



A-level HISTORY 7042/2T

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

Mark scheme

June 2022

Version: 1.0 Final



2 2 6 A 7 0 4 2 / 2 T / M S

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 Examiner.

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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Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's answer read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the mark scheme.

Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly Level 3 with a small amount of Level 4 material it would be placed in Level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the Level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help. There will be an answer in the standardising materials which will correspond with each level of the mark scheme. This answer will have been awarded a mark by the Lead Examiner. You can compare the student's answer with the example to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse than the example. You can then use this to allocate a mark for the answer based on the Lead Examiner's mark on the example.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Section A

- 0 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]*Target: AO2*

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

Generic 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**
- 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**

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.

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

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- taken from an article in the New York Times, yet written by a journalist based in Prague, this source offers an immediate first-hand account of the re-election of Husak (first elected in April 1969) on the final day of the Communist Party conference, May 1971
- whilst largely factual, the account is given through the eyes of an American (with potential anti-Soviet and pro-liberalisation views). Consequently, anti-communist prejudice is present, partly in the selected information given and partly in the language used: comments such as ‘Soviet-led’ (invasion) and Husak ‘reassuring’ (delegates), together with the direct quotation of Husak’s use of the term ‘right-wing revisionists’ – have an underlying message
- intended for a mass American audience, the source is not only intended to impart information but also to reinforce existing American views of the satellite states and Czechoslovakia in particular. This source plants Husak firmly in the Communist camp as a close associate of Brezhnev
- the tone used is subtly critical and the emphasis (in a veiled warning) is on the links between Czechoslovakia and the USSR under Husak’s leadership.

Content and argument

- the source suggests that Husak has restored order and hardline Communism in Czechoslovakia, following Dubcek’s attempts to liberalise socialism. Husak’s leadership brought a return to post-war sovietisation and repression after Dubcek’s ‘Prague Spring’. Husak increased censorship and surveillance and restricted travel
- Husak is reported as taking strong measures against those who supported Dubcek’s liberalisation policies. These included a purge, both of cultural dissidents and of reformers in the Party (including Dubcek, 1970). To ensure conformity, the powers of the secret police (StB) were increased and directed against suspected political opponents
- Husak’s (and his party’s) admiration for the USSR is repeatedly alluded to; Husak firmly believed in control through the Communist Party. He adopted the policies of the Soviet hardliners under Brezhnev and he was inflexible, defensive and resistant to change. Like Brezhnev, Husak was reluctant to share power beyond his small leadership team which remained in control, hardly changing and stifling any attempt at reform
- Husak even suggests that the USSR had ‘saved’ Czechoslovakia from internal and external dangers; his attitude mirrored this conviction: he shunned any involvement with the West (including Western investment) and relied on the USSR, not only for defence but also cheap energy.

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

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- taken from an article by an East German intellectual and communist historian, this is an informed, but highly one-sided view by a writer who supports and seeks to justify Honecker's policies at the time when Honecker had just taken over from Ulbricht as leader of the GDR
- whilst it provides a direct account of Honecker's words and therefore illuminates his leadership, it also provides a good deal of the writer's comment; the reader can only assume his views are the same as Honecker's
- this is likely to be primarily intended for a sympathetic audience of communists – both fellow-intellectuals and ordinary East Germans who might need reminding of the values of socialism. It is essentially a propaganda piece. The emphasis is certainly on the attributes of Communism, (as opposed to capitalism as practised in West Germany) and to the need to retain a separate entity
- the tone is persuasive and direct. Note the use of 'we' – drawing in the audience and of the exemplification provided by the Honecker quotations. Some inflammatory words are deliberately used of the FRG – 'reactionary-nationalistic', suffering 'insecurity', 'militarism', 'misery'. These contrast with the language used to describe the ambition of the GDR – 'strong, great and beautiful'.

