

Teacher Resource Bank

GCE History

Candidate Exemplar Work (June 2009):

- HIS2L: The Impact of Stalin's Leadership in the USSR



The following responses are not 'model' answers, nor are they indicative of specific overall grades, but are intended to illustrate the application of the mark scheme for this unit. These responses should be read in conjunction with the HIS2L Question Paper, Sources Booklet and Mark Scheme.

Copies of the paper and are available from e-AQA or the AQA History Department.

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AQA GCE History Teacher Resource Bank Commentaries on June 2009 AS answers

General Introduction by the Chief Examiner

The first June examination series for the new AS specification saw some excellent examples of well prepared candidates who were able to demonstrate their breadth of knowledge and depth of understanding by addressing the questions set directly and efficiently. Sadly, it also suggested that, whilst some candidates knew the material quite well, they struggled to apply it successfully to the questions asked. At the lowest end, there were, of course, some candidates whose knowledge let them down, but even these might have been able to achieve more highly had they thought more carefully about each question's demands.

The importance of timing for both Units needs to be stressed. In Unit 1 candidates should allow themselves approximately 12 minutes for the first part question and 25 minutes for the second. In Unit 2, they could spend 15 minutes on the first part question and 30 minutes on the second, but they are likely to need slightly longer for the source question. Good time keeping is essential in any examination. No matter how successful the answer to the first part question, an incomplete second part question will always mean a loss of marks (notes receive limited credit).

These commentaries are intended to help teachers and candidates to understand the demands of each question type and consequently to encourage students to perform at the highest level of which they are capable. Please note that errors relating to Quality of Written Communication (of spelling, syntax, etc.) have been reproduced without correction. Please note that the AQA convention for question numbering will be changing as from the June 2010 examination papers. Examples of the new format for question papers can be found elsewhere in the Teacher Resource Bank.

Unit 1

The first part of each question in Unit 1 (those questions labelled 01, 03 and 05 in the new numbering style from June 2010) asks candidates to 'explain why' an event, issue or development came about. The best candidates answered this question, not only with a selection of reasons (and a minimum of three well-explained reasons was expected for Level 3/4), but also by showing how those reasons linked together. This is essential to meet Level 4 criteria and can be achieved by prioritising, differentiating between the long and short-term factors, or showing how different categories of reasons, such as political, social and religious inter-link. It is not, however, enough to simply assert that the links exist – they also needed explaining.

Candidates who only performed at Level 2 often wrote too descriptively, whilst many achieved a good Level 3 by offering a range of relevant and clearly explained reasons but failing to make any links between them. As the exemplars demonstrate, answers did not need to be long but they had to be effectively focused and directed to achieve good marks.

The second part of each question (those questions labelled 02, 04 and 06 in the new numbering style) asked for a response to a question beginning 'how far, how important or how successful'. Each question stem invited candidates to offer a balanced response and this was the key to an award at high Level 3, 4 or 5. Most answers which achieved only a Level 2 or a low/mid-Level 3 mark contained too much description, were excessively one-sided or lacked depth and precision in their use of examples. Some candidates also failed to address the full question set, often

by ignoring starting or finishing dates. To achieve the higher levels, candidates needed to balance one side against another. For example, a question asking how far 'X' contributed to 'Y' demanded a consideration of the importance of other factors which also contributed to 'Y'. Sometimes questions, particularly 'how important' questions (e.g. how important was 'X' in bringing about 'Y?'), could be balanced by considering the ways in which 'X' was important as opposed to the ways in which it was not, rather than introducing 'other factors'; either approach was equally legitimate. The crucial test of an answer was, therefore, the degree to which the candidate was able to argue the issue and how well that argument was supported by accurate and precise evidence. The best answers at Level 5 managed to sustain a focus and convey convincing individual judgement.

Unit 2

The first part of question 1 (labelled 01 in the new numbering style from June 2010) asks students how far the views in two given sources (A and B) differ, in relation to a given topic. Perhaps the most common error was to waste time writing a paragraph or more about the source content before addressing differences. Levels were awarded according to how well candidates identified and explained differences of **view**. This was not simply an exercise in source comprehension, so such answers received an award of only Level 1/2. Contrasting 'views' required students to go beyond the mere words of the sources or their omissions, and to assess 'how far' the sources differed required some awareness of the degree of **similarity** they contained. To meet the full demands of the question and obtain an award at high level 3/4, candidates also needed to introduce some contextual own knowledge to explain the differences and similarities identified – possibly (but not necessarily) referring to provenance when it helped the explanation, and, more often, explaining references in the sources and drawing on their contextual knowledge to account for differing views.

