

**A-level
HISTORY
7042/2N**

Component 2N Revolution and dictatorship: Russia, 1917–1953

Mark scheme

June 2020

Version: 1.0 Final



Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

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Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's answer read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the mark scheme.

Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, i.e. if the response is predominantly Level 3 with a small amount of Level 4 material it would be placed in Level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the Level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help. There will be an answer in the standardising materials which will correspond with each level of the mark scheme. This answer will have been awarded a mark by the Lead Examiner. You can compare the student's answer with the example to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse than the example. You can then use this to allocate a mark for the answer based on the Lead Examiner's mark on the example.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Section A

- 0 1** With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the Stakhanovite movement in the USSR.

[30 marks]

Target: AO2

Analyse and evaluate appropriate source material, primary and/or contemporary to the period, within the historical context.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Shows a very good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to present a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. The answer will convey a substantiated judgement. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **25-30**
- L4:** Shows a good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with an awareness of the historical context to provide a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. Judgements may, however, be partial or limited in substantiation. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **19-24**
- L3:** Shows some understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance together with some awareness of the historical context. There may, however, be some imbalance in the degree of breadth and depth of comment offered on all three sources and the analysis may not be fully convincing. The answer will make some attempt to consider the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **13-18**
- L2:** The answer will be partial. It may, for example, provide some comment on the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question but only address one or two of the sources, or focus exclusively on content (or provenance), or it may consider all three sources but fail to address the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **7-12**
- L1:** The answer will offer some comment on the value of at least one source in relation to the purpose given in the question but the response will be limited and may be partially inaccurate. Comments are likely to be unsupported, vague or generalist. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **1-6**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Students must deploy knowledge of the historical context to show an understanding of the relationship between the sources and the issues raised in the question, when assessing the significance of provenance, the arguments deployed in the sources and the tone and emphasis of the sources. Descriptive answers which fail to do this should be awarded no more than Level 2 at best. Answers should address both the value and the limitations of the sources for the particular question and purpose given.

Source A: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- taken from his own speech, this source exemplifies the views of Stalin. Furthermore, since Stalin was a virtual dictator in the 1930s, his views can be considered to represent the official position
- the speech was delivered 3 years after Stakhanov's 'miracle' of 1935 (following which Stakhanov had been declared a Soviet hero and given honorary awards). Although many others had since matched his achievement, the timing of the speech in 1938 (as the Third Five Year Plan was launched) suggests Stalin still believed the movement could serve its purpose in propelling further progress
- delivered to a sympathetic audience of higher educational workers, the speech was doubtless intended to inspire, and its subsequent publication in Pravda suggests Stalin's determination to give his latest drive for production spurious scientific credentials. It also underlines the importance of propaganda in promoting industrial progress
- the tone is positive, enthusiastic, commanding and authoritative. The rhetorical questions are designed to reinforce Stalin's view of Stakhanov and science, so making this a forceful exposition of the leader's views, which he expected his audience to accept uncritically.

Content and argument

- Stalin uses the speech to associate the new standards set by Stakhanov with the march of 'real science'. Stakhanov was a miner who had exceeded all norms by cutting 102 tonnes of coal in 5 hours 45 minutes. Stalin suggests that human determination and application were all that was needed to advance science and ensure the progress of the USSR. Practical application is applauded over theoretical knowledge and university attainment – an important message for an audience of higher educationalists
- the speech offers an insight into the propaganda used to extol a proletarian culture based on self-sacrifice; Stakhanov ('just' a plain, 'practical man') and others like him have achieved impressive records. The Stakhanovite movement forced managers to adopt new methods and support workers; it suggests that it is the workers who are driving Russia forwards
- Stalin applauds the 'innovation' of the Stakhanovites. Many work quotas and production records were broken. These feats enabled Stalin to raise production targets and denounce those who criticised the speed of industrialisation
- this propagandist speech clearly fails to tell the full story: the record-breakers not only relied on the support of others but also on new tools and machinery and their efforts could not be long sustained; despite Stalin's views, traditional scientists and technicians did more to advise on and implement the Five Year Plans; far from being driven by the proletariat, the industrial modernisation of the USSR was a carefully planned and centrally organised affair in which the Stakhanovites were, at best, a side-show.

