



History 7042
Specimen Question Paper 2R (A-level)
Question 02 Student 3
Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0

Specimen answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

Paper 2R (A-level): Specimen question paper

02 'The Cold War developed by 1949 because of Stalin's intention to dominate Post War Europe.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25marks]

Student response

In some ways, yes. Stalin's intention of domination was a major factor in the initiation of the Cold War. However, there were many other causes from the rest of the allies. In this essay, I will discuss the reasons supporting and opposing this statement and will draw to a conclusion, determining whether this statement is valid or not, which, in my own opinion, is true.

Firstly, yes. Stalin was a primary factor in the development of tension between the allied forces, resulting in the Cold War. The first factors leading to this tension started during the conflict of the Second World War. In 1944, Stalin waited just outside Warsaw, Poland. After planning and discussion, it was decided to start an uprising in the capital – aided by the Soviet Red Army. Starting on the first of August, the Polish fought the Nazi occupiers. However, Stalin did not send his troops in to aid the resistance fighters and as a result, the Polish freedom fighters were massacred. Stalin's distrust led to growing uncertainties between him and the other allied leaders. He also had initiated the mass execution of 20,000 Polish army officers. This and the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 made the allied leaders worry for their own safety and initiated a growing distrust between these nations. Nearing the end of the War, Russian troops were storming through east Germany, raping and burning 2 million German citizens. Roosevelt and Churchill were very much concerned with this. After seeing what the Soviets did during the war, the fact that Stalin kept his Red Army spread all over Eastern Europe made the two leaders fear in thought of what Stalin might try to do. These actions from Stalin and the USSR caused a great deal of unrest in the governments of the UK and USA. This therefore shows us that Stalin's goals for European domination were a key factor in the development of the Cold War.

Stalin was neither helpful nor productive at the conferences and in addition, did not fully adhere to/manipulated the agreements set. At the Yalta Conference, the allies decided to agree to hold free elections in the whole of Eastern Europe. However, Stalin (although spoke of acting on these free elections) never held any in any of the Countries he now occupied in Eastern Europe. This presented to the allies the intention of domination. Secondly, at Potsdam, the Soviets refused to reduce the size of the Red Army which now consisted of 11 million troops, spread over a total of five countries. With regards to re-instating efficient governments to the countries which had been occupied by Nazi Germany, it was agreed that London Poles would form the new Polish government. However, Stalin did not allow these people to form the whole government and by 1947, all London Poles were expelled from office. The reparations and Polish buffer zone agreements were also both manipulated by Stalin as no amount was set for reparations and the vague agreement that Poland should be moved West (i.e.- the borders, not the people as well, although this did eventually happen). All in all, Stalin manipulated the

agreements at the conferences which increased the distrust between him and the rest of the allied forces.

Finally, the actions in Eastern Europe by Stalin were a large part to blame after the war. Primarily, the actions made by Stalin and the USSR presented the Soviet ideology of expressionism and total control – a major fear of the allies in later years. Stalin, after creating his buffer zone, created/established Communist governments in these countries. He did this by using underhand methods such as rigging elections and making false accusations against existing political parties. A prime example of this would be the Czech Coup. In this, Stalin merged the larger native parties with his Soviet groups and started to “eliminate” the members of these parties, leaving the Communists in total control. A specific example would be King Michael of Romania being forced to abdicate his family’s position on the throne. With all these Communist governments in place, Stalin set up Cominform in 1947. This was set up to control all the Communist governments in Eastern Europe under Soviet control. The final points to make would be the asset stripping to pay for reparations, going against the agreements made in the conferences and the fact that Stalin kept his Red Army stationed within Europe, which was seen as a great threat by the rest of the allies. This was a key factor in formulating growing tensions between the East and the West

However, we will not be able to accumulate an acceptable conclusion if we do not draw upon the actions of the rest of the allied leaders. Firstly, Stalin was denied help from the allies from the relentless advance by Germany in the opening of a second front in Western Europe. This resulted in massive losses for the Russians and a huge amount of infrastructural damage which cost the USSR millions to repair. Due to the lack of a second front being opened earlier on in the war, the war was very costly for the USSR. Even so, the Americans decided to take most of the credit, even though they entered two years after Russia. With the suggestion of a buffer zone to keep the USSR from something like this again, they were yet again met with stiff opposition from the UK and USA. This Western paranoia fuelled fear and tension between the two allied ‘Sections’. Finally, the dropping of the A. Bomb was obviously an intimidation made by the US to try and show their superiority, therefore, Stalin was not entirely to blame for the growing tensions which led to the initiation of the Cold War.

