Activity

Using the information in the chapters of this book which you have already read, and any other materials you have used, write a couple of paragraphs to explain the reasons why Stalin launched a 'second revolution from above'.

Fact

Between 1941 and 1945, the Soviet Union suffered staggering losses; the USA was the only power to emerge richer from the war. According to the historian Chris Ward, by 1945, 25% of the USSR's pre-war capital stock had been destroyed. It was even worse in those western regions of the USSR that had been occupied by Axis forces - there, the figure was 66%, while, according to Robert Service, population losses were an incredible 25%. As the Axis forces retreated in 1944-45, they carried out systematic destruction - hardly a mine, factory or collective farm remained intact. In addition, over 1700 towns and over 70,000 villages were razed to the ground. One result of this deliberate destruction was that over 2.5 million civilians were forced to live in makeshift underground hovels. By May 1945, the Soviet economy was in turmoil and the Soviet people were traumatised.

The economic results of collectivisation are also an area of controversy, although historians are agreed that, after 1928, grain deliveries to the state increased despite total agricultural production suffering a serious decline in the 1930s. One group of historians supports the orthodox standard model, which argues that, while agricultural output declined, collectivisation shifted resources and funds from rural to urban areas, and so allowed rapid industrialisation. Michael Ellman, for example, claims collectivisation provided food, labour and funds for the first Five-Year Plan; others argue that, had the NEP continued, industrial growth rates would have been much lower than those achieved by the Five-Year Plans. However, historians such as James Millar and Holland Hunter offer a revisionist argument, claiming that collectivisation was an economic disaster that made little contribution to the industrialisation programme.

Economic reconstruction after the Second World War

During the Second World War, nearly 100,000 kolkhozes, 2000 soukhozes and almost 5 million homes were partially or completely destroyed, and over 17 million cattle were lost. Railways, roads and bridges were also destroyed in large quantities. Retreating German armies stripped the occupied areas of all the industrial equipment and agricultural produce they could carry, and destroyed the rest. After the war, with the USA and Britain refusing to agree to massive reparations from Germany, it was clear that the Soviet Union would have to rely on its own resources for reconstruction.

The fourth Five-Year Plan, 1946-50

Stalin outlined a 15-year programme for long-term recovery, and a fourth Five-Year Plan was announced in March 1946. Hopes were dashed that the pre-war drive for industrialisation and collectivisation might be eased, but the harsh labour laws and methods of the 1930s did not reappear. Emphasis was placed on re-building heavy industry and on reviving agriculture. However, civilian needs were also given priority - within nine months of the end of the war in Europe, over 2.5 million homeless people had been re-housed.

The first year of the plan was not very successful. However, once the surviving mines and factories had re-opened and war industries switched back to industrial production, the industrial revival took off. By 1950, Stalin was claiming that the targets set had already been exceeded and that production levels were equal to or higher than those for 1940. These were exaggerations, but a surprisingly rapid and extensive industrial recovery was being made.

Agriculture

The revival of agriculture was less successful. Even before 1941, agricultural production had been insufficient, but the effects of war were disastrous. In many areas, the collective system had totally collapsed and many peasants had grabbed land to work as private plots and sold produce on the black market. In September 1946, Stalin announced that all previously collectivised land would be reclaimed, but the drought that hit many areas and the genuine lack of labour resulted in a poor harvest. The reduced number of farm animals also led to a drop in meat production. However, things began to improve after 1946. By 1950, state meat procurements were just about back to 1940 levels, although the 1950 harvest was still about 15% below the figure for 1940. Significantly, by 1950, almost half of agricultural production was still in the hands of the private sector, despite the existence of over 250,000 kolkhozes.

The fifth Five-Year Plan, 1951-55

The fifth Five-Year Plan, which ran from 1951 to 1955, set relatively lower targets than the previous plan. The Cold War resulted in increasing amounts of state funds going to the defence industry. Despite this, tremendous improvements had been made by the time of Stalin's death in 1953. Rationing had ended in 1947, and real wages (which by 1947 were only about 60% of 1940 levels) began to rise steadily from 1948; by 1952, they had surpassed the 1940 levels.

What was the position of women in Stalin's Russia?

There were fundamental differences between fascism/Nazism and Marxism/ communism over the emancipation and role of women in society.

