

AS

# History

The Crisis of Communism: the USSR and the Soviet Empire, 1953–2000

Component 2T Crisis in the Soviet Union, 1953–2000

Mark scheme

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June 2017

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Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts: alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Assessment Writer.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

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June 2017

**The Crisis of Communism: the USSR and the Soviet Empire, 1953–2000**

**AS History Component 2T Crisis in the Soviet Union, 1953–2000**

**Section A**

- 01** With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two sources is more valuable in explaining the beginning of ‘de-Stalinisation’ in 1956?  
**[25 marks]**

*Target: AO2*

*Analyse and evaluate appropriate source material, primary and/or contemporary to the period, within the historical context.*

**Generic Mark Scheme**

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the value of the sources in relation to the issue identified in the question. They will evaluate the sources thoroughly in order to provide a well-substantiated conclusion. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **21-25**
- L4:** Answers will provide a range of relevant well-supported comments on the value of the sources for the issue identified in the question. There will be sufficient comment to provide a supported conclusion but not all comments will be well-substantiated, and judgements will be limited. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **16-20**
- L3:** The answer will provide some relevant comments on the value of the sources and there will be some explicit reference to the issue identified in the question. Judgements will however, be partial and/or thinly supported. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **11-15**
- L2:** The answer will be partial. There may be either some relevant comments on the value of one source in relation to the issue identified in the question or some comment on both, but lacking depth and have little, if any, explicit link to the issue identified in the question. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **6-10**
- L1:** The answer will either describe source content or offer stock phrases about the value of the source. There may be some comment on the issue identified in the question but it is likely to be limited, unsubstantiated and unconvincing. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **1-5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

## Indicative content

**Note:** This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

**Students must deploy knowledge of the historical context to show an understanding of the relationship between the sources and the issues raised in the question, when assessing the significance of provenance, the arguments deployed in the sources and the tone and emphasis of the sources. Descriptive answers which fail to do this should be awarded no more than Level 2 at best. Answers should address both the value and the limitations of the sources for the particular question and purpose given.**

In responding to this question, students may choose to address each source in turn or to adopt a more comparative approach in order to arrive at a judgement. Either approach is equally valid and what follows is indicative of the evaluation which may be relevant.

**Source A: in assessing the value of this source as an explanation, students may refer to the following:**

### Provenance and tone

- the source is valuable because it comes from a key individual in a major political event: in February 1956, Khrushchev had recently emerged as the dominant leader of the post-Stalin regime in the USSR. He was consciously setting the agenda for the future direction the Party and state should follow
- it is valuable because the speech was given to a very specific audience: a closed session of the Party Congress (with foreign delegates and the press excluded). Many in the audience did not want to hear what Khrushchev had to say (note the ‘consternation in the hall’)
- the tone of the speech is both persuasive, trying to convince the audience of the need for change, and bold – designed to shock the audience with unpalatable truths. This means it cannot be taken at face value.

### Content and argument

- the theme of this extract from a very long speech is an attack on Stalin’s abuse of power and reign of terror (note that the context relates to 1956, not to the 1930s!)
- in his 1956 speech, Khrushchev was forcing his audience to face up to what crimes Stalin had committed against loyal party comrades; Khrushchev knew that there was reluctance to accept the truth, and that he had to work hard to overcome this reluctance. He also had to defend himself against the charge that he had been implemented in Stalin’s crimes
- Khrushchev’s other theme is Stalin’s cult of personality and the need to ‘debunk’ it answers may use own knowledge to explain why it was necessary to criticise Stalin’s legacy in order to pave the way for essential change.

**Source B: in assessing the value of this source as an explanation, students may refer to the following:**

**Provenance and tone**

- the source is from an informed insider: the memoirs of the Soviet leader who knew Khrushchev personally and who tried to emulate Khrushchev thirty years later. It has value as a retrospective view from 1985
- it is valuable because the tone is balanced and reflective, showing understanding of the difficulties faced by Khrushchev
- Gorbachev is not a wholly objective source; the tone shows sympathy for Khrushchev, perhaps reflecting the fact Gorbachev had faced very similar problems in persuading the Party to go along with his reforms.

**Content and argument**

- the first theme is that Khrushchev's attack on Stalin's cult of personality was correct but 'subjective' and insufficient to 'reveal the real truth'. Answers might use own knowledge to develop Gorbachev's criticisms of Khrushchev
- a second theme is how Khrushchev 'shrewdly isolated his closest rivals' – answers might use own knowledge to explain how Khrushchev was open to criticism he had participated in Stalin's crimes; and how the 1956 speech was part of a power struggle
- the third theme is the 'reform of the system' and how Khrushchev deserves credit for beginning it; this might lead into own knowledge about Gorbachev's own commitment to reform through 'perestroika'.

Khrushchev's speech may be seen as more valuable because of its central importance as an event; Khrushchev's carefully-planned political campaign to debunk Stalinism and buttress his own political position.

