

History

Answers and commentaries A-level (7042)

1H Tsarist and Communist Russia, c1855 — 1964

Marked answers from students for questions from the June 2022 exams. Supporting commentary is provided to help you understand how marks are awarded and how students can improve performance.

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Answers and commentaries

Please note that these responses have been reproduced exactly as they were written by the student.

This resource is to be used alongside the A-level History 1H Tsarist and Communist Russia, 1855–1964 June 2022 Question paper and inserts.

Question 1

Using your understanding of the historical context, assess how convincing the arguments in these three extracts are in relation to the development of the Soviet economy in the years 1921 to 1941.

[30 marks]

Mark scheme

- L5:** Shows a very good understanding of the interpretations put forward in all three extracts and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to analyse and evaluate the interpretations given in the extracts. Evaluation of the arguments will be well-supported and convincing. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **25–30**
- L4:** Shows a good understanding of the interpretations given in all three extracts and combines this with knowledge of the historical context to analyse and evaluate the interpretations given in the extracts. The evaluation of the arguments will be mostly well-supported, and convincing, but may have minor limitations of depth and breadth. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **19–24**
- L3:** Provides some supported comment on the interpretations given in all three extracts and comments on the strength of these arguments in relation to their historical context. There is some analysis and evaluation but there may be an imbalance in the degree and depth of comments offered on the strength of the arguments. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **13–18**
- L2:** Provides some accurate comment on the interpretations given in at least two of the extracts, with reference to the historical context. The answer may contain some analysis, but there is little, if any, evaluation. Some of the comments on the strength of the arguments may contain some generalisation, inaccuracy or irrelevance. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **7–12**

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- L1:** **Either** shows an accurate understanding of the interpretation given in one extract only **or** addresses two/three extracts, but in a generalist way, showing limited accurate understanding of the arguments they contain, although there may be some general awareness of the historical context. Any comments on the strength of the arguments are likely to be generalist and contain some inaccuracy and/or irrelevance. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **1-6**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Student responses

Response A

Within extract A, Freeze presents an overly-positive view on the soviet economy, despite acknowledging impressive achievement. Freeze's first argument centres around the introduction of Lenin's NEP, brought about to solve the crisis of war communism which he makes clear indication of in by stating it was 'in need of rescue in 1921'. Freeze makes the convincing statement that by '1924 it had already begun to revive' as the NEP indeed achieved initial restoration, cereal production increasing 23% from 1920 to 1923. However, Freeze's argument that 'industrial production proved rapid' and recovery was even marked in agriculture' appears less convincing considering the NEP was short-term in its success – especially in agriculture – as, by 1927, grain production was 75% of 1926, agriculture was still extremely backwards (farms using wooden ploughs) and, whilst grain production had been at 12 million tons in 1913, under the NEP the figure barley surpassed 3 million. Freeze's next argument centres around the impressive industrial growth achieved under Stalin's Five-Year-Plans beginning in 1928, and considering that electricity output had increased 300% and coal/iron output doubled during the first plan, Freeze's assertion that it 'could boast some real achievements' seems very convincing. However, once again, Freeze seems to ignore the failures; due to unrealistic high targets, none of the first five-year-plans targets were actually achieved, despite Freeze arguing 'gross industrial production' 'surpassed the targets'. Moreover, he also glosses over the failures met with Stalin's process of collectivisation, only mentioning that 'agriculture lagged behind', which seems to not emphasise the fact that, by 1941, the USSR was still producing less grain than under the NEP. Finally Freeze returns to a more convincing argument that the 'Soviet economy was in a strong position on the eve of war' as industrialisation (which had increased three-fold by 1941) had indeed strengthened the economy whilst the 3rd FYP laid the foundations for war. Whilst the USSR did indeed 'close the gap with the west' as it overtook Britain in iron and steel production by 1946, the economy still faced issues of uneven industrial development and a continued focus on quantity over quality. Overall, Freeze's argument to emphasises the real economic achievement but fails to acknowledge the negatives.