In 1926, a new Family Code consolidated earlier rights (see Fact box, right), and also gave women in 'common law' marriages the same rights as those in registered marriages. In Muslim regions, where feudal forms of social structure remained, women were a subject class. The communists raised the minimum age of marriage in these regions to 16 (it was 18 in the European parts of Soviet Russia), and polygamy and bride money were banned. They also organised mass political activity, known as the khudzhum, to mobilise women to oppose traditional practices. At the same time, education was provided equally for both males and females. State nurseries and workplace crèches and canteens were provided to enable mothers to work outside the home.

However, under Stalin some of these reforms and benefits were reduced or removed. Fear of war was growing following Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933, and Soviet population growth was in decline. For these reasons, from 1935 Stalin decided on policies to promote 'traditional' family values in order to increase the Soviet population. Although most of the rights established by the 1926 Code remained intact, a new family law was introduced in 1936. This made divorce more difficult, with a rising fee for each divorce, and restricted abortion to those required for medical reasons only. In addition, in order to encourage bigger families and so raise the birthrate, tax exemptions were given to families with large numbers of children. From 1944, only registered marriages were recognised, children born outside marriage were no longer allowed to inherit property from their father, and divorce became even more difficult and expensive. During the Second World War, medals were awarded to mothers with large families and unmarried people were taxed more heavily.

However, women in particular benefited from new welfare reforms introduced under Stalin – a free health service, accident insurance at work, the expansion of kindergartens for working mothers with children, and paid holidays for many workers. Equal educational provision continued. Nonetheless, the provision of sufficient and adequate housing continued to be a problem.

In employment, women had traditionally been found mainly in agriculture, textiles and services. Their position improved considerably under the Bolsheviks, and even more so under Stalin's rule. Women were actively encouraged to play their part in the economic development of Soviet Russia, and all employment was thrown open to women, who had the same rights as men. By 1939, a third of all engineers and 79% of doctors were women.

Fact

Before 1924, the Soviet government had tried to liberate women and establish equality between the genders. Steps were taken to weaken the traditional family, which was seen as contributing to the exploitation of women. Left-feminist Bolshevik leaders such as Alexandra Kollontai pushed hard for this, although Lenin's views were more conservative. Early reforms included free contraceptive advice. Abortion was legalised in 1920 and made available free on demand. Marriages were to be performed in brief civil ceremonies in register offices, and divorce was made much easier - all that was necessary was for one partner to request it.

Fact

Many Muslim women removed their veils at mass meetings on International Women's Day, 1927. This continued in the following years and hundreds of women in traditional areas were raped and killed by male fundamentalists for 'outraging' Islamic customs.

By 1934, the divorce rate in Moscow was 37% and there were over 150,000 abortions for every 57,000 live births. Population growth dropped and there was an increase in the number of abandoned children. Between 1923 and 1928, the population had grown by 4 million a year - in 1928, the rate of population growth had been 24%. But from 1928 to 1940, rates of population growth fell almost continuously.

In 1923, the League of the Godless

(known as the League of Militant

Atheists from 1929) was set up to turn



Women learning to write as part of the literacy campaign, using the new Russian alphabet, imposed in the late 1920s

In 1928, the number of women listed as 'workers-employees' had been 2,795,000. By 1939, this had risen to just over 13 million. By 1933, women made up 33% of the industrial workforce, rising to 43% by 1940.

Despite the emphasis on family life during the 1930s, women of all ages continued to work. There were many women 'hero-workers' in the Stakhanovite movement, though in a smaller proportion than men; by 1936, a quarter of all female trade unionists were classified as workers who had exceeded their production targets. However, access to the higher administrative posts was unequal and the patriarchal tradition was still widespread in society, leaving many

working women with the bulk of household chores. Despite these realities, the attitude of the Stalinist state to women was very different from that in Nazi Germany. Nazis considered women to be inferior to men and thought they should be confined mainly to domestic concerns. Communists believed in total equality between the sexes in education, employment and the law.

SOURCE C

Though women were restricted in their access to the highest jobs and had to cope with the pressures of running a household and a job, they were regarded as an integral element in the construction of the new community. Stalin's rhetorical claim in 1938 that 'Woman in our country has become a great might', if it still disguised the social reality of discrimination, it nonetheless exposed a priority very different from that of the Third Reich.

Overy, R. 2004. The Dictators: Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia. London, UK. Allen Lane/Penguin Books. p. 260.

What were Stalin's policies towards religion and ethnic minorities?

Religion

Under the tsars, the Russian Orthodox Church had been the national Church of the empire. As Marxists, the Bolsheviks had always seen religion and the Churches as aspects of class-divided societies which tried to reconcile the lower classes to poverty, inequality and exploitation, and to uphold the privileges of the ruling classes. Marx described religion as 'the opium of the people.'