In the second part of question 1 (labelled 02 in the new numbering) candidates were asked to answer a question beginning 'how far, how important or how successful' with reference to the sources as well as their own knowledge. The best answers to these questions maintained a balanced argument (as explained for Unit 1 above) and the information given in the sources was used in support of that argument. Poorer answers tried to address the sources separately – at the beginning or end of the answer, or sometimes as an asterisked afterthought. Those who omitted them altogether could not obtain more than top Level 2. Whilst the main criteria for the higher levels was the degree of argument, the precision of the evidence and the judgement conveyed, in addition to these, good source use could ensure that students were placed higher in a level than those who used the sources in a perfunctory way. Source use needed to be explicit, and the best candidates appreciated that Source C was provided to give further ideas and/or information that was of direct relevance to this question.

In questions 2 and 3 (03/04 and 05/06 in the new numbering) candidates were asked to respond to an 'explain why' question – on which comments will be found under the Unit 1 commentary above – and a short, provocative quotation about which they were invited to explain why they agreed or disagreed. The demands here were similar to those for the second part of Unit 1 (b) questions. In adopting a view about the quotation, candidates were expected to examine the opposing arguments in order to reach a balanced judgement on the extent of their agreement/disagreement.

Sally Waller Chief Examiner December 2009

GCE History HIS2L: The Impact of Stalin's Leadership in the USSR.

Responses to June 2009 Questions

Candidate 1

- 1 (a) Explain how far the views in **Source B** differ from those in **Source A** in relation to the reasons for the Terror in the USSR in the 1930s. (12 marks)

Sources A and B offer different insight into The Terror of the 30's.

Source A suggest only that Stalin was responsible for the purges and Terror, even source B confirms he 'set the ball rolling' – "Stalin began and maintained the purges". Source A says Stalin believe that installing fear and insecurity was the best means to get control, "rather than beliefs, because beliefs could change" as he reportedly told Yagoda. Stalin was determine to crush any criticism of anything that resembled opposition to him, whether it was a real threat or not. Source A suggests The Terror was all down to Stalin and it was his brutish nature, possibly stemming from his peasantry upbringing and beatings as a child. Source B says this is a "limited view" The purges went beyond Stalin's expectations and control, as people readily denounced others in fear they would denounce them, and so it escalated – each arrested body would be forced to confess to crimes against the state and give more names. The NKVD had much to be responsible for regarding the scale of the Terror. Their motive; it raised their profile making them indispenable to the socialist state. It is true that Stalin's power was limited, he couldn't do what he wanted early on in the 30's – exemplified by Rzhinik speaking out against him and Stalin being powerless to crush him. Both sources confirm Stalin fully supported The Terror and concept behind it, securing his revolution from internal and external threats.

Principal Examiner's Comments

This is a good answer. The candidate demonstrates good comprehension of the two sources. An area of agreement between the two sources is immediately recognised: both confirm that Stalin was the prime mover in the Terror. However, the candidate then goes on confidently to identify differences in emphasis, for example as to whether Stalin was intent on eliminating all possible opposition and instituting a regime of fear, or whether the purges developed their own momentum, as people rushed to denounce each other. The analysis is effective, integrating evidence from the sources and own knowledge effectively throughout. There is a brief, neat conclusion, again recognising an area of agreement between the sources in terms of Stalin's determination to secure his vision of post-revolutionary Russia. Overall it is a concise, well-argued and well-informed analysis, meriting Level 4 – 10 marks.

Candidate 2

- 1 (b) How important was Stalin's use of terror in securing his domination of the USSR in the years 1934 to 1941? (24 marks)

The use of terror has been seen by many historians as the consolidation of Stalin's power. He had secured his dominance in 1929, battered down the peasants during the famine of 1932-4 and was just getting comfortable when Kirov rose through the ranks and began to challenge his authority. No longer General Secretary in his own right, but one of "Equal Rank" it is no wonder that the already paranoid Stalin began to panic.

Through his extensive use of terror, Stalin began to claim back what he felt was rightfully his. It has been reported that by the mid 1930s, Stalin had already convinced himself that this was his destiny – he was meant to lead the Soviets towards the Communist Dream. He was Lenin's true successor.