Content and argument

- the source speaks of Honecker's aim not to be diverted from his aim to build a socialist society by the tactics of the 'imperialistic' FRG; Honecker was a committed communist believing in 'consumer socialism' – sometimes called, 'real existing socialism', making life a little easier after the harsh rule of Ulbricht
- Honecker emphasises the need for continued separation as an answer to the FRG's 'reactionary-nationalistic' and anti-communist stance. This portrays Honecker as more of a hard-liner than he was. He was prepared to accept western loans and trade deals – working with, rather than against 'Ostpolitik'. (In 1972 he would sign the Basic Treaty; this did fulfil 'separation' but also showed East and West co-operating together)
- the source defines the socialist society Honecker claims to be working for as peaceful, humane, secure and offering cultural improvement; in practice, whilst Germany enjoyed some reforms and an economic upturn under Honecker, nothing changed politically. The SED continued to dominate and relied on repression; the Volpo and Stasi grew and potential escapees over the wall or border were shot
- the source claims that Honecker will direct the GDR to become strong, great and beautiful; whilst many East Germans seem to have accepted the message – becoming a 'niche society', there was underlying discontent (as seen by attempts at escape and in Stasi reports). East Germany's 'strength' depended on the USSR (and western loans).

Source C: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- taken from a secret memorandum produced by the CIA, this is likely to provide a candid picture of American views of Gierek, yet it is limited in that the American observers (gleaning knowledge through spies) are ‘outsiders’ and not privy to the internal workings of the Polish communist party
- the source was produced just a year after Gierek came to power (both valuable in that it is an immediate view but limited in the opportunity to provide balanced assessment) and is a mixture of factual observation and speculation, the latter being a limitation
- this secret document had a limited audience, but it is a balanced, analytical, informed and thoughtful piece because of its role in informing policy-makers. Given its American origins, it is, perhaps, more credible for its more positive assessments
- the tone is quite conversational – as appropriate to its more private audience. The source contains some subjective language such as the reference to Kadar as a ‘cautious innovator’ or Gierek as ‘unusually artful’, ‘perhaps lucky’ – a potential limitation.

Content and argument

- the source claims that Gierek is aiming for a ‘new course’ (a more open political atmosphere as well as improvement in living standards, reviving national pride). It compares Gierek’s programme to Kadar’s in Hungary – ‘cautious’ reform’. Like Kadar, Gierek promoted economic reform with social purpose using Western loans/technology; he tried (not very effectually) to reduce corruption but maintained a centralised economy, did little for agriculture and upheld the traditional political structure
- the source suggests that Gierek has ‘taken hold in Poland surprisingly well’, applauding him for his strong start: Gierek did well in his early years. He ended the workers’ strikes and riots (in Gdansk/ Gdynia) and his policies (reducing food prices, increasing wages, allowing more press freedom and beginning negotiations with the West) looked positive for all in 1971
- the source confirms some of the problems Gierek faced (including problems of his relationship with the USSR) and the scepticism of the population; Gierek had not been trained in USSR; the USSR under Brezhnev was hostile to reform and had repressed attempts in Czechoslovakia in 1968; the population had endured years of repression and workers continued to cherish hopes of real representation
- Gierek is described as ‘unusually artful and perhaps lucky’, tough but human, decisive but careful and a believing but non-doctrinaire Communist; his ‘artfulness’ is reflected in his ability to take and retain power and his avoidance of a major clash with the USSR; his caution is attested by the superficiality of his reforms: he avoided mass repression (shooting workers) but he remained tough and careful, therefore disappointing reformers.

Section B

- 0 2** To what extent did the risings of 1953–56 threaten the stability of the East German, Polish and Hungarian Soviet satellite states?

[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 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**

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 supporting the view that the risings of 1953–56 threatened the stability of the East German, Polish and Hungarian Soviet satellite states:

- East German riots of June 1953 had political overtones; rioting workers called for the resignation of SED leaders and more political freedom; threat to control in East Berlin; sufficiently alarmed USSR that 20 000 Soviet Army troops/tanks stationed there joined GDR police to establish control; fierce fighting – up to 100 deaths; showed vulnerability of regime
- Polish riots of June 1956 showed political discontent: Party offices set on fire; SB headquarters and city gaol attacked; anti-Soviet demands, eg end to Soviet occupation; threatening as couldn't be contained by local (Poznan) troops and reinforcements sent from Warsaw (and occupying Soviet troops advanced to outskirts of Warsaw) c75 dead/900 wounded; dangerous divisions in communist leadership hardliners v. reformers
- Hungarian revolution of October 1956 – even more political; greater threat because led by students (not workers) and attracted intellectuals; 16-point manifesto read on national radio; giant statue of Stalin torn down; led to state of emergency and fighting between soviet forces in Hungary/Hungarian forces and rebels; lynchings of secret police and hardline Party leaders, Nagy became defender of reformers, announced intention of leaving Warsaw Pact; threat to stability of whole Soviet bloc
- sufficiently dangerous situation in Hungary by November, that USSR chose to use massive force to crush Hungarian revolution; shows reality of threat; 2500 killed, 20 000 wounded; following invasion 100 000 arrested, 26 000 imprisoned, 300-600 executed including Nagy.

