



A-level HISTORY 7042/2T

Component 2T The Crisis of Communism: the USSR and the
Soviet Empire, 1953–2000

Mark scheme

June 2025

Version: 1.0 Final



2 5 6 A 7 0 4 2 / 2 T / M S

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.

No student should be disadvantaged on the basis of their gender identity and/or how they refer to the gender identity of others in their exam responses.

A consistent use of 'they/them' as a singular and pronouns beyond 'she/her' or 'he/him' will be credited in exam responses in line with existing mark scheme criteria.

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from aqa.org.uk

Copyright information

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Copyright © 2025 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Supporting Marking Guidance

A separate Supporting Marking Guidance document has been created for use in this series and any future series.

It has been written by the senior examining team. It applies to all A-level History options. The purpose of the guidance is to clarify key aspects of the mark scheme and further ensure consistency of approach across all options. The guidance does not reflect a change in the standard applied, but clarification and amplification of the standard. We hope that the guidance document will aid you in your understanding of how the standard should be applied and deepen your understanding of how the key aspects of the mark scheme work. The Supporting Marking Guidance should always be used in conjunction with the mark scheme, and any relevant examiner standardising and teacher training material.

Examiners can find the Supporting Marking Guidance on the associate extranet.

Teachers can find the Supporting Marking Guidance alongside the current mark scheme on Centre Services on results day. It will also be published with any future assessment materials on the public website.

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, ie 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 unrest in Poland in 1980/81.

[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

- Source A is valuable because it comes from Lech Walesa and the Gdansk Strike Committee, providing the reasons for strike action, ranging from censorship to poor working and living conditions, and political corruption
- Source A is valuable because it provides an insight into the seriousness of the situation for both Poland and the USSR, as revealed by the concessions offered by the government later in August legalising trade unions. Gdansk played a central role in Poland's shipbuilding industry, and any General Strike would have crippled the economy.
- The source could be considered to lack value due to its date, being very early in the period in question and therefore is not able to give a full picture of how the unrest developed into 1981
- the tone of the source is bold and ambitious, which is valuable in the context of Soviet action in Afghanistan which had undermined its international position. The regime was therefore more likely to respond with caution, which was the case initially in 1980.

Content and argument

- the demands appear to be born mainly out of poor working conditions and a desire to reward the working class in Poland, which is valuable in revealing the socio-economic problems underpinning the unrest
- the demands reveal clear frustration with the corrupt and self-serving political elite in Poland which was a significant motivation for the unrest throughout 1980-81
- Walesa is not calling for political revolution but for political reform, notably regarding corrupt appointments, granting a political amnesty and introducing a much more inclusive political system, which is valuable in foreshadowing Solidarity's non-violent strategy and aims over the next year
- the Twenty-One demands are far-reaching and would have put a strain on Poland's weak economy and have required significant political reform. The government was never going to agree to many of the demands, which explains their ultimately hardline response, which adds value to the source

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

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- Source B is valuable because it comes from the CPSU and gives their view on the current situation in Poland, revealing their frustrations with the conciliatory approach adopted by Kania to this point. The CPSU had great influence over the regime in Poland and therefore heavily influenced decision making.
- by April 1981, the Kremlin was looking towards the leadership in Poland for more decisive action. In March, Brezhnev sent Soviet warships to the Polish coast and instructed the army to carry out training

manoeuvres on the Polish border both as a sign of support for the regime in Poland but also as a way of pressuring them into taking a harder line

- Source B is valuable because it has been written 8 months since the Twenty-One Demands were made at Gdansk, enabling it to report substantially on developments in Poland
- the tone of Source B is one of disappointment and caution; disappointment at the lack of action taken by Kania and Jaruzelski, and caution due to the desire not to send Soviet troops into Poland, fearing NATO's response, which is valuable in revealing the delicate diplomatic balance required for the USSR

Content and argument

- The source is valuable in revealing the strength of Solidarity in April 1981 but also the fact that it pursued non-violent tactics and feared the prospect of a Soviet military intervention
- However, the claim that Solidarity had grown into its own political force capable of taking power into its own hands is misleading. Solidarity was an umbrella organisation for a variety of groups with differing goals and, whilst Solidarity perhaps had the potential to overthrow the PUWP, it was not its intention
- it is true that the Polish leadership had made concessions since the formation of Solidarity, notably voting members of Solidarity onto the Central Committee and agreeing to a 12% pay rise for workers.
- it is true that the CPSU were keen for Kania and Jaruzelski to fix Poland and were reluctant to send in Soviet troops as they feared repercussions with the West. Kania continued in power until October before being replaced by Jaruzelski
- as alluded to in the source, the CPSU placed continual pressure on the Polish leadership to impose martial law, e.g. through the repeated visits of Marshal Kulikov, whilst simultaneously providing significant levels of financial support to keep the Polish economy afloat