Source B: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- taken from an interview with a female Soviet Stakhanovite of the 1930s, this provides a valuable insider's view on why the Stakhanovite movement was so attractive to those living at the time. That the author should continue to express her admiration for its ideals, despite living through later revelations about Stalin's 'mistakes', says a lot for the influence of Stakhanovism
- although the interview was given 60 years later, it is significant that the speaker is able to describe her personal commitment and the enthusiasm of the times, suggesting that the movement was profoundly important to those involved
- it might have been expected that the speaker would downplay Stakhanovism (and the worker's life in the Stalinist regime) when speaking to television interviewers in the West; that she does not would reinforce the value of the source for understanding the power of Stalinist propaganda. Knowing the interview would be broadcast to a wide audience does not appear to have affected what appears to be a truthful appraisal of this worker's time as a Stakhanovite
- the tone is reflective but always positive. It is interesting that the speaker should see the movement as 'spiritual' and 'hard to explain' – reinforcing the idea that she had been swept up in something larger than herself.

Content and argument

- the speaker shows the sort of work Stakhanovites might be associated with, offering valuable comments on her 'brilliant' Stakhanovite team which built the Moscow metro; this was a show-piece project, first opened in 1935, but extended in 1938. The use of steel and the tunnelling were indicative of the USSR's industrial achievement in the 1930s
- the source's main argument is that Stakhanovism produced a 'happy life' and Stakhanovites were 'full of enthusiasm'. Stakhanov's own achievement is described as 'fantastic' and the desire to emulate his success appears to have been ubiquitous; Stakhanovism was certainly seen across the USSR, although the source ignores the degree to which support was whipped up by speeches and written articles
- the speaker sees Stakhanovism as a 'very big thing for the country'; it helped reinforce targets and productivity rates did improve; however, other factors contributed and the impression given in the source is over-optimistic and limited in its discussion to one well-funded showpiece project. Overall, the economy remained inefficient and living standards were low
- according to the speaker, Stakhanovism was not merely a ploy to make workers apply themselves more but was something which individuals actually wanted to do. This can be challenged both on the grounds that some Stakhanovites are likely to have been attracted by rewards of superior accommodation, pay, holidays and possibly even a car and that some workers failed to aspire to Stakhanovism, resenting the campaigns and attacking those who were swept up in them.

Source C: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- as a defector to USA, Viktor Kravchenko represents those who became disillusioned with the Soviet experiment and his writings must therefore be seen as influenced by his change in opinions by 1946. Nevertheless, he was an industrial manager in the 1930s and swept up in the Stakhanovite movement, which clearly made an impression on him since he is able to describe it vividly
- Kravchenko was personally affected by the demands made on managers to implement Stakhanovism and his writing provides a valuable insight into the way the authorities got records broken and ensured public awareness of industrial feats
- in writing for a wide and, primarily western audience, free from Soviet persecution, Kravchenko feels able to speak his mind, even although Stalin was still alive. He may have been tempted to

exaggerate, at a time of emerging Cold War between East and West, but regardless of what use is made of his opinions, the factual content of this source detailing his experience is of immense value

- Kravchenko's tone is opinionated – damning of the Stakhanovite movement and the writing is clearly intended to absolve him from any complicity in it. It is valuable as a counterblast to the adulatory sources and a reminder of the downsides of the movement – particularly for those serving as managers.

Content and argument

- Kravchenko contends that Stakhanov's achievement was merely 'deceit' that every Stakhanovite demand was a 'blunt threat'; Stakhanovism was a 'crime against the workers' and the 'victory' that his factory achieved left him heartsick. Knowledge of the way managers were put under pressure by workers who demanded the best tools in order to be classified as Stakhanovites, despite the lack of equipment, and that managers' jobs depended on overall (not merely Stakhanovite) output would help explain this attitude
- Kravchenko refers to the 'religion' of speed-up and the ways in which the Stakhanovite movement was spread: the Stakhanovite slogans; the reporters and photographers who recorded Stakhanovite feats; the 'flaming' headlines and congratulations; he also shows the other side of the campaign – the threats and the branding of those who raised objections as 'saboteurs'; such reflect the 'carrot and stick' approach of the Stalinist government, and provide a valuable indication of the way the movement was artificially whipped up and maintained
- Kravchenko demonstrates how it was possible to give the false illusion of achievement by using the best workers and best tools in a carefully-contrived manner; this again provides valuable evidence of an 'artificial' movement which probably contributed little to the (undoubted) industrial achievements of the 1930s
- Kravchenko sees Stakhanovism as entirely propagandist with, perhaps, a subsidiary aim to discipline the labour force. This can be challenged with reference to the enthusiasm shown by some – particularly young workers in Komsomol. Overall, contemporary accounts would suggest that Kravchenko's views were the exception, not the rule – although accounts published in USSR are more likely to have been adulatory given the central controls over publishing.

