

### Task 1

Read the following three sources carefully, considering their historical context. Can they be reconciled? Make a note of any issues, contradictions or questions.

#### Source 1

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I have no illusions about our having only just entered the period of *transition* to socialism, about not having yet reached socialism. But if you say that our state is a socialist Republic of Soviets, you will be right ... We are far from having completed even the transitional period from capitalism to socialism. We have never cherished the hope that we could finish it without the aid of the international proletariat. We never had any illusions on that score, and we know how difficult is the road that leads from capitalism to socialism. But it is our duty to say that our Soviet Republic is a socialist republic because we have taken this road, and our words will not be empty words.

V.I.Lenin, *Report on the Activities of the Council of People's Commissars* (11 January 1918)

#### Source 2

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Departing from us, Comrade Lenin adjured us to hold high and guard the purity of the great title of member of the Party. We vow to you, Comrade Lenin, that we will fulfil your behest with credit. Departing from us, Comrade Lenin, adjured us to guard the unity of our Party as the apple of our eye. We vow to you, Comrade Lenin, that this behest, too, we will fulfil with credit!

From a speech made by Stalin at the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets (1924)

#### Source 3

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"Uneven economic and political development," says Lenin, "is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence the victory of socialism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country taken separately. The victorious proletariat of that country, having expropriated the capitalists and organised its own socialist production, would stand up *against* the rest of the world, the capitalist world, attracting to its cause the oppressed classes of other countries, raising revolts in those countries against the capitalists, and in the event of necessity coming out even with armed force against the exploiting classes and their states." For "the free union of nations in socialism is impossible without a more or less prolonged and stubborn struggle of the socialist republics against the backward states."

The opportunists of all countries assert that the proletarian revolution can begin - if it is to begin anywhere at all - only in industrially developed countries, and that the more highly developed these countries are industrially the more chances there are for the victory of socialism. Moreover, according to them, the possibility of the victory of socialism in one country, and one in which capitalism is little developed at that, is excluded as something absolutely improbable. As far back as the period of the war, Lenin taking as his basis the law of uneven development of the imperialist states, opposed to the opportunists his theory of the proletarian revolution about the victory of socialism in one country, even if that that country is one in which capitalism is less developed.

J.V.Stalin, *The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists* (1924)

### Task 2

Read sources 4-8 and use them to help you understand the Lenin and Stalin sources (1-3).

#### Source 4

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Marxism starts out with the assumption that people's abilities and requirements are not, and cannot be, equal in quality or in quantity, either in the period of socialism or in the period of communism.

Speech by Stalin, 1934, quoted by Sidney & Beatrice Webb *Soviet Communism a New Civilisation?* (1935)

#### Source 5

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In Marx's letter concerning the Gotha program of the German Social Democracy, Stalin found a phrase to the effect that during the first period of socialism inequality will still be preserved, or, as he expressed it, the bourgeois prerogative in the sphere of distribution. Marx did not mean by this the creation of a new inequality but merely a gradual rather than a sudden elimination of the old inequality in the sphere of wages. This quotation was incorrectly interpreted as a declaration of the rights and privileges of the bureaucrats and their satellites. The future of the Soviet Union was thus divorced from the future of the international proletariat and the bureaucracy was provided with a theoretical justification for special privileges and powers over the masses of the toilers inside the Soviet Union.

Leon Trotsky, *Stalin* (1947)

#### Source 6

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The cult of the state and worship of rank, the irresponsibility of those who hold power and the population's lack of rights, the hierarchy of privileges and the canonisation of hypocrisy, the barrack system of social and intellectual life, the suppression of the individual and the destruction of independent thought, the environment of terror and suspicion, the atomisation of people and the notorious 'vigilance', the uncontrolled violence and the legalised cruelty.

R. A. Medvedev an oppositional Marxist historian, writing in the Soviet era, responding to the question 'what is Stalinism?'. Quoted in Martin McCauley, *Stalin and Stalinism* (1983)

#### Source 7

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Stalin probably read Lenin's works more closely than anyone else, and to greater effect. In so many respects inferior to Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin, he succeeded in clambering to the pinnacle of power precisely because he used as his chief weapon the 'defence' of Leninism, and presented himself as the chief interpreter of Lenin's ideas.

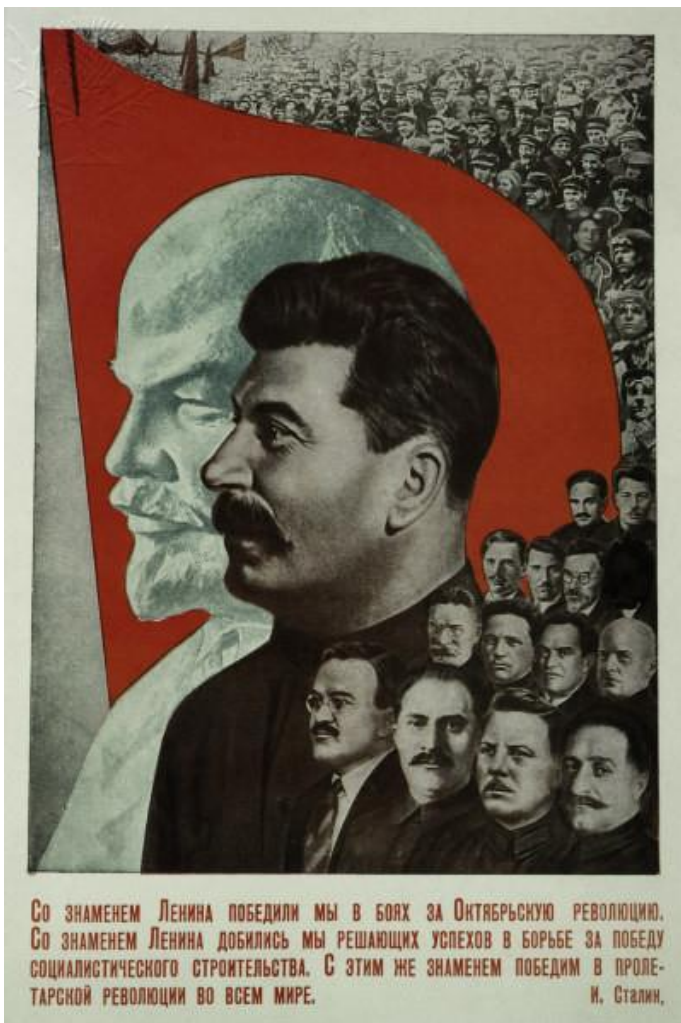
Dmitri Volkogonov, *Lenin: Life and Legacy* (1995)

### Source 8

In a more advanced phase of communist society, when the enslaving subjugation of individuals to the division of labour, and thereby the antithesis between intellectual and physical labour, have disappeared; when labour is no longer just a means of keeping alive but has itself become a vital need; when the all-round development of individuals has also increased their productive powers and all the springs of cooperative wealth flow more abundantly - only then can society wholly cross the narrow horizon of bourgeois right and inscribe on its banner: From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs!

Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875)

### Source 9



Stalin, Lenin's Banner, Poster, 1933 / Credit: akg Images / Universal Images Group / Copyright © AKG Images / For Education Use Only. This and millions of other educational images are available through Britannica Image Quest. For a free trial, please visit [www.britannica.co.uk/trial](http://www.britannica.co.uk/trial)

‘Under Lenin’s banner for the second 5 year plan!’ Poster by Sergei Senkin (1931)

### Task 3

Using your understanding of all the sources, consider:

- Why Stalin espoused 'Socialism in One Country'?
- The nature of Stalinism?