After the November Revolution, the Bolsheviks did not see religion as a threat - freedom of religion was allowed and churches were not closed. However, lands owned by the Churches were confiscated, and Church and state legally separated. In addition, registration of births, marriages and deaths became secular rather than religious. In 1921, the giving of religious instruction to those under 18 was banned and anti-religious campaigns were allowed. However, in 1927, the Orthodox Church was granted official recognition in return for promises to stay out of politics and to be loyal to the Soviet regime.

Then, in 1928, Stalin began a vigorous anti-religious campaign, involving the closure or confiscation of places of religious worship. Church bells were melted down into scrap metal for use in the new blast furnaces. By the time of the Nazi invasion in 1941, nearly 40,000 Christian churches and 25,000 Muslim mosques had been closed down and converted into schools, cinemas, clubs, warehouses and grain stores, or Museums of Scientific Atheism.

In 1929, worship was restricted to 'registered congregations', and the 1936 Constitution made pro-religious propaganda (such as study groups and Bible circles) a crime. This particularly hit the various Protestant sects, especially evangelical groups such as the Baptists, many of which were seen as having links to religious groups abroad. In 1930, Church leaders were banned from conducting religious services - those who resisted were arrested and imprisoned. Many thousands of Church leaders and priests were sent to the Gulag, or even killed. In 1932, a new 'uninterrupted work week' was introduced, partly to prevent church attendance.

The anti-religion drive spread to cover Buddhism and the Armenian and Georgian Churches, as well as Islam. In the Islamic republics of the USSR, Sharia courts were abolished; the frequency of ritual prayers, fasts and feasts (which interfered with the working day) was reduced; Muslim women were granted equality and wearing the veil was forbidden. In 1935, pilgrimages to Mecca were made illegal.

However, religious belief and worship persisted - the 1937 census showed that 57% of the population still defined themselves as believers.

Stalin's attitude to religion was variable. In the 1936 Constitution, priests regained the right to vote (which they had lost in 1918); in 1937, while the central authority of the Orthodox Church was recognised, 50 bishops were imprisoned or shot for counter-revolutionary activities. Then, during the Second World War, Stalin removed many restrictions on the Orthodox Church. In 1943, the post of patriarch or head of the Russian Orthodox Church (which had disappeared in 1925) was re-established as part of the new Soviet patriotism.

Stalin also allowed the re-opening of churches – by 1947, about 20,000 existed, along with 67 monastic houses. Although it had some aspects of a state-Church concordat, this accommodation had its limits. In 1944, Stalin revived antireligious propaganda once a Soviet victory seemed certain. While Orthodox priests and congregations were still kept under observation, Protestants and Catholics continued to suffer more severe persecution, especially in Ukraine and the Baltic republics re-annexed in 1940.

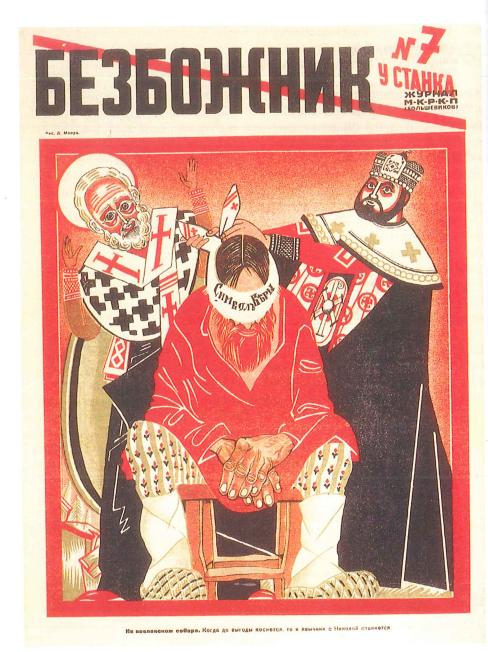
Fact

Fact

The 1936 Constitution was often known as the Stalin Constitution. It claimed the Soviet Union was socialist and listed various individual rights, but political freedoms were not honoured.

Sharia courts These are the courts that apply Sharia law in most Muslim societies, based on a combination of sources, including the Qu'ran, the teachings of Mohammed and rulings by Islamic scholars. The Bolsheviks were mainly opposed to this as they saw Sharia law as oppressing women.





