“Lenin was the ruler who did the most to transform Russia in the period 1855-1964”. How far do you agree with this verdict?

* You need to start by using a quotation or restating the question – try Bakunin who wrote “no state... not even the pseudo-popular state contemplated by Marx, in essence represents anything but government of the masses from above downward.’ (Quoted in Richard Sakwa *Soviet Union 1917-1991)*
* Compare this to Lenin’s address to the first Congress of Soviets where he said “It comes down to one of two things: either a bourgeois government with those ‘plans’ of reform... or that institution which is now suggested, a new type of ‘government’ ... in which the entirety of power would belong to the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies.”
* Did Lenin really manage to bring about the idealised vision of change he stated here? Or was Bakunin more accurate, bearing in mind the Terror and the economic disasters. How far was Lenin constrained by opposition and untimely death?
* Examine the Cheka, set up in 1918 by Lenin. Used to create the stability Lenin needed to push through his policies it is a clear link to the Third Section used by Alexander II. However the Third Section was used to stop reform 1865-1881, whilst the Cheka was used to fight off opposition so reform could occur.
* Alexander III set up the Okhrana which for the first time was used to persecute the public, specifically being used against national minorities in the programme of Russification.
* This forms a link in increasing attacks on the public which culminated in Stalin’s Terror State and the NKVD with Yagoda and Beria.
* It was the Cheka who set up the first labour camps – later to become the gulags.
* Stalin extended the terror to the party – most notably in the Great Purge of 1936-39 with nearly 700,000 people executed between 1937-38.
* Compare this to Stolypin’s repressive regime – between 1906-1909 3,000 people were executed – a figure that falls far short.
* Furthermore Stalin targeted politicians – deliberately breaking with the policies of Lenin, who was trying to guide the proletariat with these men.
* The Bolshevik leaders used these forces as agents for reform – the Tsars as agencies of repression.
* Economy – agrarian change – Alexander II – emancipation but internal passports – inability to reform as would affect own power base.
* Impact on national minorities – until the Tsars Russification and anti-Jewish pogroms were the norm – find examples! Compare this to Lenin and Stalin – still persecution but Lenin much less harsh than Stalin.
* Agrarian reforms – emancipation of the serfs then led to Nicholas II allowing peasants to withdraw from the *mir* and then incentivising them to pass on their land to their children. This was mirrored by Khruschev’s planting of the Virgin Lands in Kazakhstan which also prompted great rejoicing – but Khruschev was starting from a low base of expectation after Stalin’s disastrous collectivisation of Soviet agriculture. Furthermore in 1960 the methods used led to 13,000 square miles blowing away – the USSRs own ‘Dustbowl’.
* Mention famine of 1932-4 with estimated 7m deaths
* Industrialisation – Great Spurt under Witte and Five Year Plans under Stalin similar – Stalin produced more coal but Witte produced more railways and more infrastructure. Both enjoying rising populations and wages remained depressed with scarce consumer goods. Khruschev and Lenin both lacked time to implement their more consumer-led reforms.
* Finally make sure you compare and contrast the rulers in detail before your reasoned and balanced conclusion and source analysis.