

# History

## Answers and commentaries A-level (7042)

### **2T The Crisis of Communism: The USSR and the Soviet Empire, 1953 — 2000**

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 Component 2T The Crisis of Communism: the USSR and the Soviet Empire, 1953–2000 June 2022 Question paper and inserts.

## Question 1

With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the political leadership of the satellite states in c1971.

**[30 marks]**

## Mark scheme

- L5:** Shows a very good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to present a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. The answer will convey a substantiated judgement. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **25-30**
- L4:** Shows a good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with an awareness of the historical context to provide a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. Judgements may, however, be partial or limited in substantiation. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **19-24**
- L3:** Shows some understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance together with some awareness of the historical context. There may, however, be some imbalance in the degree of breadth and depth of comment offered on all three sources and the analysis may not be fully convincing. The answer will make some attempt to consider the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **13-18**
- L2:** The answer will be partial. It may, for example, provide some comment on the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question but only address one or two of the sources, or focus exclusively on content (or provenance), or it may consider all three sources but fail to address the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **7-12**

## A-LEVEL HISTORY – 7042/2T – ANSWERS AND COMMENTARIES

**L1:** The answer will offer some comment on the value of at least one source in relation to the purpose given in the question but the response will be limited and may be partially inaccurate. Comments are likely to be unsupported, vague or generalist. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **1-6**

Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

## Student responses

## Response A

Source A is from an article in the New York Times, written by the newspaper's foreign correspondent in Prague. This makes the source more ~~valuable~~ <sup>valuable</sup> to studying the political leadership of the satellite states since it is written by a representative of the newspaper who is based in the satellite state of Czechoslovakia. So, the correspondent would have valid information on the political leaders of the satellite state, even if it was to a lesser extent. However, the ~~an~~ validity of the source can also be challenged due to vagueness of the correspondent's knowledge of the leadership. ~~For example,~~ ~~a~~ As a result of the secretive nature of politics within satellite states, information of the political leadership would be hard to obtain unless you were directly involved in the politics of the Party. Therefore, the validity of the source is limited due to the fact that we cannot assume that this correspondent's information on Czechoslovakia's political leadership is accurate. The tone of this source is very informative as it relays the introduction of Husak to the CPCZ and his early relations with Soviet leader at the time, Brezhnev. This is valuable because it accurately relays the initiation process of a new political leader in a satellite state. The informative nature of the source suggests that ~~political~~ the introduction to political leadership is complex and not ~~as~~ straightforward.

The source depicts Husak's rise to the position of the head of the CPCZ and hints at his personality and relation with the Soviet Union as he exclaims, 'Long Live the Soviet Union'. This is convincing, not only because the ~~rise of~~ promotion of Husak is accurately ~~display~~ displayed and dated with the correct date, but because his reputation as a Soviet puppet in a satellite state is also depicted. By doing this, the source ~~not only~~ presents the political leaders of Czechoslovakia and, also, their relationship with the Soviet Union. This source also shows that the political leadership of satellite states was chosen by the Soviet Union, in 1979, to

to preserve the Soviet influence in its satellite states. At the end of the source, Husak is seen thanking Brezhnev for "saving Czechoslovak socialism from imperialism". This further reinstates the idea of political leadership of satellite states continuing the sovietisation of satellite states through the ideology of socialism. Furthermore, it shows how this was done at the expense of the population. Following the anti-soviet uprising of 1968, Czechoslovakians were unhappy that Soviet rule in their country was upheld. Therefore, this action by Husak displayed how the best interests of political leadership in Czechoslovakia was to please the Soviet Union, rather than its citizens.

Overall, this source is convincing as it touches on matters of political leadership that would be known or available to the general public. Therefore, it is information that is obtainable for the foreign correspondent, even if he wasn't involved or had access to restricted political information.

Source B is from an article by an East German intellectual and communist historian. This is valuable to studying the political leadership of GDR because Kuczyński is a communist historian. Therefore, he would have a higher degree of information of a communist country such as GDR. As a result, he can accurately present the policies regarding the separation from the FRG and this is the very reason why the source is valuable. On the other hand, the fact that Kuczyński is a communist historian can also make the source less valuable. This could lead to Kuczyński being biased towards GDR since it is a communist nation and could lead him to give a wrong perspective of the political leadership of the GDR, which could be argued is the case as he justifies the separation from the FRG. The tone of the source is motivational as Honecker is depicted as almost trying to inspire the Central Committee and persuade them to distance themselves



from the FRG. This is valuable to studying the political leadership of the GDR as it suggests that policies were impossible to be carried out without the assistance of the governing body directly connected to the ~~Soviet~~ Soviet Union.