A front cover of Bezbozhnik ('The Godless'), an anti-religious magazine published in Moscow in the 1920s and 1930s; it shows the Church and religion keeping the Russian people in superstition and ignorance

Ethnic minorities

Tsarist Russia had been a multi-national empire, with Slavonic groups in the western and central European parts and mainly Muslim and Asiatic groups in the central and eastern areas. After the 1917 Revolution, the Bolsheviks campaigned against Slav and **Great Russian chauvinism**. Native languages were tolerated and even encouraged through literacy campaigns, and a degree of self-determination was allowed. The early Communist Party allowed all the major nationalities – including Soviet Jews – to have separate party sections.

However, this changed in the 1930s under Stalin. Once he had decided on his 'revolution', Stalin's desire for central control led to greater assimilation of the various national groups, in order to achieve a 'Soviet' identity. Many historians see Stalin's policies as those of a Great Russian nationalist. For example, Russification of education was accompanied during the 1930s and 1940s by a clear policy of equating Soviet patriotism with Great Russian nationalism. Russian became the official language.

By 1936, Stalin had divided central Asia into five separate republics, in order to weaken any pan-Turkic loyalties (many Turkic people wanted to join together in one state). According to Ward, a semi-colonial relationship developed between Moscow and these republics. According to some Soviet calculations published under Gorbachev in the late 1980s, almost 3.3 million non-Russians were deported to special settlements in the 1930s and 1940s, while a vigorous policy against Soviet Jews was also followed.

However, Richard Overy states that Stalin was not a Russian nationalist, suggesting that his policies were political and strategic rather than ethnic or racial. In the face of growing threats from Japan and Nazi Germany, Stalin was trying to construct a Soviet patriotism to unite all nationalities in a common commitment to building socialism and defending the Soviet 'motherland'. Stalin's actions were directed against what he saw as a reactionary nationalism (i.e. anti-socialist and anti-Soviet). Many of the resettlements were due to the fear – and later the results – of war. For example, national groups living on the Soviet borders were moved if they shared ethnic origins with potential enemies.

Immediately after the Second World War, there were more violent measures against ethnic groups accused of collaborating with the Nazi invaders. Thousands were imprisoned or resettled in areas far from their original homes. However, this declined after 1945.

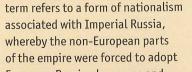
Jews

Before 1917, there were 5 million Jews in Russia. They suffered considerable persecution under the tsars. As a result of this persecution, Russian Jews were the first to develop **Zionism**.

In 1917, all anti-Semitic laws were abolished. Many of the early Bolshevik leaders (such as Trotsky) were Jews themselves. However, in common with their attitudes to the Christian and Islamic religions, the Bolsheviks had opposed the activities of Jewish religious leaders and Zionists. Hence, Yiddish was an acceptable language; Hebrew – because of its religious connotations – was not.

Under Stalin, between 1926 and 1931, the number of Jewish workers in industry more than doubled and, by 1939, 77% of Jewish workers were wage earners in industry and offices. Thus hopes for rapid and full integration and assimiliation were high. Nonetheless, anti-Jewish prejudices began to re-emerge in some sections of the population – especially in rural areas – in the campaigns against 'subversives' and 'saboteurs' during the purges. However, it is important to note that the Jews arrested in the 1930s were arrested – like Russians and other non-Russians – as suspected counter-revolutionaries or reactionary nationalists, rather than as Jews. In fact, in the Gulag population of the late 1930s, Jews were actually under-represented.

Zionism This term refers to a movement for the re-establishment of a Jewish nation. Because of persecution throughout Europe, a minority of Jewish leaders during the 19th century came to believe that Jews should have their own state. At first, these Zionists considered several possible locations, including parts of Africa and Latin America; eventually, they decided on Palestine. Between 1881 and 1891, over 10,000 Jews from all over the world settled there. Soviet Jews supporting Zionism were seen as disloyal.



Great Russian chauvinism This

of the empire were forced to adopt
European Russian language and
culture. After 1917, Stalin increasingly
took this approach – leading to a
clash with Lenin over the 'national

question', shortly before he died.

Fact

That Stalin's regime kept racism in

check is illustrated by the thousands

of Ukrainians who, once removed from

Soviet control after the Nazi invasion,

eagerly co-operated with the SS and

participated in the round-up and

murder of Ukrainian Jews.