Hosking, in extract B, provides a generally convincing, yet perhaps overly negative picture of the economy. Hosking begins by addressing the 'future of the NEP', which indeed was not managing to secure the economy in the long-term despite its revitalisation after the civil war. Hosking's argument continues to acknowledge the considerable 'increased industrial output' of Stalin's five-year-plans, which is convincing knowing that industrial production had increased three-fold by 1941, yet also notes how these plans were used to direct resources into a 'few chosen areas', which holds value knowing that Stalin's aim was always to develop heavy industry in order to 'catch up' with the USA. Hosking's continues to point out the 'neglected' areas of consumer goods and housing which never received attention despite the promise of the second five-year-plan to double the output of lighter industries including consumer items. However, housing perhaps depicts the plans too negatively in his discussion of the neglect of 'chemical and electric' industries, as production nonetheless doubles during the second five-year-plan of 1933-37. Moreover, mentions of 'construction projects' also take on a negative association for Hosking considering that many, like Magnitogorsk that funded

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the largest blast furnace in the world, led to great Soviet success. Overall, Hosking's general argument that 'Russia's seemingly impressive' growth was 'lop-sided and unsustainable' is generally convincing, definitely for the fasted process of collectivisation, yet it also presents the achievements as less than they really were.

Within extract C, Overy's argument is partially convincing yet is also arguably overly-negative, focusing on how the soviet economy negatively effected the people such as workers and peasants. Overy's opening discussion on the NEP proving 'successful' and 'popular with workers and peasants' seems very unconvincing considering that, whilst the NEP may have revived the economy in the short term, it was a constant source of trouble for ordinary people – excluding the Kulaks and the NEP men who thrived off the private enterprise. Various 'scissors crisis' (as termed by Troskey) occurred during the NEP as prices of goods rose from the cities, causing peasants to hold back their grain whilst they waited for grain prices to rise. The workers, too were dissatisfied; unemployment was on a high, despite working better working conditions, and they resented being led by single managers in factories. However, Overy does note the NEP as 'ideologically unsound', which is convincing considering Lenin was facing opposition from within the party, many viewing the return of private trade a betrayal of socialism. Overy continues with the assertion that 'capitalism had to be destroyed', which was indeed the principle Stalin led with when he aimed to introduce his new centralised command economy – what he donned the 'Great Break' from the past – at the 15th Party congress in 1927. Overy's following argument focuses on the 'economic coercion' of 'ordinary workers and farmers' which seems partially valid; during Stalin's process of collectivisation there were incentives given to peasants such as tax breaks and better quality land if they followed the system, however many of the peasants were also forced by violent methods such as shock brigades, something which Overy only points out near the end of their argument. Overy neglects to mention that propaganda alongside 'economic' coercion also played a key role in getting workers on board. For instance, Alexey Stakhanov – who repordely mined 14x his quota in 1935 – was hailed as the model proletariat and used in various campaigns to promote industrialisation. Many workers responded to this propaganda, making Overy's argument that it worked 'better in theory' seem too dismissive. Where Overy's argument does seem convincing is in Narodniks, where many peasants revolted via arson and killing their livestock (which halved from 1928-32). Overy's discussion of 'harsh penalties' seems convincing as failures to meet the targets of the five-year-plan would often lead to arrest or worse, and many over-exaggerated figures to prevent this, indeed causing a 'cycle of crisis' as Overy puts it considering the famine in Ukraine (1932) caused around 5.7 million deaths due to over enthusiastic reporting. Overall, Overy's arguments about the soviet unions 'extraordinary violence' in 'factories and fields' has value, especially mass agriculture, but also presents worker response and industrial success as overly negative.

This is a Level 5 response

This script shows an understanding of the overall interpretation of each of the sources. The answer is well-focused and presents a balanced assessment of the extracts, using good contextual knowledge. The script also deploys material across the time frame of the question, with reference to both the 1920s and the 1930s. The precision of the evaluation of Extract A is evident in the assessment of the impact of the NEP to 1927, as well as the balanced assessment of the impact of the Five Year Plans. The focus on the issue of the development of the Soviet economy is maintained throughout. Good contextual knowledge is evident in the challenge made to Extract C, using Stakhanov and worker enthusiasm. The sustained focus and balance of the answer shows good understanding of the extracts and a secure historical context.