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

Provenance, tone and emphasis

- as leader of the Polish Communist Party, Jaruzelski played a key role in banning Solidarity and quieting the unrest in Poland. He was specifically appointed by the USSR to replace Kania to implement this policy
- Source C is valuable as this was the moment in December 1981 when Jaruzelski announced to the Polish people that Martial Law had been implemented; it was this use of coercion that resulted in Solidarity being defeated
- the radio announcement was almost certainly aimed at the people of Poland but also the CPSU who had entrusted Jaruzelski to get a better handle on the situation in Poland. This would have been listened to on a wide scale, and even in the West, whom the CPSU were keen not to antagonise
- the tone is a combination of desperation and strength because of how perilous the situation was. The emphasis is on doing the right thing for both Poland and its socialist allies within the Warsaw Pact.

Content and argument

- Jaruzelski is correct to refer to the seriousness of the situation come December 1981 – Solidarity's membership continued to grow and Poland was in economic meltdown due to repeated strike action
- there was a need for an alternative tactic. Walesa negotiated skilfully and diplomatically, and offering concessions had resulted in little gain for the PUWP. Jaruzelski's Martial Law is presented as a much-needed last resort to restore order and discipline
- it is true that the Polish leadership valued aid from its allies, particularly the USSR whose economic support and propaganda campaign during these troubled years enabled the PUWP to survive
- Jaruzelski refers to the special bond that existed between the USSR and Poland, evidenced in 1984 when the CPSU awarded Jaruzelski with the Order of Lenin for strengthening socialism on Polish soil.

• **Section B**

- 0 2** To what extent did Khrushchev achieve peaceful co-existence with the West in the years 1958 to 1962?

[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 Khrushchev achieved peaceful co-existence with the West in the years 1958 to 1962 might include:

- Khrushchev made several attempts to negotiate with the West. In September 1959, he visited the US and concluded his meeting with President Eisenhower with the following joint statement – ‘international questions would be resolved not by force but by peaceful means through negotiations’
- it could be argued that the Berlin Wall prevented war between the US and the USSR with Kennedy famously stating, ‘it’s not a very nice solution, but a wall is hell of a lot better than a war’
- at certain points Khrushchev’s actions alleviated the crisis in Cuba – in October 1962, he ordered Soviet ships to stop around 750 miles off the coast of Cuba to prevent a stand-off between the Soviet and US navy; he also ordered for the nuclear missiles to be withdrawn from Cuba
- Khrushchev made further attempts to achieve peaceful co-existence with the West in the immediate aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis – a hotline phone link between the White House and the Kremlin was set up in order to improve communication between the two powers, and talks began to limit nuclear testing, resulting in the signing of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

Arguments challenging the view that Khrushchev achieved peaceful co-existence with the West in the years 1958 to 1962 might include:

- Khrushchev behaved provocatively towards the West over Berlin. It was part of the occupation agreement that citizens of Berlin could travel freely between sectors. However, in November 1958, Khrushchev issued an ultimatum to the West, instructing that they were to withdraw from Berlin within 6 months. In August 1961, he ordered for the erection of the Berlin Wall
- Khrushchev behaved provocatively towards the West over Cuba. In October 1962, US spy planes identified Soviet nuclear missiles sites in Cuba, which was situated just 90 miles from the American coast. Kennedy ignored the guidance from his military advisers, which was to bomb the sites. Khrushchev’s adventurism almost led to war
- Khrushchev’s backing of Soviet efforts in the Space Race worsened relations with the US. Sputnik’s success overturned the American belief that the US had technical superiority. In turn, this increased American paranoia and strained relations
- on 1 May 1960, an American U2 spy plane was shot down over the USSR, and Khrushchev threatened strikes on bases used by the USA in neighbouring countries and walked out of the Paris peace summit.

Students may argue Khrushchev made some attempt to achieve peaceful co-existence with the West, particularly in moments of crisis. However, students will likely comment that his adventurism resulted in flashpoints of tension with the West and almost led the world to the brink of nuclear disaster.

- 0 3** 'In the years 1953 to 1968, Communist regimes controlled the Church effectively in all satellite states.'