2 Stalin and Russia

In 1926, Soviet Jews were granted a special 'national homeland' settlement in part of the far eastern region; in 1934, this became an autonomous republic - but only about 50,000 settled there. In 1939-40, the USSR gained an extra 2 million Jews by incorporating the east of Poland and the Baltic republics - Zionism was especially strong in these areas. This, and the Nazi invasion of 1941, led to strong campaigns against Zionism - thousands of rabbis and community leaders were arrested.

Those Soviet Jews who survived the Nazi death squads and were part of the intelligentsia suffered from some persecution after the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948. They were called 'Zionists' and 'rootless cosmopolitans', and emigration to Israel was banned. Following accusations that Jewish doctors in the Kremlin were planning a coup, several Jewish academic and cultural figures were sacked from positions of responsibility and several were arrested. Rumours began to circulate that Stalin intended to deport all Jews to the 'national homeland' in the far east of the USSR. Just before the 'unmasking' of the so-called Doctors' Plot, 26 were executed. This persecution ended with the death of Stalin in 1953 - although discrimination against Zionists continued because of their alleged links to and support for Israel.

However, such policies were essentially anti-Zionist rather than anti-Semitic as far as Stalin and the rest of the government were concerned. Racism and anti-Semitism clearly existed against Jews and between other ethnic groups, but the Soviet state was strongly against all forms of overt or violent racial discrimination. Communists - unlike the Nazi Party in Germany - believed all races were equal and welcomed inter-marriage as a way of assimilating the different national and ethnic groups. Hence those policies that affected many Jews under Stalin were politically, not biologically, motivated, and were not intended to be genocidal.

What impact did Stalinism have on education, young people and the arts?

Education

One aspect of the crusade against religion was the spread of state education. The early Bolsheviks realised that an educated workforce was vital if they were to create a modern socialist industrial society – education was thus seen as a priority in providing the skilled workers needed for industrial and technological expansion. Mass provision of primary education - with equal opportunity for all - had been their first aim, in order to overcome the high illiteracy rate that was inherited from tsarist Russia. Education was made free, comprehensive and coeducational. At first, the Commissariat of the Enlightenment, which organised education, tried to encourage individuality and creativity; there was little political restriction on work in science and the arts; and physical punishment was banned.

Under Stalin, the provision of secondary and higher education expanded. In 1927, the 15th Party Congress greatly increased expenditure on education. As a result, primary and secondary schooling grew immensely – from 7.9 million students in 118,558 schools to 9.7 million in 166,275 schools by 1933. By 1939, illiteracy had been almost eradicated: 94% of those aged 9-49 in towns could

read and write; in rural areas, the figure was 86%. The proportion of workingclass students in higher technical education doubled after 1928 to about 62% as a result of a class-quota system that operated until 1935; thereafter, the percentage dropped to about 45%. However, this was still a marked improvement on pre-1917 Russia.

Young people

From the beginning, the early communists wanted to influence and recruit young people. In 1918, they formed a communist youth organisation. At first this was radical and, unlike Nazi youth organisations (see pages 101-02), largely independent of the adult party. Age of entry was 15 (reduced to 14 in 1949) and membership continued until 21. However, membership was not compulsory. Again unlike the Nazi youth movements, entry was closely controlled: youths had to be sponsored by an adult communist. In the 1920s, a junior organisation was set up for those aged 10 to 15: this was known as the Pioneers. By the 1940s, most children of school age belonged to this organisation.

During the power struggle in the 1920s, the radicalism and independence of the youth movement was ended, as many sections tended to support Trotsky and the Opposition. In 1926, it became the Communist Union of Youth (or Komsomol). In 1939, it was directly affiliated to the party. Membership rose quickly from 4 million to 9 million by 1939, and to 16 million by the time of Stalin's death in 1953.

As in Nazi Germany, there was a militaristic element to some Komsomol activities, with an emphasis on national service, but unlike in Nazi Germany, this included girls as well as boys. In fact, all students in universities, higher and middle schools had to do some military training.

Stalin's main aim concerning young people was to ensure that future workers would be skilled enough to play their part in Russia's industrial and scientific development. From the early 1930s, Stalin insisted that education and school life became more strict. Thus the libertarian trends of the 1920s were reversed: for example, school uniforms, report cards and test results were reintroduced, and teaching became more formal. In 1943, co-education in urban areas was replaced with single-sex schools.

Education was specifically geared to the needs of the state, as well as being designed to make all citizens educated and cultured. One aim was the creation of a new 'socialist citizen' who accepted collectivist rather than individualistic ideals. Later, as fear of war increased, nationalism was stressed in history teaching, with tsars such as Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great being referred to as national heroes. In order to ensure that he could control what people were taught and thought, Stalin had teachers and university lecturers arrested if they were suspected of opposing such principles.