Arguments challenging the view that the risings of 1953–56 threatened the stability of the East German, Polish and Hungarian Soviet satellite states:

- East German riots of 1953 were largely limited to workers in East Berlin and were more the result of anger over work norms, low wages, high taxes and rising food prices than political concerns; call for a general strike was supported by only 6% of the total workforce; no participation of peasants or intellectuals; riots swiftly contained by Ulbricht who remained in post and used them as justification to resist reform; c6000 arrests, a purge of reformists in SED and reform of Stasi; swift action ensured continued control and stability
- Polish riots of June 1956 were primarily workers' riots regarding pay, work norms and overtime payments; settled peaceably when some of these demands were met; other compromises agreed, eg return of Soviet army to bases, restrictions on movement of soviet troops, freeing political prisoners; quick resolutions ended riots in days so no threat to stability
- Hungarian revolution of October 1956 was anti-USSR but not all anti-socialist; swiftly crushed by Soviet army with period of harsh repression; some reforms quietened situation under Kadar
- Overall, these risings were only momentary interruptions to stability; in East Germany and Poland risings were rapidly contained from within; Soviet reaction over Hungary showed that the USSR would not tolerate political challenges and a rapid response returned stability and control.

Students are likely to argue that none of these uprisings seriously threatened stability, although for a few tense moments (and slightly longer in Hungary) it appeared as though they would. Some may explain why this was the case, citing the attitude of the USSR and the lack of action by the West, but this is not necessary. More important is a well-supported argument showing the degree of threat that these risings posed. If a comparative approach is used, it is likely that the Hungarian uprising will be deemed the most threatening and de-stabilising, although in the longer term all regimes carried on much as before.

0 3 How effectively did Khrushchev ‘de-Stalinise’ the USSR in the years 1956 to 1964?

[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 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**

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 supporting the view that Khrushchev effectively ‘de-Stalinised’ the USSR in the years 1956 to 1964 might include:

- de-Stalinisation (after the 1956 secret speech exposing Stalin’s ‘crimes’) altered attitudes, bringing greater expectation of change, more positivity of outlook; obliterated worst of Stalin’s excesses but sowed doubts re the Party by identifying errors/problems; recognised the Party could make mistakes; less censorship; greater freedom for writers and artists, eg Solzhenitsyn ‘Day in the life’
- power of police regularised (reduced in state matters with reform of legal system); unpredictable terror as method of control ended; many political prisoners rehabilitated; greater independence of judiciary; some reduction in bureaucratic privileges
- dismantled the Stalinist cult and created different type of leader – more energetic/reformist; much symbolic de-Stalinisation: removal of statues and busts, renaming of streets/towns; Stalin’s mummified body removed from Red Square, reinterred inside the Kremlin
- Stalinist power structure dismantled: Stalin’s isolationism abandoned as Khrushchev worked with other socialist regimes and capitalist countries; de-Stalinisation meant Khrushchev had less power: he was removed from leadership but allowed to ‘retire’
- more willingness to listen to new ideas: Khrushchev toured, spoke to ‘ordinary people’; promoted power-sharing with regions; party organisation changed and institutions revived – Party split into central/local divisions in attempt at decentralisation/democratisation.

Arguments challenging the view that Khrushchev effectively ‘de-Stalinised’ the USSR in the years 1956 to 1964:

- de-Stalinisation was limited; secret police continued and dissidence repressed; anti-religious policies continued with demolition of Orthodox churches, pressure on Muslims and Jews
- Authoritarian society remained with state control over communication, education and culture; cultural non-conformity attacked if critical of system; Pasternak not allowed to publish Dr Zhivago or collect Nobel prize; control by bodies such as Union of Soviet Writers
- One-Party state still dominant; ideology unchanged (Khrushchev upheld belief that USSR would achieve Communism through ‘socialism in one country’); Stalin’s key political institutions remained; no self-government for nationalities
- a centrally-planned ‘command’ economy remained with continued emphasis on heavy industry and defence; large and privileged bureaucracy with Khrushchev’s reforms largely ineffectual
- reliance on propaganda and authoritarian controls to maintain a single socialist world view; Warsaw Pact and action over Hungary/Cuba showed Stalinist world outlook continued.