Response B

Overall, Freeze's argument doesn't convince me. His main point is that the economy was a great success under Lenin and Stalin which I do not agree with. His first point is that the economy 'surpassed the targets set by the first five-year plan' and that there were impressive results.' Despite the success of larger projects the Magnitogorsk and the Dnieper Dam, a lot of targets weren't met. This is why I don't agree with this argument as Freeze says targets were surpassed which on the whole they weren't. His second point is that agriculture was 'transformed' under Stalin's rule. Again, I disagree with this statement as collectivisation was a huge failure. Due to poor harvests there was a great famine in Ukraine between 1932-33 which led to the death of 3 million people. In no way do I think this warrants agriculture being 'transformed'. His final point is that in the years running up to the war there were huge investments channelled into armaments'. This I do agree with as Stalin always had a huge focus on heavy industry throughout his reign and not only in the years leading up to WWII. For example the number of tanks made in the five-year plan were more than ever before in Russia, so I find this argument more convincing.

Hosking's argument displays the Russian economy very well and calling it 'lopsided and unsustainable' is a very accurate way of describing it. His first point talks about the huge increase in industrial output, but also how it was quite selective. It was clear to see heavy industry was the main focus of the five-year plans, with production of iron and steel trebling during the first one. Other than this however, little effort was put into other areas, which Hosking's statement portrays perfectly. His second point isn't so convincing to me. He says 'other aspects of the economy were downplayed or neglected' and goes on to mention agriculture. Although collectivisation may not have been a huge success, Stalin did put effort into it so I think it's wrong to say it was completely neglected. By 1930 he managed to collectivise 50% of peasants and in 1939 90% were part of collective forms. His final point is that the industrial changes weren't planned very well. This is accurate as the plans were sprung on the workers when a lot of people weren't really prepared for it. This was a reason the plans weren't so successful, as well as the awful conditions they had to work in and the stress they were put under.

Personally, I think Overy puts forwards a strong argument which interprets the five-year plans as failures. First of all however, he mentions the NEP under Lenin. He argues that it 'proved successful' and that the people liked it, which I agree with to an extent. On the whole I don't think it was successful. It was a short term solution that worked for a short time but had to be scrapped. In fairness it began the recovery of the economy post civil war but it did no more than that. His second point is that the plans were 'over optimistic' and there was too much pressure put on the workers, who were key to the success of the plans. Up until 1941, none of the five-year plans were actually completed, despite some of the good things that came out of them like heavy industry. As well as this, there was certainly too much pressure put on the workers as Stalin threatened the safety of them and their families should the targets not be met. His final point mentions the cost of life 'in factories and fields' under Stalin. An example of this is the white sea canal. Which in the process of being made hundreds were killed. Awful conditions in factories would have also given the workers a hard time, as well as the people in charge of factories. They were given little protection and those with power often resorted to violence if they felt people weren't working hard enough. To me, Overy's analysis describes

the issues with the five year plans perfectly, but I don't totally agree with his interpretation of the NEP.

This is a Level 3 response

This script provides some comment, with contextual support, on the interpretations given in the extracts but does not show a good understanding of the arguments. For example, the commentary on Extract A is solely on Stalinist developments in the Five Year Plans. The depth of the comments in evaluation is not strong, for example 'a lot of the targets weren't met.' The commentary on Extract B also focuses on the 1930s. It shows an awareness of a possible challenge to the argument, relating to collectivisation, but lacks the secure context to back this up. The general argument of Extract C is understood, with some reference to the 1920s, but the answer lacks secure contextual support. There is an awareness of the difficult working and living conditions with some identified examples. There is some evaluative comment on the strength of the arguments in all three extracts.

