. Kirov was foully murdered in the Smolny, in Leningrad [St. Petersburg], by a shot from a revolver.

The assassin was caught red-handed and turned out to be a member of a secret counter-revolutionary group made up of members of an anti-Soviet group of Zinovievites in Leningrad.

S. M. Kirov was loved by the Party and the working class, and his murder stirred the people profoundly, sending a wave of wrath and deep sorrow through the country.

The investigation established that in 1933 and 1934 an underground counter-revolutionary terrorist group had been formed in Leningrad consisting of former members of the Zinoviev opposition and headed by a so-called "Leningrad Centre." The purpose of this group was to murder leaders of the Communist Party. S. M. Kirov was chosen as the first victim. The testimony of the members of this counter-revolutionary group showed that they were connected with representatives of foreign capitalist states and were receiving funds from them.

The exposed members of this organization were sentenced by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. to the supreme penalty - to be shot.

Soon afterwards the existence of an underground counter-revolutionary organization called the "Moscow Centre" was discovered. The preliminary investigation and the trial revealed the villainous part played by Zinoviev, Kamenev, Yevdokimo and other leaders of this organization in cultivating the terrorist mentality among their followers, and in plotting the murder of members of the Party Central Committee and of the Soviet Government.

To such depths of duplicity and villainy had these people sunk that Zinoviev, who was one of the organizers and instigators of the assassination of S. M. Kirov, and who had urged the murderer to hasten the crime, wrote an obituary of Kirov speaking of him in terms of eulogy, and demanded that it be published.

The Zinovievites simulated remorse in court; but they persisted in their duplicity even in the dock. They concealed their connection with Trotsky. They concealed the fact that together with the Trotskyites they had sold themselves to fascist espionage services. They concealed their spying and wrecking activities. They concealed from the court their connections with the Bukharinites, and the existence of a united Trotsky-Bukharin gang of fascist hirelings.

As it later transpired, the murder of Comrade Kirov was the work of this united Trotsky-Bukharin gang...

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The chief instigator and ringleader of this gang of assassins and spies was Judas Trotsky. Trotsky's assistants and agents in carrying out his counter-revolutionary instructions were Zinoviev, Kamenev and their Trotskyite underlings. They were preparing to bring about the defeat of the U.S.S.R. in the event of attack by imperialist countries; they had become defeatists with regard to the workers' and peasants' state; they had become despicable tools and agents of the German and Japanese fascists.

The main lesson which the Party organizations had to draw from the trials of the persons implicated in the foul murder of S. M. Kirov was that they must put an end to their own political blindness and political heedlessness, and must increase their vigilance and the vigilance of all Party members...

Purging and consolidating its ranks, destroying the enemies of the Party and relentlessly combating distortions of the Party line, the Bolshevik Party rallied closer than ever around its Central Committee, under whose leadership the Party and the Soviet land now passed to a new stage - the completion of the construction of a classless, Socialist society.

~From *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course*. J. V. Stalin et al, 1938, Moscow.

1. What were the Purges?

2. Why did the Seventeenth Party Congress believe the Bukharinites to be insincere?

3. Which counter-revolutionary groups did Stalin uncover?

4. What was the purpose of the Leningrad Centre?

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5. What were the counter-revolutionary groups accused of?

6. Who was Trotsky, and why do you think he was villainized by Stalin?

7. Discuss the reliability of this excerpt.

8. Explain the bias present in this excerpt. How does this bias impact the validity of this source?

9. If this excerpt from a Soviet textbook (1938) was your main source of historical information in high school, would you believe that Stalin was justified in his purges?