The source presents the reasoning for separating from the FRG was to 'build up the new socialist society' and 'conflict ~~at~~ with the imperialism of the FRG and its attempts to divert the GDR'.

This is valuable because it ~~is~~ is supported by the previous progress made by the GDR and FRG to reunite Berlin and Germany as a united nation. Therefore, the value in the source is within the argument that the GDR wanted to preserve and ~~or~~ develop socialism and that that was only possible without the ~~of~~ FRG and their imperialistic, capitalist influence. The 'reactionary-nationalistic, anti-Communist policy of the FRG' alludes ~~to~~ to the FRG's influence on GDR citizens through radio ~~and~~ broadcast casts. The increased ~~and~~ broadcasts of FRG radio and TV shows certainly had an affect on the lives of the people of the GDR and had ~~finally~~ exposed them to the truth about life in the West, that was being hidden from them and propagandised, compared to life in the East. ~~to~~ This ~~is~~ also is valuable to the political leadership of the GDR because it alludes to the continuous ~~test~~ juxtaposition between the East and West.

Overall, this source is ~~unreliable~~ because, although it does allude to it, it fails to mention the Western influence. For ~~example~~ example, the source claims that Honecker's leadership will build up the GDR to be strong and beautiful. However, this was achieved with the ~~reliance~~ reliance of ~~for~~ loans from the FRG. Furthermore, if ~~is~~ anything, Honecker's leadership made the GDR even weaker than before because of the huge debts that amounted because of these loans.

Source C is a secret memorandum from the CIA. This is ~~conveniently~~ <sup>valuable</sup> because the CIA is a secret intelligence agency. This means that the CIA would've had credible information on the Party leadership of Poland. They obtain this information ~~by~~ by having informants that are already within the PZWP or by placing agents ~~within~~ ~~the~~ directly from the agency within the Party. However, the validity of the source can be challenged because there was a consensus belief, during this period, ~~that~~ that USA struggled to gain intel, ~~or~~ especially on ~~the~~ satellite states such as Poland, and to infiltrate their political constituencies. So, how exactly did the CIA gain this information? The tone of the source is stern and serious, ~~representing the se~~ This is ~~valuable to the study~~ <sup>as somewhat</sup> ~~valuable~~ because it only acts as a testimony to the CIA rather than the political leadership. On the other hand, due to the secretive nature of ~~the~~ politics of satellite states, it could be seen as valuable.

The source touches on the ~~surprise~~ success of Gierk's regime initially. This is valuable to studying political leadership of Poland because the improvement to Polish life was seen as unprecedented. Gierk's regime was successful in providing more jobs in the country by ~~increasing~~ increasing production norms in order to increase the workforce needed to supply these products. Also, it was successful in increasing consumer choice with the import and ~~internal~~ internal production of ~~in~~ technology. Furthermore, the source is ~~conveniently~~ valuable as it refers to Poland becoming more efficient and less bureaucratic. This was done ~~with~~ the election of PZWP members and the development of multi-party elections.



Overall, this source is valuable ~~because~~ because it relays the advancement of Poland caused by the political leadership of Gierek. Living standards improved with the focus of improving the social and political aspects of life in Poland.

**This is a Level 5 response**

This script maintains a very good focus on the issue of political leadership and offers a thoughtful and well-balanced assessment of the sources. A strong awareness of the historical context is evident in both the assessment of the provenance and the content of the sources. For example there is a thoughtful comment on the extent of knowledge a foreign correspondent would have due to the secretive nature of politics in Czechoslovakia (Source A). Knowledge of the historical context is used to both challenge and support the content of the sources, for example in the assessment of Source B. The script shows a sensitive awareness of the problematic nature of all the sources. There is very good understanding of the sources and the historical context.

## Response B

Source A is valuable to an historian studying the political leadership of the satellite states as it shows a US perspective within Prague and so shows how 'first hand' witness of the actions within Czechoslovakia are reported by US and Capitalist media. As this is ~~the~~ an article written by the 'New York Times', it would have been made for public viewing outside of Czechoslovakia. This is valuable as not only does it show the capitalist perspective but it also is supposed to factually accurately create a trusted and well-rounded report to the public.