Question 2

'By 1881, the emancipation of the serfs had brought profound social change in Russia.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Mark scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It 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 relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** 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, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is 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**

Student responses

Response A

When Alexander II passed the emancipation edict in 1861, it seemed to be the greatest social upheaval in Russian history. Russia's economy was serf-driven relying on grain exports to service its budding industrial sector however, the abolition changed very little. Whether he was influenced by enlightened bureaucrats such as brothers Dimitri and Nicholas Milyutin or feared being usurped from below makes little difference; the emancipation of the serfs marked a great turning point in Russian history. From autocracy and severity to reform and the fall of Tsardom. However, very little actually changed as a result of the abolition as the serfs were still thralls in all but name.

The emancipation did grant serfs some freedoms. When the 22 million serfs were freed in 1861, they gained the ability to travel and many sought work in cities after selling the allotted land which paved the way to an industrial Russia. In addition, serfs were now allowed to marry who they wanted when before they were forced to marry who their lord demanded. Due to the powers given to the Zemstvo in the 1862 and 1870 local government reforms, primary education was free and provided by the state, This led to much higher literacy rates as triple the number of primary schools were built by 1881 and double the number of children attended primary education. This led to the formation of a more educated peasant class and allowed them read Socialist books smuggled into the country by factors such as the collectivisation. This led to a more progressive minded society however it was limited in scope. Despite this, many peasants still floundered in impoverished, rural areas and not much actually changed for them.

In reality, despite the few freedoms the peasantry were offered very little changed for their day to day existence of the former serfs. Despite being allotted land from their former owners estates, many allocations were too small to subsist on. Zemstvo Survey during the 1880's found the 2/3rds of peasants couldn't feed their families without going into debt. This was due to still being tied to the Mir who promoted backward farming techniques and redemption payments to the state as recompense for their freedom which spanned for the next 49 years at 7% interest. These were passed on to the children of debt holders which was likely as the life expectancy at the time for a peasant was 27 years for a male and 29 years for a female compared to 45 in more developed country such as the UK. This forced peasants to sell their small allotments of land in order to eek out a meagre existance lest they fall even deeper into debt. Overall, the former serfs had it rough. Redemption payments coupled with poor yields left many peasants to starve leaving some worse off than under serfdom; at least as thralls, they had the legal right to be fed and housed. The emancipation left many peasants as landless labourers who felt dejected by the very edict that was meant to free them.

Not everyone from the emancipation. A new class of peasants known as the kulaks emerged. With the help of the peasant land bank established by finance minister Von Reutern, they were able to escape debt. This allowed them to make vast profits, employing peasants and selling the surplus grain to the state or abroad. These kulaks were generally hated by the former serfs as they were seen as exploitive but many were in fact jealous of the success the

kulaks' achieved. In this highly stratified society, which formerly consisted of nobles and serfs, the kulaks were a fresh addition to this class structure who didn't fit into either group showing a notable social shift. The emergence of the kulak class would not have been possible without the emancipation as it created the opportunity for the enterprise due to the availability of land. The kulaks helped pave the way to the formation of a middle class in between the nobles and peasantry.

Overall, there was quite a large societal upheaval as a result of the emancipation. Firstly it created a culture of reformation which enabled other reforms such as the local government reform to take place. In addition, it kickstarted Russia's industrial revolution as serfs were now free to travel to cities however the full impact of this would not be seen until after 1881. Finally although not much improved for the former serfs as they were still slaves in all but name, they did get some freedoms which allowed for the emergence of kulaks, therefore society was greatly impacted by the emancipation of the serfs

This is a Level 5 response

This script is fully analytical, and it has an excellent focus on the issue of social change arising from the emancipation of the serfs to 1881. The argument is sceptical of the extent of social change in this period which shows very good understanding of key features and concepts. The answer is balanced, dealing with both change and continuity. The supporting information is well selected and precise, for example the evidence of the size of land holdings and the continued obligations of the serfs after 1861. The development of the kulaks as a 'fresh addition' to the class structure is well explained and further strengthens the evaluation of social change after emancipation. There are both implicit and explicit links to the further legislation which followed emancipation, as well as an awareness of the wider consequence of industrialisation, which is recognised to be limited by 1881. There is a well-substantiated judgement.

