Pearson Edexcel Level 3 GCE

History

Advanced
Paper 1: Breadth study with interpretations
Option 1E: Russia, 1917–91: from Lenin to Yeltsin

Friday 9 June 2017 – Morning
Extracts Booklet

Paper Reference
9HI0/1E

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Extracts for use with Section C.

Extract 1: From Edward Acton and Tom Stableford, *The Soviet Union Volume 2 1939–1991*, published 2007.

The end of the Soviet Union was triggered by the new General Secretary appointed in 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev. He changed the USSR's foreign policy. He attempted to accelerate industrial growth and later began to dismantle many of the structures of the command economy. He radically loosened the rigour of censorship and the scope for questioning the certainties of Marxism-Leninism. He instigated dramatic reform of the party and of the entire political system, introducing competitive elections both at the All-Union level and within each Republic. His confidence that the result would be the revitalisation of the Soviet Union proved gravely misplaced.

The attempt to reform society from above unleashed forces for change which the government proved wholly unable to control. It undermined the economy, turning stagnation into steep decline. It ignited a cultural and ideological revolution that swiftly stripped the regime of its legitimacy and ruptured the Communist Party. It set off an explosion which ripped apart the Soviet system and fractured the country along the fault-lines of the fifteen constituent Union Republics. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, for so long a major fixture in international relations, disappeared into history.

Extract 2: From Raymond Pearson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire*, published 2002.

A complex interaction of overthrow from below – 'people power' – and collapse from above brought about the events of 1989 across the Soviet empire of Eastern Europe. This deadly combination of predominantly nationalist pressure and Soviet imperial withdrawal spread east to contaminate the USSR itself during 1990–91.

Another major shortcoming was the Soviet Union's inefficient and wasteful economic performance. By the time Gorbachev was promoting ideas on the desirability and practicability of a mixed economy in the late 1980s, a doomed atmosphere of 'too little too late' hung over the commitment to perestroika. By its last decade, the sprawling, outdated and dysfunctional economy of the Soviet Empire could neither deliver the welfare state by fulfilling the economic and social expectations of its population nor supply the warfare state by satisfying the spiralling financial and technological demands of the Cold War. By 1990, financial bankruptcy ensured that the stricken Soviet Union could sustain neither role.

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