

Letter Templates: Lenin and Stalin

A comparison between two letter styles, one by Lenin and the other by Stalin. The phrases all come from actual letters, collated in what follows

Lenin

Dear ...,

I am writing under the fresh impression of your letter, which I have just read. Although you have resented my previous missives, I shall try to be mild and kind.

I know of no task more fatiguing, more thankless and more disgusting than to have to wade through this filth. Yet your senseless twaddle is so exasperating that I am unable to suppress the desire to state my opinion frankly.

You propose that we should [fill in proposal here, such as:] collaborate with magniloquent liberal windbags, that we should philander with reaction. Strictly speaking, this proposal is too ludicrous to merit serious consideration, the product of either a charlatan or an absolute blockhead. The only answer can be a bitter laugh. You may couch it in pompous, high-blown phrases, but it is really befouled and spattered with shit. All your talk about freedom and democracy is sheer claptrap, parrot phrases, the product of mean-spirited boors, and your education, culture, and enlightenment are only a species of thoroughgoing prostitution. It is a ridiculous and puerile attempt to be clever.

You either cannot think logically, or you are a liberal hypocrite, wriggling like the devil at mass. May I make one suggestion, as difficult as it may seem: scrape off all this green mould of intellectualist opportunism.

Yours,

V. Ulianov.

P.S. I cannot share your regret at not having met. After your tricks and your conniving attitude, I do not wish to have anything to do with you except in a purely official way, and only in writing.

Stalin

Stalin may not have had the acerbic edge of Lenin's letter style, but he prided himself on going straight to the point.

Comrade ...,

I am very late in replying. You have a right to be angry with me, but you must bear in mind that I am unusually remiss as regards letters and correspondence in general. Don't scold me for being straightforward and blunt concerning your report. Yes, comrade, I am straightforward and blunt; that's true, I don't deny it!

It is very praiseworthy that you should have wanted to use your own brains. But just look at the result: on the peace issue you used your own brains, and came a cropper; then in the trade-union discussion you again tried to use your own brains, and again you came a cropper; and now, I do not know whether you are using your own brains or borrowing someone else's, but it appears that you have come a cropper this time too. I have a notion that certain comrades are not all there in their upper storeys.

Although this fantastic report needs no refutation because of its obvious absurdity, nevertheless, perhaps it will not be superfluous to state that this report is a gross mistake and must be attributed entirely to the author's imagination. Why, then, do you continue to circulate all kinds of nonsense and fable?

In short, your report is a frightful dream, but thank God only a dream.

Instead, you should emphasise that our country can and must become a land of metal. After all, the party has been forged out of hard steel and tempered in battle. Without such an approach, our work will become

meaningless, criminal and futile, which will give us the right, or rather will force us, to go anywhere, even to the devil himself.

In closing, comrade, let me say that I do not undertake to prophecy.

God grant us a new year every day!

With communist greetings,

J. V. Stalin

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