

**EUROPEAN HISTORY
SECTION II**

Part B

(Suggested planning and writing time—35 minutes)

Percent of Section II score—27 1/2

Directions: You are to answer ONE question from the three questions below. Make your selection carefully, choosing the question that you are best prepared to answer thoroughly in the time permitted. You should spend 5 minutes organizing or outlining your answer. Write your answer to the question on the lined pages of the Section II free-response booklet, making sure to indicate the question you are answering by writing the appropriate question number at the top of each page.

Write an essay that:

- Has a relevant thesis.
- Addresses all parts of the question.
- Supports thesis with specific evidence.
- Is well organized.

2. Analyze the impact of the rise of militarism and the Second World War on the lives of European women. In your answer consider the period 1930 to 1950.
3. Considering the period 1953 to 1991, analyze the problems within the Soviet Union that contributed to the eventual collapse of the Soviet system.
4. Analyze the problems and opportunities associated with the rapid urbanization of western Europe in the nineteenth century.

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Question 3

Considering the period 1953 to 1991, analyze the problems within the Soviet Union that contributed to the eventual collapse of the Soviet system.

8–9 Points

- Thesis explicitly identifies and defines the problems *within* the Soviet Union in the period 1953-91 that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet system.
- Essay is clearly organized, consistently followed, and effective in support of the argument regarding the problems within the Soviet Union that led to the collapse of the Soviet system.
- Essay is balanced, analyzing at least TWO major problems *within* the Soviet Union AND how and why such problems led to the collapse of the Soviet system; essay takes into account the chronological parameters required by the question.
- At least TWO major problems *within* the Soviet Union that led to the collapse of the Soviet system are supported with multiple pieces of relevant evidence.
- May contain errors that do not detract from the argument.

6–7 Points

- Thesis is explicit and responsive to the question but may not fully define the problems *within* the Soviet Union that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet system.
- Essay is adequately organized, supportive of the argument, but may on occasion stray off task in terms of the prompts of the question (analysis, problems *within* the Soviet Union, linkage of such problems to the collapse of the Soviet system, coverage of the period 1953-91).
- Essay analyzes at least TWO major problems *within* the Soviet Union AND how and why such problems led to the collapse of the Soviet system but not in equal depth; essay may concentrate on the post-1985 period but suggests at least some awareness of the broader chronology required by the question.
- At least TWO major problems *within* the Soviet Union that led to the collapse of the Soviet system are supported by at least ONE piece of relevant evidence each.
- May contain one error that detracts from the argument.

4–5 Points

- Thesis explicitly addresses the question but may provide no development of its arguments.
- Essay is organized but may not always address the requirements of the question (analysis, the period 1953-91, problems *within* the Soviet Union, linkage to the collapse of the Soviet system).
- Essay shows some imbalance; some of the major topics suggested by the prompt may be neglected: (1) may only provide effective analysis for only one problem *within* the Soviet Union that led to the collapse of the Soviet system; (2) may describe MULTIPLE problems *within* the Soviet Union that led to the collapse of the Soviet system; (3) may focus exclusively on the period after 1985.
- At least ONE of the problems *within* the Soviet Union is supported by at least one piece of relevant evidence.
- May contain more than one error that detracts from the argument.

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Question 3 (continued)

2–3 Points

- Contains no explicit thesis OR the thesis provided may be irrelevant OR inaccurate OR is simply a paraphrase of the question.
- Essay lacks organization and may wander off task repeatedly; fails to respond effectively to the question by focusing on the Cold War OR Soviet relations with its Eastern European satellites OR Russian and/or Soviet history before and/or after the time period 1953-91.
- Essay shows serious imbalance, because most major topics suggested by the prompt are neglected (may simply describe problems, either within or outside the Soviet Union, may provide no linkage between the problems within the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Soviet system, may demonstrate no knowledge of the chronology).
- Most assertions may be generalized OR rarely supported by relevant evidence.
- May contain several errors that detract from the argument.

0–1 Point

- Essay lacks any discernable thesis OR is simply a paraphrase of the question OR an irrelevant AND inaccurate thesis.
- Disorganized response suggests little or no understanding of the question.
- Essay may be polemical rather than analytical OR may not attempt to discuss problems and/or collapse in any effective way OR shows no knowledge of the proper chronology.
- Offers little or no supporting evidence.
- May contain numerous errors of interpretation and/or fact that detract from the argument.

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Question 3 Historical Background

Material in this section is derived from the following texts:

Hunt et al., *The Making of the West* (2nd edition, 2005)

Kagan et al., *The Western Heritage* (8th edition, 2004)

McKay, *A History of Western Society* (8th AP edition, 2006)

Palmer, Colton, and Kramer, *A History of the Modern World* (9th edition, 2002)

Spielvogel, *Western Civilization* (5th edition, 2003)

In addition, textbooks by Coffin and Stacey, Hollister, Levack, Hause and Maltby, and King and Chambers were scanned. They do not appear to provide anything that cannot be found in the textbooks listed above.