This article ~~and~~ describes how the people within Czechoslovakia after the 'Prague Spring' of 1968 were not anti-Soviet as they shouted 'long live the Soviet Union'. Not only does this article report that the people are pro-Soviet Union but also the leadership as Husak's tone towards Brezhnev is ~~greatly~~ grateful and praising. This could have possibly been in fear of another attack if Husak had not sided with the Soviet Union as Brezhnev had created the Brezhnev Doctrine which stated that he would intervene if a ~~country~~ socialist or socialist-developing country started to fall off the road to socialism with military force. ~~But~~ <sup>Husak</sup> could also have been in need of Soviet ~~Union~~ support USSR's support because of the reliability ~~with~~ of trade with them. Czechoslovakia was extremely dependant on the USSR's oil trade. ~~But~~ This makes this source valuable as it shows how Husak praised ~~the~~ Brezhnev publically and how this could have been interpreted.

Furthermore, this article is valuable as it shows the overall feeling of Czechoslovakia after the Prague Spring in 1968. The tone towards those who started the Prague Spring (party revisionists) is anger by Husak whilst this ~~left~~ correspondent, even though they are from the capitalist US, manages to maintain a neutral tone. This shows how the idea of being a separate state to the Soviet Union was not liked by many and so this is valuable to the historian studying the leadership of satellite states because this article highlights Husak as a popular leader after Dubcek, showing the ideas of the state did not align with the Prague Spring.

Source B is valuable to an historian studying the leadership of the satellite states as it shows the view of an East German intellectual who justifies the leadership of Honecker publically. As this is a public article published within East Germany it would have been approved by the East German leadership before publication. This makes this source a variation of propaganda ~~to show~~ ~~how~~ which shows why the tone of this source is very critical and blaming of West Germany. This source is about how West Germany (FRG) is supposedly threatening military intervention within East Germany and that it is stricken with unemployment and 'misery'. This is a valuable source as it shows the attempts of ~~defining~~ Honecker as he tries to create a disappointing West Germany through propaganda of this intellectual. The people of East ~~Germany~~ <sup>Berlin</sup> only had to look onto the other side to see the prosperity of capitalism and the West and that is the reason why ~~so~~ <sup>so</sup> many fled before the building of the wall which was

Honecker and his party's idea.

As this source came from an intellectual, this ~~source~~ <sup>article</sup> would have been effective propaganda for East Germans as it shows someone who is educated and influential siding with the leadership of Honecker as well as the hopefulness of the building up of GDR 'that is strong, great and beautiful'. This makes this source valuable to a historian studying the leadership of within the satellite states as it shows the use of promotion to make people in favour of Honecker's style and aims in leadership.

Source C is valuable to an historian studying the leadership within the satellite states as this shows how the Capitalist USA ~~source~~ saw the new leader, Giersek and what they hoped he would bring to Poland. As this is a secret memorandum produced by the CIA it was not meant for the public and so was not written for the idea that it would be read by a wider audience. This shows how this could be more exact of what the CIA believed about Giersek and his leadership without showing it with rose-tinted glasses like in a public speech. Furthermore, as it was created at the beginning of Giersek's leadership, it would not have known what would happen and so can only be seen as what is hoped and expected from Giersek. Making this valuable to a historian.

Furthermore, the source mentions the 'great turmoil' which

is related to the Strikes in 1970. This was the reason for Gomułka fell from power due to economic issues. Gomułka had taken loans out from the West in the hope to restore the economic issues he had ~~encouraged~~ inherited. However, because his reforms were not sustainable with the loans, it led to even greater challenges which Gomułka tried to counteract with an unprecedented 60% price increase. This left many people extremely angry and so strikes occurred across Poland which at first, was met with heavy oppression until Gomułka changed his mind and took the price increase away and promised amnesty for all those imprisoned for this reason. Many people would have agreed with the statement 'anybody would have seemed an improvement on Gomułka' and so this would have been valuable to an historian studying the leadership of the satellite states as it showed a general acknowledgement of the improvement of Gomułka at the ~~beginning~~ beginning of his time as leader of Poland.

### This is a Level 3 response

This script has made selections from the content of each of the sources to comment on the issue, although the overall understanding of the sources is not secure. There is some comment on provenance but the judgements of value of provenance are not convincing. For example, there are dubious suggestions about the value of Source A. The content of the source is seen as valuable regarding Husak's relationship with Brezhnev, and this is supported from context. The commentary on Source B is stronger on the provenance, which is recognised as propaganda, than it is on the content of the source. The comments on Source C show contextual knowledge of Gomułka but lose the focus on political leadership. Overall, the script shows some understanding of all three sources in relation to content and provenance, and some awareness of the historical context.