Through the show trials of 1936-8, Stalin also managed to get rid of any old Bolshevik rivals he may have had, perhaps in a bid to avoid another Kirov catastrophe. And to finalise this securely and tie the lid down firmly on the past, in 1940 Stalin hired a hitman to assassinate Trotsky. By 1949, all stages of the Party had been purged and the Politburo, the few men who had stood in Stalin's way a decade earlier were gone. He was now free to rule as he pleased through whoever he pleased.

This perhaps is supported by Source A's "The desire for power was Stalin's strongest & most obvious motivation."

However, the terror also provided scapegoats for Stalin to blame when his promises didn't happen. Instead of admitting to the impossibility and over-estimated ideals they were chasing, it looked better for his own credentials if there were "enemies of the people" and "saboteurs" lurking and waiting to attack. This also linked to Kirov's murder – someone must be trying to wipe them all out. (The irony being that there is a high possibility that Stalin was behind it all anyway.)

But we must not give Terror all of the success. The Cult of Personality, which gave life throughout even the Terror period and passed Stalin on the side of the people must certainly be credited. For all the time that Stalin was "The Great Terror" (For as Source B agrees, not even Stalin could have controlled the mass momentum it picked up), some people still loved him and almost worshipped him as the saviour of the Soviet people. It is that faith which quite possibly allowed them to turn a blind eye and still love him and mourn for him after his death even though he had murdered their parents and terrorised their sleepless nights with the fear of the NKVD's "Ravens".

To conclude, although Stalin did not need to rule by fear – think the Cult of Personality, and although it wasn't the only thing that cemented his domination – people believed in him; the Russian people needed to believe in a greatness & he represented that greatness – it was possibly the most important for it had the loudest impact, eliminated his rivals and gave him the utmost power he, more paranoid than ever, desperately needed.

Principal Examiner's Comments

This is a very strong answer. The first paragraph shows a good perspective on the origins of the Terror, by developing the background of Stalin's rise to power and his determination to assert his vision of developing socialism through whatever means were necessary. The candidate shows further knowledge through the description of the purging of leading Communists, tied to the issue of how Stalin used this to further increase his power. The aspect is also linked well to the sources: for example linking Stalin's desire for power to the candidate's knowledge of Kirov's assassination. The answer also acknowledges 'other' factors responsible for Stalin's control, notably his cult of personality which bred respect and even 'worship' from the people. There is a pertinent conclusion. The answer does not cover all possible factors and could have made more use of the sources – but it is well written, shows perspective, understanding and combines analysis, knowledge and evaluation effectively, and thus merits Level 5 – 23 marks.

Candidate 3

- 1 (b) How important was Stalin's use of terror in securing his domination of the USSR in the years 1934 to 1941? (24 marks)

It is clear that Stalin used Terror in order to maintain and impose his control over the USSR between 1934 to 1941. The Great Terror allowed him to remove or silence any opposition to his power. It is argued that Stalin's ruthless attitude led him to rule effectively by striking fear into anyone that could oppose or question him, this is illustrated in Source A, which states, "he [Stalin] preferred people to support him from fear rather than from beliefs, because beliefs could change."

However, it is evident that Terror wasn't Stalin's only means of securing his power. Ideology is something Stalin utilizes greatly in order to gain support, particularly in the earlier years of this period. For example, Stalin turned on the NEP in 1936 so that he could remove the opposition of Bukharin as well as his ideas of rapid industrialisation was gaining support throughout the population. Source C states "Stalin did not need to rule by terror." In compliance with this view that ideology allowed Stalin to gain and secure control, Source C also states that "Stalinism provided an important means of upward social mobility and participation, as the country moved from backwardness to superpower status."

Overall it is clear that ideology played a role in Stalin's domination of the USSR in the years 1934 to 1941. However, it is arguable that Terror was Stalin's most important means of control. Article 1147 is clear illustration that Stalin's ruthless mentality allowed him to create a state of fear in the USSR that allowed him to remain in complete control, removing any potential opposition.

Principal Examiner's Comments

This answer is mostly relevant, but lacks range and depth. The candidate makes limited use of the sources. Source A is essentially taken at face value rather than being effectively analysed. The candidate recognises 'other' factors behind Stalin's dominance, besides Terror, notably the use of 'ideology'. However, this factor is scarcely explained or developed, since the material on the late 1920s is not relevant to this question and has therefore not been credited. Source C is quoted, but again, it is essentially taken at face value, without use of own knowledge to back up the assertions. There is some good application of

knowledge towards the end to explain Stalin's ruthlessness. This helps push the answer towards the upper end of Level 2, but not to the next level, since the analysis of the sources and the overall use of knowledge are quite limited and it is a very partial answer to the actual question. Level 2 – 10 marks.