The best responses will appreciate that it is difficult to define ‘Stalinism’ and therefore the extent of de-Stalinisation, but creating terms of reference will help to focus answers. Conclusions are likely to suggest that the essentials of Stalinism were still in place in 1964, despite Khrushchev’s attempts at reform. His efforts to modify the economic structure largely failed and even increased bureaucracy. Although it would be true to argue that the state relied less on force, many will conclude that de-Stalinisation was probably the most effective in cultural terms although even here, artists and writers did not enjoy complete freedom.

0 4 'The collapse of the USSR in 1991 was due to Gorbachev's failure to carry through a successful programme of reforms within the Soviet Union.'

Assess the validity of 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.

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- 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**

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 supporting the view that the collapse of the USSR in 1991 was due to Gorbachev's failure to carry through a successful programme of reforms within the Soviet Union might include:

- Gorbachev was a misguided idealist; he wanted economic, political and social reform but his reforms were not well-planned or executed; glasnost encouraged criticism; perestroika was insufficiently rigorous; demokratizatsiya was partial and weakened control; political reforms took effect before new economic system had time to deliver
- Gorbachev tried to combine a planned economy with a free-market approach which didn't work; economic problems not resolved/shortages continued; old economic system dismantled a new one could replace it; reforms undermined by corruption and entrenched attitudes which were not addressed
- politically, Gorbachev had incompatible ideals: a leading role for the Party as well as giving the people a greater role; tried to retain too much of the Soviet political system; 1988 attempts at political change (2 tier legislature) too cautious – insufficient democratisation; reform of the Party caused opposition, making it difficult to get laws passed; no multi-party system until 1990 which then led to questioning of the Party's right to govern people who didn't want to be part of USSR; Party no longer had control over key areas of state, eg legal system
- Gorbachev too concerned to find a middle path – appeared indecisive; upset radicals and conservatives by offering the former too little and the latter too much; strong opposition in Party, government and bureaucracy left him without the support needed to hold the USSR together
- Gorbachev failed to appreciate growing mood of separatism in the republics – reluctant to address these issues; glasnost publicised historic injustices; end of Communist control in East Europe, 1989, inspired; democratisation allowed nationalist politicians to gain influence (creation of presidencies, 1990), decline of CPSU emboldened republics; Gorbachev cracked down on unrest in Baltic republics and Georgia rather than reform; fear spurred independence movements.

Arguments challenging the view that the collapse of the USSR in 1991 was due to Gorbachev's failure to carry through a successful programme of reforms within the Soviet Union:

- the collapse of the USSR was not solely due to Gorbachev's own failure; problems beyond Gorbachev's control made perestroika difficult; a fall in international price of oil, 1986 weakened the already-ailing economy; poor harvests meant foreign currency had to be spent on food imports; USSR's increase of international debt led to inflation and reduced investment in reforms
- interference from the Russian mafia, an overly complex bureaucratic structure, hardline opposition and corruption were entrenched problems which frustrated reforms
- Nationalist feeling had been long present and leaders of breakaway states played a role; particularly strong feelings in Baltic states (incorporated 1940), which increased as hardline conservatives urged repression; Lithuania declared independence March 1990, setting a precedent
- Yeltsin also important to break-up; he was focus for the democrats; set out to challenge Gorbachev's leadership and Presidency 1990/91, supporting the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) agreement rather than Gorbachev's voluntary union proposals; the August coup worked against Gorbachev
- some of Gorbachev's reforms were successful, eg freedom of speech and of religious belief; economic reform had potential for success in longer term.

Students may conclude that Gorbachev not only failed to carry through his programme of reforms within the Soviet Union successfully, he actually worsened the situation in the USSR. He opened up the USSR

(and the Party) to criticism. By giving a little, but not doing enough or acting firmly enough, he simply encouraged more demands and left the way open for the break-up of the state. Better answers will understand that the USSR was already vulnerable to collapse. Some will argue that Gorbachev's policies hastened this but it is equally valid to see the 1991 collapse as the product of a variety of factors and to suggest that, for example, Gorbachev's reforms could have been continued in an undivided USSR had it not been for Yeltsin or the August coup.