### Question 3

How effectively did Khrushchev 'de-Stalinise' the USSR in the years 1956 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

Khrushchev wholeheartedly acknowledged the previous failures of Stalin and the Party, and consistently promoted the need for reform. However, pre-existing fundamentals of the Soviet Union, like Central Planning, meant the efficacy in terms of output from Khrushchev's reforms was severely limited. Reforms to the economy simply could not co-exist with central planning, neither could ~~political~~ political reform tie in with absolute need to control from the Party and autocracy. So whilst Khrushchev's aims and efforts to 'de-stalinise' and renovate the Soviet Union were strong, the effective change it brought about was minimal.

By 1956 Khrushchev had consolidated power and made one of his first actions as leader of the USSR to deliver the Secret Speech to the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU. Khrushchev's speech consisted of all the reasons Stalin and his methods of scapegoating, rather than actually taking responsibility for the failures of himself and the Party, were to blame for the USSR's unavourable position after Stalin's death. Khrushchev removed the condition that Stalin should never be slandered and that he was of unimaginable greatness. Khrushchev even accused Stalin of arrogance nearly having costed the USSR the Great Patriotic War. Khrushchev Secret Speech was reasonably effective in beginning de-stalinisation, given much of Stalinism was built on the framework and pretence the Stalin should never be criticised. The Secret Speech was also somewhat effective in de-stalinisation as it ~~allowed~~ set the tone for Khrushchev to go on and create a new culture in the USSR, although a new, solid and long-term regime never materialised. The Secret Speech obviously didn't achieve de-stalinisation alone and it, although

laying the ground-work, failed to illuminate a clear path towards alternative socialism, especially given many of those in attendance of the Secret Speech had been heavily involved in upholding Stalinism, particularly the 1936-38 purges which Khrushchev heavily criticised. Khrushchev also tried to 'de-Stalinise' the Soviet economy by trying to move from a heavy industry market, towards a more consumerist market, where consumer goods would be much more widely available to people, like they were in the West. Khrushchev also wanted to improve Soviet agriculture, he was keen to exploit the agricultural potential he identified in the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic, especially given agricultural output was lower in 1953 than it had been ~~in~~ in 1917, before the Bolshevik revolution. Khrushchev's attempts to 'de-Stalinise' the economy proved broadly ineffective, central planning proved too complex to accommodate for consumer goods, given targets were set based on quantity rather than quality. Central planning was also inherently conservative, and based targets on what they were the year before, and couldn't cope with the dynamic demands of the consumerist market. ~~and~~ Despite, Khrushchev's best efforts heavy industry still outpaced agricultural production, the virgin lands scheme had some success, but was too dependent on Khrushchev's investment and the unreliable harvest, illustrated best by the poor harvest of 1963. Hence, although Khrushchev made solid efforts to 'de-Stalinise' the economy, they proved ineffective. The USSR's economy remained dominated by heavy industry as it had done under Stalin, consumer products continued to be in short supply, and strong agricultural output proved unsustainable.

Khrushchev also tried to move away from Stalinist politics, Stalin had operated the USSR in a predominantly autocratic manner, with just a few trusted advisors surrounding him. Khrushchev sought to disperse power throughout the Soviet Union, and out of Moscow, more

towards each ministry. The effectiveness of this idea by Khrushchev was severely limited by a problem that became known as 'localism'. By power over industry being dispersed out to each region, inter-regional trade connections were stifled. Local ministries also struggled to operate because resources were still centralized. Although Khrushchev condensed 105 Sovnarkhozs into 47 in an attempt to solve this problem, his efforts at de-Stalinisation, again proved ineffective in reality. The Party still held the monopoly on power and although Khrushchev had stripped the KGB of its power to arrest and judge people (as they had under Stalin) and returned this power to the courts the KGB found new ways to intimidate. So, whilst people could no longer be charged with intending to commit a crime or being an 'enemy of the people', Soviet people remained unable to openly criticise the Soviet Union. Hence, Khrushchev hadn't been wholly effective at removing Stalinism politically and culturally.

In ~~general~~ conclusion, people were definitely freer under Khrushchev in the Soviet Union and millions were released from the gulag, so de-stalinisation took place to some extent. However Khrushchev proved unable to remove some of the fundamentals of Stalinism: the USSR's economy remained dominated by heavy industry, the CPSU kept the monopoly on power, the divide between the poor and nomenklatura was as stark as ever, agricultural production was unsustainable and people were not free to criticise the Soviet Union. Hence, Khrushchev ~~did~~ <sup>did</sup> not really effectively ~~de~~ 'de-Stalinise' the USSR at all between 1956 and 1964.