Candidate 4

- 3 (a) Explain why Stalin introduced a Five-Year Plan for industry in 1928. (12 marks)

Up until 1928, Russia operated under the New Economic Policy, which was seen by Lenin as a necessity to stabilise a post-revolutionary state he had inherited which, before the NEP, was only hitting production levels that matched those of 1914 and previously.

Perhaps one of the biggest reasons for the introduction of the Five-Year Plans was the ideology behind it; Lenin stated the NEP as a necessary halfway house to the socialist state that was aimed for, compromising with capitalism for the sake of necessity. It was because of this that many saw the NEP as unacceptable, despite the fact it was never intended as a long term method. The Five Year Plans were introduced as a means of creating a self-reliant Communist state, which Stalin dubbed 'Socialism in One Country'. This fitted in much better with the ideological framework of the party.

This emphasis on self-reliance was essential for the institutions of the plans. Being a lone Communist state in world of hostile capitalist nations, a method of rapid industrialisation for a country which Stalin claimed was "fifty to a hundred years behind our rivals" was necessary, and the over-ambitious targets and massive social-upheaval which was resultant of this is evident. A further reason for the First Plan was to further strengthen Stalin's position of power, using his notion of rapid industrialisation and subsequent popularity of it to shoot down his gradualist opponents, such as Bukharin, further consolidating his power, undoubtedly an underlying motive for all that Stalin did once his lust for power emerged.

Principal Examiner's Comments

The candidate develops several reasons for the Five-Year Plans. There is a brief and effective explanation of the NEP background, and then the specific reasons are discussed: the fact that the NEP was ideologically unacceptable to many Communists; the need to industrialise and strengthen the USSR in a hostile capitalist world; Stalin's desire to strengthen his own power. These reasons are developed well through own knowledge, and hence the answer merits the top of Level 3. It does not quite reach Level 4, because for this, the reasons should have been more effectively linked, or there could, for example, have been a clearer distinction made between political, economic and 'personal' factors, at the same time explaining how they combined or how some reasons may have been more significant than others. Level 3 – 9 marks.

Candidate 5

- 2 (b) 'By 1941, collectivisation had seriously weakened the USSR.
Explain why you agree or disagree with this view. (24 marks)

Collectivisation had many aims that were often quite different from each other. However, the main aim was to feed the workers in the factories. It succeeded in this, it's main aim. On this basis, I disagree that collectivisation had seriously weakened the USSR however, when measured against other aims, collectivisation was far less successful.

Economically, collectivisation was a disaster. Produce had actually fallen since collectivisation began. When it was implemented, farmers burned their livestock and produce rather than hand it over to the state. It is believed that 50% of livestock was lost as a result. It was not until the late 1930's that produce returned to 1914 levels. However, as previously mentioned, collectivisation did produce enough to feed the factory works – this was the main aim of collectivisation as it coincided with the Five Year Plans to rapidly industrialise the USSR. So it weakened the agricultural economy but it actually helped boost the economy in relation to industry (which was what the Communists really cared about anyway).

Politically, the Kulaks had been eliminated and the Communists finally gained a foothold in the countryside. Furthermore, as system had been implemented in the countryside which adhered itself to Communist beliefs – the farmers worked on shared land and all contributed together for the good of the state (or not as the case may be).

The human cost was enormous. It is estimated 10 million were moved/interfered with and that 7 million died as a result of famines. This agrees with the statement that the USSR was weakened.

In conclusion, in some aspects the USSR was weakened. Millions of people died and the countryside felt the harsh effects terribly. However, collectivisation was actually successful for the Soviets primary aims. The workers were fed which drove USSR forward to an industrial state – they did in a few years what it took the West years. They defended themselves from Germany and became a superpower to Rival USA.

Principal Examiner's Comments

This is a good answer. The candidate has gone straight into an analysis of the impact of Collectivisation, recognising both success and failure in terms of strengthening the USSR. The candidate shows knowledge of the economic failures such as loss of production, but balances this by explaining how Collectivisation supported the industrial programme which was the Communists' main aim all along. There is a sound analysis of the political impact of Collectivisation, again linked to the issue of strengthening and weakening. The conclusion includes a good perspective on where the USSR had arrived at by 1941. The quality of balanced and supported argument merits Level 4, but not Level 5, because there could have been more use of evidence and more sustained judgement. Level 4 – 18 marks.