Section B

- 0 2** 'The two revolutions of February/March 1917 and October/November 1917 were the result of Russia's involvement in the First World War.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21-25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16-20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11-15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6-10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1-5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that the two revolutions of February/March 1917 and October/November 1917 were the result of Russia's involvement in the First World War might include:

- the war brought economic chaos with inflation, the collapse of the railway system, lack of food, factory closures and unemployment. These raised the cost of living, fuelling social distress which led to protests and strikes in cities and arson and lawless behaviour in the countryside. The former provided the impetus for revolution in February/March and the widespread discontent helps explain support for the Bolsheviks and the ease with which they were able to effect their revolution in October/November
- military conscription hit peasants and inadequate provisions and military failures brought desertion and fuelled the collapse of authority. The link between military failure and revolutionary activity grew even stronger after the failure of the Brusilov offensive (June 1917)
- the war increased political disillusionment with the Russian leadership: first the Tsar (leading his troops from the Front) and subsequently, the middle-class democratic Provisional Government; since neither were prepared to end the war, nor able to win it, they lost the support of 'the people'
- the failures of the war provided a focus for oppositional propaganda. This was particularly important to the Bolsheviks, e.g. Lenin's promise of 'peace' in his April theses; Lenin's return was facilitated by the Germans and the Bolsheviks received German funding
- mutiny from the war-weary soldiers and sailors of Petrograd was crucial to the success of the February/March revolution, while war-weariness helped fuel the ranks of the Red Army and unite workers and peasants against the Provisional Government in October/November.

Arguments challenging the view that the two revolutions of February/March 1917 and October/November 1917 were the result of Russia's involvement in the First World War might include:

- political discontent was high in 1917 and neither Tsar Nicholas II, nor the subsequent PG leaders, Prince Lvov and Kerensky, could command respect. The revolutions were as much a protest against failures of leadership and inadequate political systems as about wartime issues
- Russia had been involved in war for three years without revolution and during that period wartime provisioning had improved. It was the broader deficiencies of the economy and social structure that really caused the revolution
- there was a long tradition of political opposition in Russia and the Dual power members were veteran campaigners for political influence. They and the Bolsheviks seized power as a result of their ideology/promises (e.g. 'democracy' (Feb/March) and 'all power to the soviets' (Oct/Nov); the appeal of the opposition was broader than merely ending war
- opposition leadership (Lenin and Trotsky) and organisation was an important factor in Oct/Nov, in contrast to a weak and illegitimate Provisional Government which refused to make changes before the election of a Constituent Assembly; in Feb/March, Duma/Military leadership helped topple the Tsar but the revolution was more genuinely popular
- the fortuitous circumstances following the Kornilov coup in July 1917, aided the 2nd revolution. This left the Bolsheviks armed and so provided for the Bolsheviks' seizure of power in October – which was a coup by a highly motivated political group.

Students may argue either way. Some will see the impact of war in all the revolutionary activity of 1917, whereas others may prefer to highlight the inadequacies of the political systems and the promises made by opponents of those systems. Reward those who maintain a good focus on the causes of both revolutions and avoid undue narrative about the broader events and developments of 1917.

0 3 'Stalin's foreign policies were inconsistent and contradictory in the years 1924 to 1934.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Target: AO1

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21-25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16-20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11-15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6-10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1-5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that Stalin's foreign policies were inconsistent and contradictory in the years 1924 to 1934 might include:

- contrary to his communist beliefs, in the struggle for control in China after the death of Sun Yat-sen in 1925, Stalin backed the nationalist GMD, rather than the Chinese Communist Party; when his favoured GMD/CCP alliance failed, Stalin strengthened his friendship with Jiang Jieshi, leader of the GMD
- Stalin had inconsistent relations with Germany. The USSR signed the Treaty of Berlin, 1926 (re-negotiated 1931), despite the contradiction of Germany being a western capitalist power, led by Stresemann who represented the interests of German industrialists in the DVP. After intense military collaboration, 1929–1932, Stalin changed tack again looking elsewhere for allies
- Stalin was inconsistent, pursuing contradictory paths in his use of Comintern. Believing it had outlived its usefulness as a promoter of 'world revolution', he sidelined this to 1928, but then changed his attitude, using it to purge foreign Communist parties of 'social fascists' and bringing foreign Communist leaders to Russia in order to control them; he abandoned this policy in 1934 when he reverted to supporting popular fronts elsewhere
- having maintained diplomatic isolation in the 1920s, Stalin sought US diplomatic recognition (1933) and joined the League of Nations, 1934 – a radical change in policy
- Stalin did little to protest against the rise of Nazis in Germany and the repression of Communism there; yet he (inconsistently) made pacts with Poland (1932/34) and France (1932) – countries threatened by/hostile to Nazi Germany.