The Conferences were, however, not just broken by Stalin. The hostile attitude to the buffer zone was not expected by Stalin due to the percentage deal made with Churchill (and Roosevelt, although unofficially). This clearly stated that he would be able to have superiority in most Eastern European Countries. The allies should not have agreed to this if they did not want it to happen. With this percentage deal, Roosevelt was being hypocritical due to the fact that he never told this to the US public. Secondly, Truman’s aggressive atomic diplomacy did not work on Stalin; it simply just gave him another reason to push forward with his plans of Soviet expansion. Finally, the allies were the ones who broke their own rules about a unified Germany from the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences. The UK and USA merged together to form a constitution in West Berlin and introduced a new currency, even though Russia had not agreed with this.

The allies’ actions in Europe also stirred up trouble and uncertainty between the two sides. With the introduction of the Marshall Plan, the Soviets believed that the West was being expansionistic and attempting to impose Capitalism on their own governments within the Cominform and the Comecon. This made Stalin react defensively in order to protect his buffer zone and sphere of influence. The West’s hostile ideology in the “Long Telegram” showed this and proved to Stalin that he had to act fast to protect his country and lands outside of Russia,

including his allies. Finally, the formation of NATO was the last straw to Stalin. To him and the Soviet leaders, this was seemingly an organisation trying to keep him and the eastern communist ideology at bay. Through this organisation, the West had declared war on the Soviet Union. Evidently, with these aspects of western paranoia and disobedience, Stalin was right to assume that the west was threatening him. Therefore, the development of tensions leading to the cold war was not because of Starlin's intention to dominate post- was Europe.

There were many other reasons why Stalin was not to blame for the start of the Cold War. One of these reasons being that he did obey a few of the rules and agreements made at the post-war Conferences such as free elections. Stalin did hold free elections in Czechoslovakia until 1948 and also in Hungary until 1947. The only reason he stopped this was because the imposing Capitalist regime of Marshall aid and the Truman Doctrine. Also, his need for a buffer zone was justifiable due to the Collective fear of the Soviets towards another German invasion. The fact that Stalin did not intervene with the Greek Civil War was also reason to suggest that Soviet expansion was down to Western paranoia. In fact, the control Stalin had over Eastern Europe was no different to the West and their numerous Colonies. Stalin's actions are mainly justified through the destruction of World War Two on the Soviet Union. Actions such as asset stripping were done for the good of the Russian people. Finally, one of the most important points in this Section, the Red Army was never used against anyone after the war, again, strengthening the idea of Western paranoia starting the Cold War, nbot Stalin's hunger for European domination.

To conclude, although Stalin was not entirely to blame, he was one of the main factors for the cause of the Cold War. Stalin's barbaric actions in World War Two and his defiance of the agreements laid down in each Conference, along with the persistent expansionistic ideology and actions caused a lot of distrust to be formed between the UK, USA and Soviet forces, starting the beginning of the Cold War. Although the US and other western nations had done many things to provoke Stalin into acting on these expansionistic idea, Stalin and the USSR were the people who drove the west to act defensively through factors such as intimidation, threat and a vicious ideology that mounted the driving force behind the fears of the west.

Commentary – Level 4

This is an effective response with good control directed consistently to the question within an analytical framework. It is balanced and in many cases, a persuasive assessment. The overall answer is weakened, however, by a weak introduction, the occasional use of the first person (suggesting some lack of objectivity) and lack of development in places with some omissions (Berlin). It is a good Level 4 response.