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 in the years 1953 to 1968, Communist regimes controlled the Church effectively in all satellite states might include:

- in Czechoslovakia, the Church operated entirely under the Party's control. The StB arrested thousands of priests, monks and nuns. All Church property was seized by the state and religious education removed from schools
- in Hungary, the Church was only allowed to continue under complete state control. When Cardinal Mindszenty, the leader of the Catholic Church in Hungary, spoke out against Communist rule he was arrested and tortured. All religious leaders in Hungary were made to swear allegiance to the state
- in the GDR, those who spoke out against Socialist rule, such as Otto Dibelius, Bishop of Berlin, were harassed. Manfred Stolpe, lay head of the Protestant Churches of the GDR was a Stasi agent, which meant that the authorities could suppress potential opposition arising out the Churches promptly.
- the SB in Poland was responsible for monitoring and suppressing the actions of potential opponents of the party – it is estimated that 15% of priests were informants for the SB which no doubt enabled the party to better control the Church. It is no surprise to learn then that the leader of the Polish Catholics, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, was imprisoned from 1953 to 1956 for criticising the party leadership.

Arguments challenging the view that in the years 1953 to 1968, Communist regimes controlled the Church effectively in all satellite states might include:

- in Poland, and to an extent in the GDR, the independence given to the Church was problematic for the satellite states. It meant the promotion of a set of ideological beliefs that conflicted directly with that of Marxism-Leninism and provided another set of leaders to whom people owed their allegiance
- the satellite states adopted an inconsistent approach to the Church. In some states the Church was brought under complete party control, eg in Hungary. However, in others, eg in Poland, the Church remained independent and influential. This was problematic as church-goers in the satellite states where religion was heavily repressed felt they were being treated unfairly and became more difficult to manage
- Ulbricht's attempts to weaken the Church in the GDR had limited impact since the Church held onto much of its responsibility and remained influential by continuing to run old people's homes, childcare facilities and hospitals. Soviet attempts to persecute the Church in the GDR only worked to drive religious worship underground
- in Czechoslovakia, priests could still be trained and Church attendance in the towns remained high
- in Poland, 95% of the population were Catholic. The Church in Poland enjoyed more freedom and influence than in the other satellite states. Religious leaders tended to avoid religious persecution. Also, the Church in Poland was given the freedom to continue its role in education and managed to hold on to its property.

Students may argue that the Soviet satellite states maintained control of the Church in the years 1953 to 1968, particularly in the Czechoslovakia and Hungary where the Party heavily repressed religion and took total control of the Church. However, students should refer to the independence that the Church retained elsewhere, particularly in Poland, and how this made maintaining effective control near impossible.

0 4 To what extent did Andropov and Chernenko reform the USSR in the years 1982 to 1985?

[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 Andropov and Chernenko reformed the USSR in the years 1982 to 1985 might include:

- Andropov tackled political stagnation by promoting young, able politicians with new ideas, for example Mikhail Gorbachev. In total, one fifth of regional party secretaries were replaced and one third of the departmental heads of the Central Committee
- Andropov targeted corruption within the government and party. New, severe penalties were put in place for those accepting bribes. Hundreds were arrested, including many of Brezhnev's Old Guard
- the workplace became more efficient – absenteeism and drunkenness were reduced. In January 1984, Andropov's economic reform of giving factory managers more power to make decisions and the breaking up of monopolies contributed significantly to the improvement in industrial output in the USSR at this time
- Chernenko's agricultural reform increased the amount of land under cultivation. Techniques were applied which redirected the flow of rivers across Siberia towards the Caucasus and Central Asia, making land more fertile.

Arguments challenging the view that Andropov and Chernenko reformed the USSR in the years 1982 to 1985 might include:

- both Andropov and Chernenko were unwell and old when in power – a recipe for continued stagnation. Andropov died after 15 months in power and Chernenko after just 13 months, the shortest of any Soviet leader. They had little opportunity to make an impact
- Chernenko was conservative by nature and so too were many of his faction. Andropov's policy of appointing lots of young able politicians with new ideas was reversed by Chernenko, who in 13 months only appointed 4 new ministers
- despite hinting that the Soviets wanted a return to détente, there was no improvement in relations with the West. In fact, Reagan denounced Andropov's USSR as an evil empire
- at times, Andropov demonstrated conservatism and an unwillingness to reform. When a group of young Communist intellectuals argued that the USSR had acquired a new ruling class, they were arrested. Under Andropov, dissidents continued to be harassed, Jewish emigration halted and significant efforts were made to prevent the Soviet people from making contact with the outside world
- economic reform was limited. Whilst Andropov encouraged Gorbachev to formulate a plan in order to reform the Soviet economy, Gorbachev was not provided with key information, making the task near impossible. There were still conservative ministers in positions of significant responsibility in Andropov's USSR, for example his Head of Gosplan, who had held this position for 20 years, warned that any economic reform must proceed cautiously. Also, most of the economic reform proposed by Gorbachev was rejected by Chernenko's Old Guard.

Students may argue that Andropov and Chernenko reformed the USSR, particularly in relation to the anti-corruption programme and aspects of their economic policies. However, students will also likely comment that Andropov changed little fundamentally and much of what he reformed was then reversed by the more orthodox Chernenko.