However, as in Nazi Germany, there were examples of youth lifestyle rebellion. Mostly, such young people opted out by listening to forbidden music (especially jazz) or simply avoiding Komsomol activities. There were many small, secret youth organisations in the Soviet Union before 1941, and again after 1945. However, open political revolt was rare, and all rebels were quickly rounded up by state security.

Komsomol This is the Communist Union of Youth, set up for young people aged 18-28. It provided volunteers for various party programmes and policies, and also assisted the police and the Red Army. Many went on to join the Communist Party as full members.

Fact

Two examples of secret youth organisations were the Enlightened Communist Youth and the Communist Party of Youth. In 1945, the **Enlightened Communist Youth claimed** they were a better kind of communist, while in 1948 the unofficial Communist Party of Youth discussed political issues outside those permitted by the state.

Culture

During the early 1920s, there had been a flourishing of modern art. Lenin and Trotsky were just two of the Bolshevik leaders who supported avant-garde artists. They tended to let people write what and how they liked - provided it was not overtly 'counter-revolutionary'. However, under Stalin, state control was tightened - all writers had to belong to the Union of Soviet Writers and to write about aspects deemed compatible with 'socialist realism'. If you were not a member, your works would not be published. This affected newspapers, magazines, novels, poems and plays - all of which had to show support of Stalin, the Communist Party and Soviet Russia, and to praise ordinary workers, or show peasants as happy with their lives on the new collective farms. As the 1930s progressed, and fears of war increased, nationalism became another theme that writers and artists were expected to portray favourably.

These controls applied to all creative artists – including musicians, film makers, painters and sculptors. All works of art had to show the progress and successes achieved under Stalin and communism. Those that didn't were censored, and many artists were denied work opportunities, or ended up in the labour camps of the Gulag.

End of unit activities

- 1 Carry out some research into the economic and human impact of Stalin's agricultural policies. Then write a couple of paragraphs to summarise the different estimates of the number of deaths resulting from forced collectivisation, and list the ways in which different historians have disputed the various calculations.
- 2 In pairs, carry out further research into the role and status of women in Stalin's Russia. Then present your findings in the form of two charts - one to show how the lives of women improved during his rule, and another to highlight the ways in which women experienced a worse life than during
- 3 Find out more about the experiences of religious groups in the period 1928-41. Then draw up a list of the main religious groups, giving details of their treatment, and highlighting any similarities and differences. Finally, make an assessment of the success of Stalin's policies against religion.
- 4 Carry out an investigation into the ways in which ethnic and national minorities were treated under Stalin. Then produce two arguments - one for and one against - the proposition that 'The Stalinist state was not a racist state'.

End of chapter activities

Paper 1 exam practice

Question

What, according to Source A below, were Stalin's advantages over his rivals in the period 1924-29? [2 marks]

Skill

Comprehension of a source

SOURCE A

What these posts [general secretary of the Communist Party and chair of its Control Commission] gave him was the power of patronage, the right to appoint individuals to official positions in the party and government. He used this power to place his own supporters in key positions. Since they then owed their place to him (he fired as well as hired), Stalin could count on their support in the voting of various committees ... Whatever the ability of individuals who opposed him or the strengths of their arguments, he could always out-vote them. Stalin's advantages over his rivals had been increased ... by the 'Lenin Enrolment' [an expansion of party membership]. The new members were poorly educated and politically unsophisticated but they understood that the privileges that came with party membership depended on their being loyal to those who admitted them. They provided the general secretary with a reliable body of votes in the various party committees at local and central level.

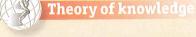
Lynch, M. 1990. Stalin and Khrushchev: The USSR 1924-64. London, UK. Hodder Arnold H&S.

Examiner's tips

Comprehension questions are the most straightforward questions you will face in Paper 1. They simply require you to understand a source and extract two or three relevant points that relate to the particular question.

As only 2 marks are available for this question, make sure you do not waste valuable exam time that should be spent on the higher scoring questions by writing a long answer here. All that is needed are a couple of brief sentences, giving the necessary information to show that you have understood the message of the source. Basically, try to give one piece of information for each of the marks available for the question.





History and science

What are the similarities and differences between the methods used by historians and scientists to establish the 'truth'? Is scientific knowledge always more 'objective' than historical knowledge?