**This is a Level 4 response**

The answer is analytical and displays a good understanding of the demands of the question. There is clear and specific supporting information which underpin a balanced response. The answer has some limitation as to range as it does not consider the cultural aspects of de-Stalinisation. Key areas which are covered include the impact of the secret speech, the control of the power of the KGB, the dismantling of the Stalin cult and the attempt to share power with the regions. These areas are evaluated with some analytical comment. The overall judgement has balance, stating that 'people were definitely freer... however Khrushchev was unable to remove some of the fundamentals of Stalinism.' The concluding comment that people were still not free to criticise could have been more effectively supported with commentary on the extent of cultural change, for example freedom for writers and artists.

## Response B

Khrushchev's 'de-Stalinisation' was relatively ~~effective~~ effective in the sense that, if ~~things~~ <sup>his reforms</sup> had worked more efficiently it ~~was~~ could be deemed effective. However his move away from Stalinism should be seen as a success as he was able to lead the USSR without the use of fear and improved some parts of people's lives also. Khrushchev focused his changes on social, political, agricultural and industrial aspects of life in the hopes to successfully 'de-Stalinise' the USSR with limited success.

Khrushchev's Secret Speech in 1956 was the beginning of de-Stalinisation as it separated the Party from the actions of Stalin. This was ~~being~~ effective as it allowed Khrushchev to begin his leadership with a strong foundation of the Party. It was also beneficial for him because it was an idea that could not be argued. This allowed Khrushchev to lead the USSR separately from Stalin's legacy and to halt the 'cult of personality' entrenched by Stalin. Therefore, it was an ~~the~~ effective way of beginning the process of 'de-Stalinisation' within the USSR as it not only benefitted Khrushchev but his Party also.

Khrushchev's reforms ~~were~~ in regards to social and cultural aspects were, theoretically effective however, in practical sense, they did not have the same effect as Khrushchev had desired. What could be argued as Khrushchev's biggest success was his improvements to living standards. During Stalin's leadership, housing, especially in large cities, was very cramped and

poorly built. Khrushchev focused on this sector and built ~~and~~ many houses which millions of people used. Though they were hastily built and sometimes unsafe they were a big improvement to before Khrushchev and

are deemed an effective part of de-Stalinisation.

Furthermore ~~that~~ Khrushchev created a Thaw within the USSR which did not have the effect that he had hoped for. He thought that this aspect of de-Stalinisation would help energise people and shift away from the dictators' leadership. Instead, people used the Thaw to ~~write~~ publish pieces which made the USSR look bad and so whilst this Thaw was effective in the sense that it was a definite shift away from Stalinist ideology the outcome was not a failure in the eyes of Khrushchev and the Party.

Khrushchev's reforms in agriculture were not that different to Stalinist ideas as his main objective was to make bigger collective farms with better technology. For this reason, Khrushchev was ineffective in his hope to de-Stalinise the USSR as it did not see much change and issues still arose or even increased during his leadership. Khrushchev's ~~policy~~ Virgin Lands Scheme began as a pretty substantial success as his desire to expand collectivisation and produce more was met. However, this did not last very long as the soil soon washed away and farmers were unable to produce much ~~food~~ product. Instead they focused more on their own private plots to feed their own families and get a steady income. For the first time, the USSR had to import grain which was an embarrassment to the Party.



For this Khrushchev's agricultural reforms were ineffective as they weren't a very substantial step away from Stalinist ideas and were not very successful.

Industrially, Khrushchev did not see much success in his reforms and was ineffective in his aim to de-Stalinise the USSR. Khrushchev aimed to partially de-centralise power to ~~the~~ a regional level in the hopes that the demand for product would be more accurate. However, Khrushchev's naivety meant that he overlooked a crucial detail which was that companies would trade goods across regional lines and that with partial de-centralisation, these chains were broken and left one region with a more concentrated amount of product than another. As well as this, Khrushchev's aim to de-Stalinise the ~~the~~ industry by focusing on light industry more was limited in its effectiveness due to the fact that heavy industry was still the main money-maker for the USSR. However, many people were able to enjoy owning fridges, cars and radios.

In conclusion, Khrushchev's 'de-Stalinisation' was only slightly effective in the sense that people were able to ~~to~~ enjoy more freedom through consumer goods, housing and the thaw without the fear of oppression. However, Khrushchev's industrial and agricultural reforms did not have the same successful outcomes.

**This is a Level 3 response**

This script shows some understanding of the issue and responds with some range but with an over-concentration on the extent of economic change. There is an awareness of the secret speech and the dismantling of the cult but the supporting information is quite general. The cultural changes are mentioned in passing but not developed. For example the comment on the impact of the 'thaw' lacks exemplification. More detail is offered on the continuity of economic policy and the difficulties Khrushchev encountered in decentralisation. The overall judgement has focus on the question but is quite general.

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T: 0161 958 3865

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