Arguments challenging the view that Stalin's foreign policies were inconsistent and contradictory in the years 1924 to 1934 might include:

- Stalin acted consistently, in the interest of Soviet security; he supported the GMD in China as the party most likely to bring stability on Russia's eastern borders; his policy was not contradictory because he had never supported 'permanent revolution' (spreading Communism) and believed the Chinese version of Communism was flawed.
- the continuance of good relations with Germany until the rise of Hitler built on the Rapallo Treaty of 1922. Stalin's approach was consistent; it was political change in Germany, rather than in Stalin's attitude that caused the apparent contradiction in 1932/3
- the move towards support for collective security in the early 1930s was motivated by the consistent need to defend the USSR in the face of a resurgent Germany; in any case, it was the League which had initially rejected Russian membership – not the other way round
- Stalin's failure to respond to Hitler's rise may have initially been because he saw the economic and political troubles that Germany faced, 1929–32, as accelerating the collapse of capitalism. Even in 1933/34 as he sought improved relations with western democracies, he kept his options open for a possible return to cooperation with Germany or a clash between Germany and the West in which the USSR could remain neutral and emerge dominant.

Although Stalin's foreign policy actions certainly appear contradictory, constant themes governing his behaviour can be identified and a good answer is likely to be able to explain apparent inconsistencies. Some students may also emphasise the link between foreign policy actions and the internal situation – with Stalin growing stronger and consequently more assertive in the early 1930s. However, it is possible to argue that his policies were, indeed, contradictory (perhaps in keeping with his character) and any argument which conveys a view and offers a substantiated judgement should be rewarded.

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- How far was Stalin personally responsible for the mass terror and purges of the Yezhovshchina in the years 1936 to 1938?

[25 marks]*Target: AO1*

Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.

Generic Mark Scheme

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- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6-10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1-5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content

Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.

Arguments supporting the view that Stalin was personally responsible for the mass terror and purges of the Yezhovshchina in the years 1936 to 1938 might include:

- Stalin was responsible for starting the Yezhovshchina of 1936–38; he personally replaced Yagoda with Yezhov in 1936 and he signed the order against ‘anti-Soviet elements’ in July 1937 which established NKVD committees to search out traitors and set up quotas for arrests; he intervened personally to allow quotas to be exceeded
- Stalin had shown a violent disposition throughout his life and his suspicious, vindictive and perhaps paranoid personality (perhaps made worse by the suicide of his wife in 1932) could account for the slide into Terror at a point (following his consolidation of power and ‘success’ in the 1934 Kirov affair) when he felt safe to take action
- Stalin needed to eliminate the Bolshevik ‘old guard’ in order to reinforce his own position; he set up the Great Purges in order to establish himself in a position of supreme power, removing both potential rivals and those who supported such rivals
- Stalin believed in the dynamic of socialist change; he believed it was necessary to ‘shake up’ the party and make officials and managers more accountable in order to permit future progress – particularly economic progress
- Stalin personally stopped the Yezhovshchina when it threatened to destabilise the regime; Yezhov was an expendable tool in Stalin’s hands; Stalin used the purges and Yezhovshchina to reinforce the belief that he knew best – he protected Soviet citizens from traitors – but was ready to remove any over-zealous and hated official when the time was right.

Arguments challenging the view that Stalin was personally responsible for the mass terror and purges of the Yezhovshchina in the years 1936 to 1938 might include:

- Terror was the work of Yezhov and the NKVD; they used mass terror to increase their power and show their devotion to the cause – rooting out ‘suspect groups’, e.g. gypsies and former members of other political parties; they were responsible for employing informers and forcing ‘confessions’ using physical and mental torture
- there were genuine threats to the state at this time and the purges and Yezhovshchina were a natural response to these, e.g. the threat of a military coup provoked by German Nazis who had established contacts within the Red Army; Yezhov spoke of ‘fight against fascist agents’
- the Yezhovshchina was self-escalating – fear fed on fear; those fearing denunciation tried to prove their loyalty by denouncing others; terror and purges were used to settle old scores; lower-ranking party members denounced those above them – higher officials accused those below; local officials followed an independent agenda; activists pursued personal vendettas; anti-Semitic and nationalist attitudes came into play; actions went unchecked
- the use of purges and mass terror was not a personal decision as they were a necessary accompaniment to rapid economic change, e.g. providing scapegoats for mistakes and failures and cheap ‘slave labour’ in the Gulags.
- Terror and purges had always been present in Communist Russia; the whole Party accepted that regular purges of potential enemies were necessary.

It is possible to argue that the purges and Yezhovshchina were entirely of Stalin’s manufacture, or that they were largely driven by one or many other factors. The best answers will see the inter-linkage between the various factors and will make judgements based on the degree to which the other factors would have come into play had the state not been under Stalin’s thumb. Reward any convincing and substantiated argument.