Pearson Edexcel Level 3 GCE

History

Advanced

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

Wednesday 6 June 2018 – Afternoon

Extracts Booklet

Paper Reference

9HI0/1E

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Extracts for use with Section C.

Extract 1: From Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia and the Russians: From Earliest Times to the Present*, 2nd edition, published 2012.

In 1990 Gorbachev loosened the electoral structure one stage further. He amended Article 6 of the Soviet Constitution to end the Communist Party's monopoly and legalised the formation of alternative political parties. At the time, elections to the Supreme Soviets of the union republics were imminent and these elections transformed the political scene yet again. For one thing, they fatally weakened the Communist Party's executive power: more or less since 1917 it had been the effective focus of state authority, coordinating and directing whatever was undertaken by public bodies. Its abdication of this function left a great vacuum at the centre of politics. Gorbachev attempted to fill it by creating the post of President of the USSR and having himself elected to it by the Congress of People's Deputies. But the new presidency had no real executive chain of command of its own. In any case, Gorbachev, never having been confirmed by popular election, lacked the legitimacy of, say, a US president. This lack of either symbolic or actual authority undermined him fatally over the next 18 months as economic crisis and inter-ethnic conflict engulfed his reform programme.

Extract 2: From Orlando Figes, *Revolutionary Russia 1891–1991*, published 2014.

Economically, perestroika had a lot in common with the NEP. It rested on the hopeful assumption that market mechanisms could be added to the structures of the planned economy to stimulate production and satisfy consumer needs. State controls on wages and prices were loosened by a 1987 Law on State Enterprises. Co-operatives were legalised in 1988, resulting in a NEP-like sprouting up of cafés, restaurants and small shops or kiosks, selling mostly vodka (now re-legalised), cigarettes and pornographic videos imported from abroad. But these measures failed to ease the shortages of food and essential household goods. Inflation increased, aggravated by the lifting of controls on wages and prices. Only the dismantling of the planned economy could have solved the crisis. But ideologically that was impossible until 1989, when Gorbachev began to break free from the Soviet way of thinking. Even then it was too radical for him to legislate until August 1990, when the 500-Day Plan for the transition to a market-based economy was at last introduced by the Supreme Soviet. But by then it was too late to halt the economic crash.

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