Gorbachev's memoirs may be seen as more valuable because of his exceptional retrospective understanding of what Khrushchev was trying to do in 1956; which 'Gorby' understood better than anyone else because he tried and failed to do the same thing.

**Section B**

**02** 'In 1982, the Soviet Union was politically and economically stable.'

Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

**[25 marks]**

*Target: AO1*

*Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.*

**Generic Mark Scheme**

- L5:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment leading to substantiated judgement. **21-25**
- L4:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be analytical comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance. However, there may be some generalisation and judgements will be limited and only partially substantiated. **16-20**
- L3:** The answer will show some understanding of the full demands of the question and the answer will be adequately organised. There will be appropriate information showing an understanding of some key features and/or issues but the answer may be limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some comment in relation to the question. **11-15**
- L2:** The answer will be descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6-10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1-5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

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**Indicative content**

**Note:** This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

**Arguments suggesting that in 1982, the Soviet Union was politically and economically stable might include:**

- the economy was stable and growing, if slowly. Living standards had steadily improved. In the early 1980s, it was claimed that the USSR was starting to catch up with the Western economics
- there was political stability, with very limited internal dissent; and the KGB was powerful and efficient
- Brezhnev and the 'Old Guard' had been in control for 18 years and the regime believed it would be able to manage a smooth succession after he was gone
- the new Soviet Constitution of 1977 strengthened the control of the Party over the people.

**Arguments challenging the view that in 1982, the Soviet Union was politically and economically stable might include:**

- Brezhnev's 'years of stagnation' left the USSR with an overloaded, broken economy. Military expenditure was more than 25% of GDP and this could not be sustained. The war in Afghanistan was causing growing instability within the USSR
- the infrastructure was crumbling and economic deficiencies were shown up by the widening gap between Soviet living standards and the West
- the Soviet regime was a 'gerontocracy' of old, frightened men, incapable of change; this was proved between 1982 (when Brezhnev died) and 1985 (when Chernenko died)
- by 1982, attempts to keep control of the Soviet Empire by repression and by controlling Communist puppet leaders, were already failing – as with Solidarity in Poland.

Answers should be able to present a balanced assessment of the state of the USSR by 1982, after Brezhnev.

One feature of higher-level answers may be the ability to make links between the various factors involved, perhaps explaining how Brezhnev's failures had a cumulative effect after 1982, or the legacy of how the situation suddenly worsened under his successors.

**03** ‘The crisis facing Russia in the years 1991 to 2000 was entirely due to Boris Yeltsin.’

Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

**[25 marks]**

*Target: AO1*

*Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.*

### Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment leading to substantiated judgement. **21-25**
- L4:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be analytical comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance. However, there may be some generalisation and judgements will be limited and only partially substantiated. **16-20**
- L3:** The answer will show some understanding of the full demands of the question and the answer will be adequately organised. There will be appropriate information showing an understanding of some key features and/or issues but the answer may be limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some comment in relation to the question. **11-15**
- L2:** The answer will be descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6-10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1-5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**



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## Indicative content

**Note:** This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

**Arguments suggesting that the crisis facing Russia in the years 1991 to 2000 was entirely due to Boris Yeltsin might include:**

- Yeltsin allowed the ‘oligarchs’ to take over state industries at knockdown prices, without any proper regulation. This led to disastrous economic inequalities
- he failed to protect the masses of people suffering from the sudden loss of state benefits; this led to deep popular unrest
- his decision to start a war in Chechnya had disastrous consequences – for Russia and for Yeltsin – it badly affected relations with the West
- his failure to push through reform of the judiciary and the state security services held back economic progress and international trade – and left him vulnerable to people like Putin; Yeltsin’s drink problem, and the high-profile public embarrassments caused by it, accentuated a growing sense of national humiliation.

**Arguments challenging the view that the crisis facing Russia in the years 1991 to 2000 was entirely due to Boris Yeltsin might include:**

- it can be argued that Yeltsin’s ‘rush to capitalism’ was essential in the desperate circumstances of economic collapse and bloated state spending up to 1991. There was no easy way to manage this transition; it was not Yeltsin’s fault that corruption was so endemic
- Yeltsin improved relations with the West. Bringing Western expertise into Russia (e.g. through the IMF) was the right thing to do and promised to produce major economic progress once the short-term pain was overcome. The crisis was due to other factors
- the crisis by 2000 was due to the impossible legacy left by Brezhnev and the Old Guard; it was too late for Yeltsin and the reforms to achieve a rescue
- Gorbachev had mishandled reform and raised unrealistic expectations.

Answers should be able to present a range of evidence and arguments to assess the reasons for the ‘failures’ of the Yeltsin Years by 2000. There was massive inflation and economic dislocation, and there was also massive political instability.

One feature of higher-level answers may be the ability to make links between the various factors involved, perhaps explaining how Yeltsin’s policy failures were, at least partly, the *result* of his erratic personality and behaviour.