
AS-LEVEL HISTORY

Component 7041/2T
Report on the Examination

Specification 7041
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Component 7041/2T

The Crisis of Communism: the USSR and the Soviet Empire, 1953–2000 Component 2T: Crisis in the Soviet Union, 1953–2000

Section A

Question 1

There were three elements to this question: an evaluation of provenance and tone, an evaluation of content and argument (both requiring some application of own knowledge) and a comparison. Although these three elements did not need to be addressed in equal measure, and it was sufficient for the comparison to emerge in the conclusion (although many good responses did maintain a comparative element throughout the answer), something of each was expected (although not always found) in answers.

Evaluation of provenance and tone was reasonably effective, with most students being able to state something of worth. Weaker students often took the provenance of the two sources at face value, asserting that Source A was definitive evidence due to it being an official document and Source B trustworthy as it was a direct appeal not intended for public consumption. Better students delved deeper and made comment on the insincere nature of Source A and Brezhnev's disinterest in this particular basket of the Helsinki Accords. Comments on tone tended to be descriptive and unrelated to source value. For example, many students alluded to the formal tone of Source A and bold tone of Source B without making reference to how the tone of each source impacted on its value.

Students managed the content of the two sources more effectively. Most were able to identify the overarching arguments in each source and most attempted to engage with and evaluate the material, although some did this more successfully than others. Whilst some evaluation was assertive, most students attempted to evaluate the content of the sources using contextual knowledge, for example, of détente and the Cold War, the Helsinki Accords, economic stagnation, war in Afghanistan, the dissidents and censorship, to both corroborate and criticise the comments made. Students who used precise knowledge to support comments made on the source as a whole, achieved better than those students who used patchy knowledge to address content through a sentence-by-sentence approach.

In terms of the comparison, better students did as asked and commented on the 'value' of the sources as evidence and evaluated how each would contribute to an understanding of the Soviet attitude toward human rights under Brezhnev. Better answers made comparative judgement throughout, although there were some very good responses that dealt with the comparison effectively in the conclusion. Better students argued that Source B was more valuable in relation to the Soviet attitude toward human rights, as it gave a clearer picture of how citizens were treated, and how conversely, Source A was signed only for convenience. Some students emphasised that Source A held more value and some argued that both held equal value. If well-reasoned (which they tended not to be), such judgements were deemed equally acceptable.

Section B

Question 02

This was the more popular of the two essay questions. Whilst there were some good responses, this question was done less effectively than Q03. Most students presented Khrushchev very favourably, commenting that de-Stalinisation dramatically changed life in the Soviet Union for the better. Many students failed to look beyond this and hence produced rather narrow accounts, preventing them from reaching beyond level 3 on the mark scheme. Better students argued that whilst de-Stalinisation resulted in some change for Soviet citizens, particularly in relation to lifting the atmosphere of terror, life did not change dramatically and that in some ways life continued as it had done pre-Khrushchev. In good responses, factors addressing change such as peaceful co-existence, lessened censorship and repression, and improved working and living conditions, were balanced out by factors which addressed continuity, such as the one party state, the command economy, Khrushchev's anti-religious campaigns and economic hardship. The more precise the information and the tighter the links to the question, the more likely the answer was to reach the higher mark levels. Unfortunately, some students failed to consistently address 'the lives of Soviet citizens', and spoke about the impact of de-Stalinisation in very general terms, prohibiting them from reaching the higher levels on the mark scheme.

Question 03

Most students answered this question effectively. Most students who attempted this question (and there were very few) had a good to excellent grasp of the subject knowledge necessary to achieve well on a question asking about Gorbachev's fall from power – they had clearly been taught well. There were some descriptive responses, which received less reward than those that adopted a more analytical stance. However, these descriptive responses often comprised impressive knowledge with occasional references to the question and so still managed to reach Level 3 on the mark scheme. Most students offered balance but with differing levels of sophistication, with weaker students spending far too little time discussing the key issue in the question (Gorbachev's economic policies), resulting in uneven balance. Stronger students adopted a much more even approach in terms of balance and evaluated a range of issues such as economic policy, constitutional change, Glasnost, Yeltsin's coup and Gorbachev's approach to nationalist unrest. Good students often concluded that although Gorbachev's economic policies had indeed failed by 1991, the more significant reasons for his resignation lay in the challenge from Yeltsin and the constitutional changes which had left him with no effective power.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.