Question 4

'There were more similarities than differences between Stalin and Khrushchev as Soviet leaders.'

Assess the validity of this view of the years 1941 to 1964.

[25 marks]

Mark scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It 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 relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** 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, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is 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**

Student responses

Response A

The soviet leaders Stalin and Khrushchev led the country and established laws and ideologies that were not that dissimilar during their respective reigns however a vast difference in the levels of severity of the 2 leaders should be noted.

Politically, Stalin led a strict and unforgiving country and most of it he did alone. He rarely called on the central committee or the politburo to pass laws or discuss changes. The suicide of his wife led to a deep paranoia that meant his leadership was built on terror. The tools he used, show trials and mass arrests, meant that he was unquestioned. He was reserved and disliked making speeches and refused any interaction with foreign powers. Khrushchev on the other hand was an open, charismatic leader who consulted and relied on his council regularly. He didn't face much opposition initially so had no use for terror. He gave orders for his government to fulfill rather than doing it all himself and he was open to foreign relations visiting Americans and the UN, though his erratic behaviour at the UN (smacking a shoe on a desk) meant that he did have a bad reputation. Though the Soviet leaders methods were different their ideologies largely resembled each other since Khrushchev worked under Stalin.

Society under Stalin was overall very bad. Living conditions were awful as Stalin did not wish to invest in the construction of new flats and housing and the lack of attention to light industry meant that workers had little to no objects or clothes to live their lives. Food shortages under Stalin meant that diet was bad too. The workers had to endure 12 hour working days. The exhaustion and malnutrition led to many deaths. Culturally, Stalin was conservative. Zhvandozhchina meant that he hated anything to do with western influence and preferred Russian culture. Religion under Stalin was also restricted specifically for Jewish people who he targeted specifically with the doctor's plot. Khrushchev however seemed fixed on improving living standards for his people focusing on light industry and consumer goods increasing the amount of people who had a TV from 4 in 1000 to 81 in 1000. He also ordered the construction of prefabricated flats to increase housing. Khrushchev wasn't completely opposed to western influence, allowing some in Russia which the youth appreciated. He also relaxed censorship allowing some once banned books but other remains banned such as Dr Zhivago which spoke of lives ruined during the civil war. Similarly to Stalin however he dislikes religion banning it from schools and telling people to practice privately. Under Khrushchev the 24 000 orthodox churches in 1953 went down to 8000 in 1964. Overall they were very different in attitudes towards society.

The economy under Stalin was centralised and focused mainly on heavy industry at cost to the people. He had no interest in agriculture and simply ordered them to collectivise and produce more food than feasibly possible without the right investment. With the pressure of the war his focus was to bring Russia back up to speed in the 4th 5 year plan to compete with the US. Khrushchev also preferred heavy industry to light industry but paid real attention to agriculture being a Ukrainian peasant himself. Schemes such as the virgin land scheme and

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large farms made up of collectivised farms were his work. He invested much more into agriculture than Stalin. He also spent a lot of money on the space race with the US which proved quite harmful to the economy. Overall Stalin and Khrushchev were quite different with different priorities.

In conclusion Stalin and Khrushchev were quite similar in ideologies but due to their different personalities had very different approaches to running and managing each sector of the society union.

This is a Level 3 response

The script shows an understanding of the issue and deploys largely accurate information. There is some balance in that Stalin and Khrushchev are both seen as ideological and anti-Church. More differences are identified, but the answer loses focus at times by discussing policy differences rather than leadership issues. The knowledge of social and economic change could have been more explicitly linked to different leadership issues, although there is comment about their different priorities. The answer begins with an argument and ends with an attempted judgement but the comments are generalist in nature. For example, the comments on Stalin do not always relate to the time period specified in the question.

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