



**General Certificate of Education  
January 2011**

**History 1041**

**Unit HIS2L**

***Report on the Examination***

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## Unit HIS2L

### Unit 2L: The Impact of Stalin's Leadership in the USSR, 1924–1941

#### General Comments

The response to this paper was mixed. There were many scripts exhibiting high quality answers, both in terms of the knowledge and understanding displayed and in candidates' ability to analyse, pursue a line of argument and make informed judgements. There were also some candidates who showed a lack of required knowledge for this specification. A minority also displayed poor communication skills. There were very few rubric offences. The great majority of candidates completed the requisite number of questions in the allotted time. There was no noticeable trend in the choice of optional questions between Question 2 and Question 3.

#### Question 1

The sources proved accessible to most candidates. Comprehension was good, and none of the three sources posed particular issues in terms of understanding. There were only two particular issues with the sources. Firstly, many candidates assumed that Source A was exclusively about the process of Collectivisation. These were candidates who seemed to assume that NEP was a golden age for the peasantry, and therefore all the peasant complaints must be about collectivisation. Whilst some peasants did do well economically under NEP, it was certainly not seen as a golden age by many peasants, who complained in their villages about interference from the central Soviet government and had no time for talk about 'socialism'. Secondly, whilst one way of demonstrating candidates' knowledge is for them to discuss the provenance of sources, it needs to be done in an informed way, taking account of context. Some source interpretation was very naïve. Just because Source A was a contemporary source and therefore primary, does not by itself make it more 'reliable'. Source B was not written post-*glasnost*.

- 01** Most candidates made a good attempt to directly compare the two sources, and tried to use their own knowledge also to develop the context. They recognised the difference in tone between the sources, with Source A containing very negative thoughts about the Soviet regime, and Source B putting across a much more positive view. Most candidates also recognised some similarities in the content, for example the sense of hostility towards kulaks. The best answers directly integrated source analysis with own knowledge. The weakest answers were those that assumed all peasants were very happy with the NEP agricultural regime.
- 02** The majority of candidates make both useful references to the sources *and* displayed a range of knowledge, which were the prime requirements of getting above Level 2. However, too many candidates did not achieve the highest levels, mainly because of their interpretation of the question. These were candidates who ignore the wording and decided that the question was solely about the 'successes' and/or 'failures' of collectivisation. Whilst this was relevant to the question, too many candidates ignored the fact that the question was specifically asking about 'socialism' in the countryside. This could be answered from different angles – political, economic, social – and some candidates did this well, but others ignored it. What was also disappointing is that many candidates wrote more about the process of collectivisation in the late 1920s and early 1930s rather than the later period. Whilst of course this could be made relevant to the

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question, too many candidates ignored the 1941 aspect altogether. Candidates often totally ignored the developments in rural areas in the later 1930s, for example, the fact that there was at least a partial recovery in agriculture, and that although many peasants might still not have been enamoured with the collective farms, the worst upheavals of the Collectivisation period had eased by 1941. Candidates too often gave the impression that they were answering a different question from the one actually set, and therefore the overall responses of otherwise knowledgeable candidates was often disappointing.

### **Question 2**

- 03** This question was not tackled effectively by most candidates. The Right Opposition is clearly a specified part of the specification. However, too many candidates simply ignored the phrase. They took the opportunity in some cases to focus solely on Stalin's 'strengths' in the rise to power. This was certainly credited, but only to some extent, if candidates made little or no reference to Bukharin and the Right. Even worse, some candidates treated this question as an opportunity to write solely about 'Stalin versus Trotsky', as if the Right never existed. Candidates often showed considerable knowledge of this period, but unfortunately too often a marked reluctance to address the specific question set.
- 04** In contrast to 03, this question was often done well, in one of two ways. Either candidates wrote at some length about Stalin's use of Terror as a means of reinforcing his power; or they balanced his use of terror against other factors such as the regime's use of propaganda. Either approach was acceptable. The important thing, often achieved, was for candidates not just to describe events but to analyse them and reach an informed judgement. In weaker answers there tended to be too much description, for example of the show trials, and insufficient analysis. Some candidates analysed the debate over the degree of Stalin's personal responsibility for the Terror. Where this was done well, and used not just as an excuse for historian name-dropping, the answer was rewarded, although the analysis was not essential for this question.

### **Question 3**

- 05** The response to this question was mixed. There were many good answers, focusing on factors such as the inefficiency of heavy industry and the desire of the Party for 'proper' industrialisation. Weakest answers ignored the precise question and wrote at length about developments in agriculture rather than industry. Answers to these types of question do not need to be lengthy: examiners are looking for a few relevant factors, briefly developed, and ideally linked together or analysed in some way to earn the highest level.
- 06** This question was often answered well, because candidates were, on the whole, knowledgeable about the Plans, although there is sometimes a tendency to exaggerate: for example, there were *some* consumer goods produced during the Plan, and not *all* soviet workers were Stakhanovites. Again, some careless candidates did not read the question carefully, and wrote at length about developments in agriculture, without necessarily making the link that from Stalin's standpoint, agriculture's main focus was to support a growing industrial economy. Candidates' knowledge of the details of the actual Plans was often impressive.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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