

Pearson Edexcel Level 3 GCE

Wednesday 13 May 2020

Afternoon

Paper Reference **8HI0/1E**

History

Advanced Subsidiary

Paper 1: Breadth study with interpretations

Option 1E: Russia, 1917–91: from Lenin to Yeltsin

Extracts Booklet

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Extracts for use with Section C.

Extract 1: From Richard Sakwa, *Gorbachev's Political Reforms*, published 2015.

Why did the Soviet system collapse so quickly and suddenly? The fundamental reason is Gorbachev's botched attempt to reform the political system. The Soviet Union would have continued if Gorbachev had not removed the vital element of the system – the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its gigantic machinery of government. 5

Gorbachev came to power in 1985 to save, not destroy, the Soviet system of government. However as *perestroika* gathered pace his reforms became increasingly radical, and instead of simply reforming communism, Gorbachev attempted to create a new system which he defined as 'humane, democratic socialism'. This ended up provoking numerous contradictions. The overall aim was to create a socialist state with a proper legal system, decentralised powers and a genuine parliament. However, the system ended up trapped between a disrupted old Soviet system of government and a new system that could not be established. The steering mechanism of the state was destroyed but no effective alternative system was put in place, and by the end of 1991 the whole order collapsed. 10 15

Extract 2: From Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, published 1993.

The death of the Soviet Union represented a failure of Gorbachev's triple revolution. The system fell because the leadership tried to dismantle the old practices of the command economy and Communist Party dominance and, at the same time, to construct a democratic multinational federation. Nations within the USSR, each with their competing interests and aspirations, tore that superpower into fragments. Gorbachev's programme fell victim to the economic collapse and the rise of powerful nationalisms. Once it became possible to break the imperial tie with Soviet Russia, nationalist leaders moved to take control of the destinies of their own peoples. 20 25

The forces of nationalism undermined the Soviet Union and Gorbachev's plans for gradual economic and political reform initiated from above. These forces were an understandable reaction to the excessive centralism and bureaucratisation of the old Soviet system.

Acknowledgements

Extract 1 from: Richard Sakwa, 'Gorbachev's Political Reforms' in Robin Bunce et. al., *Communist States in the Twentieth Century* (Hodder, 2015)

Extract 2 from: Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (1993) quoted in Robin Bunce, *Russia 1917-91: From Lenin to Yeltsin* (2017)

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