Stalin's rise to power

1. His personality
   - Stalin was ruthless and opportunistic. He was underestimated by others in the Party who saw him as the 'grey blur' or 'invisble file card'.
   - Commissar for nationalities
   - Liaison officer between Politburo and Orgburo
   - Head of Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate
   - His position as General Secretary of the Party
     - Gave him power to make appointments within the Party - could use this to ensure new appointees were loyal to him
     - Gave him access to 26,000 personal files of Party members - would use this information to blackmail

2. He held key positions in the Party which allowed him to gain support
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3. He used the Lenin Enrollment to build up a power base
   - This was a drive to increase membership of the party among the proletariat - 50,000 new members recruited, largely uneducated and politically inexperienced.
   - Stalin capitalised on his own humble background to win their support

4. He capitalised on Lenin's death
   - Stalin organised the funeral and gave the oration, making it a great occasion despite this being against the wishes of Lenin and Lenin's widow
   - Trotsky's absence seen as disrespectful
   - Some historians suggest Stalin may have deliberately misinformed Trotsky of the date Lenin's Will and Testament
   - Persuaded the party to keep the contents secret (Lenin had recommended Stalin's removal from the position of Party Secretary - 'he is too rude')

5. Developed the Lenin Legacy (Cult of Lenin)
   - Closely associated himself with Lenin and Lenin's ideas e.g. memorising speeches, doctoring photographs to show himself beside Lenin (and cutting out Trotsky and other rivals)

6. He used Lenin's Decree 'On Party Unity' 1921 to his advantage
   - 'Permanent Revolution' v 'Socialism in one County'
   - Trotsky favoured 'Permanent Revolution' i.e. the need to spread worldwide revolution otherwise the success of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia could not be guaranteed, while Stalin favoured 'Socialism in one Country' i.e. the strengthening of the Bolshevik revolution through economic modernisation
   - 'Socialism in one Country' was more popular in the party than 'Permanent Revolution'
   - Trotsky had been a former enemy of Zinoviev and Kamenev so their alliance in the United Opposition lacked conviction. Stalin accused Zinoviev and Kamenev of factionalism and they were expelled from the party
   - Trotsky had been head of Red Army - perceived as a threat to 'new Napoleon'

7. He capitalised on divisions within the party on future strategy/policies
   - Trotsky had been a former enemy of Zinoviev and Kamenev so their alliance in the United Opposition lacked conviction. Stalin accused Zinoviev and Kamenev of factionalism and they were expelled from the party
   - Trotsky had been head of Red Army - perceived as a threat to 'new Napoleon'
   - Trotsky had been a former enemy of Zinoviev and Kamenev so their alliance in the United Opposition lacked conviction. Stalin accused Zinoviev and Kamenev of factionalism and they were expelled from the party

8. He capitalised on weaknesses of his opponents
   - Lenin's Will and Testament
   - Trotsky's absence seen as disrespectful
   - Persuaded the party to keep the contents secret (Lenin had recommended Stalin's removal from the position of Party Secretary - 'he is too rude')

Typical questions

How did Stalin emerge as leader of the Soviet Union between 1924 and 1929?

How far was Stalin's victory in the power struggle between 1922 and 1928 due to his control over the party?

To what extent was Stalin's victory in the power struggle between 1922 and 1929 due to the mistakes of his rivals?

How did Stalin defeat his political rivals by 1929?

How did Stalin's victory in the power struggle between 1922 and 1929 due to his control over the party?