



History

Paper 2T (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 01 Student 1

Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0 05/01/16

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 2T (AS): Specimen question paper

01 With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two sources is more valuable in explaining Khrushchev's attitude to capitalism?

[25 marks]

Student response

Source A is valuable as it is from Khrushchev himself, giving his opinions on capitalism and his policy of peaceful coexistence. However, he is answering questions from the writer so we can assume this is an interview for publication and he might be saying what he wants the West to hear. Khrushchev sounds confident that he can improve the life of the average Russian and therefore defeat capitalism by showing that the communist system brings more benefits. By 1960 he had put many of his plans into practice. Destalinisation had begun and various economic plans, especially in agriculture, were proving popular in Russia. Khrushchev is arguing that capitalism is on the way out and that it never benefits all the people. He believes that communism can win without war and that coexistence does not mean the end of revolution in Russia. His Secret Speech against Stalin kept much of the ideology but distanced the new leadership from excesses like the Terror. He did still believe in economic controls and carried on with Five Year Plans but made local regions more responsible and made the system less centralised. He made consumer goods and agricultural growth the priority and claimed that they could defeat the USA in terms of production. He set up the Virgin Land Scheme to farm remote areas and this was initially successful. Production of consumer goods did increase and workers did benefit more. They also had greater freedom due to the policies of destalinisation. There was a drive towards improving living standards and Russia did become a better place to live by the 1960s.

Source B is a public statement by Mao Zedong, published in the official Chinese newspaper. Although Mao was a communist too, he often clashed with the Russians and he sees Khrushchev as betraying communist ideology. His language and tone is quite angry and he makes a number of critical comments about Khrushchev. Mao accuses him of bringing capitalism back to Russia through his schemes because of decentralisation and destalinisation. He thinks Khrushchev is a phoney. Mao is talking in 1964 after the Cuban Missile Crisis and the fall of Khrushchev so his point of view could be affected by what had happened. The policy of peaceful coexistence had begun well and a period known as the Thaw had followed. However, this ended after the U2 Crisis and Khrushchev became more aggressive in his attitude towards the USA over Berlin. Relations between Russia and China had become strained and finally the Cuban Missile Crisis was seen by many as an embarrassment to the USSR and was blamed on Khrushchev. These events obviously angered Mao and made him very critical of Khrushchev. In the longer term, the Virgin Land Scheme had failed to keep up production and Russia was importing grain from the USA. His decentralisation of the planned economy has created resentment amongst members of the Central Committee and his focus on consumer goods was damaging to the progress of heavy industry.

Both sources are valuable as Source A is an explanation of his policies and Source B is a criticism of them. They are written four years apart and accurately reflect the positive start to some of Khrushchev's ideas and the long term problems. Source B is less valuable as it is from an opponent of Khrushchev, is very critical and does not admit to any positive outcomes at all.

Commentary – Level 4

The answer demonstrates an effective understanding of the arguments and content of the sources and attempts an evaluation by assessing provenance, dates and by deploying knowledge of context to the arguments. It has the basis of a very effective response, but needs more development throughout. The central argument of Source A, that capitalism is the past and socialism the future, is not reviewed extensively and needed to be and this also applies to the assessment of the central arguments in Source B. It reflects a good Level 4 response.