CENTRAL TOPICS

Late Stalinism (1945-53)

All of the textbooks offer some discussion of the Soviet regime's foreign and domestic policies between the end of the World War II and Stalin's death, with Palmer providing the most thorough treatment. Most texts take note of the tremendous devastation experienced by the USSR as a result of World War II, although no consensus exists regarding the extent of the damage, especially when noting the loss of life (generally placed at between 20 million and 25 million dead.) Some textbooks indicate that the Soviet population hoped the Soviet regime would reward the public's heroic efforts during the war with greater freedom and more consumer goods. Hunt notes that some peasants expected an end to collectivization, while Kagan indicates that public expectations included less repression and more consumer goods. Stalin, however, moved quickly to reassert control over society and the economy. Palmer emphasizes the growth of the Gulag during and after World War II, describing "tighter ideological restrictions" and xenophobia. McKay also speaks of purges and "cultural conformity" and the emphasis on heavy industry and the military to the relative neglect of consumer goods, agriculture, and housing. Spielvogel likens Stalin's postwar policies to those of the 1930s, writing of growing political and cultural repression, as well as the focus on heavy industry and the military, with low levels of consumption and continued housing shortages. Kagan writes that with recovery and reassertion of authority as his principal objectives Stalin continued purges until his death in 1953. Hunt, while not denying that Stalin emphasized economic recovery and greater collectivization, also describes the creation of a welfare state, with the regime offering child care, family allowances, and maternity benefits, as well as modest national health care. All of the textbooks describe Stalin's imposition of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe between 1945 and 1948, linking the process to the Cold War. The Eastern European satellites adopted, to varying degrees, Soviet economic, social, and political policies in the years after World War II.

Nikita Khrushchev and De-Stalinization (1953-64)

Stalin died in 1953, leaving a distinctive legacy to his successors. Palmer identifies industrialization, victory in World War II, expansion into Eastern Europe, and the establishment as a military and nuclear superpower, pointing out that such an achievement came with "a heavy human cost." Initially a collective leadership, the regime was eventually led by Nikita Khrushchev, although the books offer different dates for his unquestioned domination of his colleagues. Despite his background, Khrushchev eventually challenged aspects of the Stalinist legacy. Palmer characterizes the Khrushchev era as an "abortive effort at reform," and McKay states that the party leadership acknowledged the need for reform and that de-Stalinization was "genuine." Kagan characterizes Khrushchev's policies as a "retreat from Stalinism but

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Question 3 Historical Background (continued)

Czechoslovakia and the Brezhnev Doctrine in 1968, the expulsion of Alexander Solzhenitsyn in 1974, the use of psychiatric hospitals as prisons for dissidents, various forms of discrimination against Soviet Jews). Nevertheless, one of the consequences of the repressive measures was the growth of a dissident movement (*samizdat* culture.) At the end of the 1970s, the Soviet Union became involved in a costly war in Afghanistan. By the early 1980s, the Soviet Union faced a series of profound problems. Hunt identifies a deteriorating economy, corrupt political and economic management, a declining standard of living as evidenced by housing and food shortages, and increasing alcoholism that affected productivity and morale. Efforts to reform the system occurred at a time of growing protests by workers, artists, and intellectuals; instead of stabilizing the system, reform created greater rebellion.

Mikhail Gorbachev and the End of the Soviet Union (1985-91)

Palmer characterizes the collapse of the Soviet Union and Soviet rule in Central and Eastern Europe as an “implosion” with relatively little violence in Eastern Europe, with the exception of Romania. Gorbachev introduced a series of reforms that were intended to save Communism by reform. *Perestroika* is described as a “cautious” approach that was designed to eliminate restraints on the economy in order to address consumer demands. Gorbachev hoped to raise productivity, and improve the quality of goods by decentralization, extending self-management to economic enterprises, removing bureaucratic control over production, and providing incentives for greater productivity. In agriculture, he offered a limited transfer of land to entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, the economic problems of the nation intensified, as even these modest steps encountered considerable opposition from entrenched interests. In the end, most economic reforms existed only on paper. *Glasnost* was designed to allow Soviet citizens greater freedom in their investigations of Soviet society and history. The process ended the Communist party’s monopoly on power, as censorship gradually disappeared. Soviet citizens now learned the truth about poor harvests, inefficient state enterprises, and the Chernobyl accident. Gorbachev freed Andrei Sakharov from house arrest, permitted emigration by Soviet Jews, and took a more tolerant attitude toward religion. Once again, Stalin’s legacy came under criticism. Democratization followed, and Soviet citizens elected a Congress of People’s Deputies in 1989. In 1990, Gorbachev was elected president of the USSR by the Congress. By the late 1980s, however, the absence of economic progress resulted in growing criticism of Gorbachev for his failure to undertake a more radical reform program. Looser controls also led to nationalist upheaval in Eastern Europe and within the Soviet Union. In the satellite countries, long-time party oppression, the absence of a “civil society,” economic stagnation, environmental degradation, and debts to Western banks eventually resulted in a relatively nonviolent transfer of power in 1989 (Romania is identified as the exception to this pattern). Within the Soviet Union, greater freedom resulted in what Palmer identifies as “long-suppressed” ethnic rivalries (Georgia, the Baltic republics, and Azerbaijan versus Armenia are specifically mentioned). As the economic situation worsened and as the Baltic republics threatened secession, Gorbachev temporarily shelved reform (the 500 Days economic plan and pressure on Lithuania are mentioned). Democratic reformers viewed such measures with alarm and increasingly turned to other political leaders. Boris Yeltsin, expelled from the Communist leadership in 1987, was elected president of Russia in 1991. Hard-liners, faced with the possible breakup of the Soviet Union, attempted to seize power in a failed coup in August 1991. Eventually, leaders of some of the republics agreed to create a loose federation, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Gorbachev, who is called “crucial in the destruction of the Soviet system,” resigned in December 1991.

McKay argues that the Gorbachev reforms contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union, despite the fact that destruction of the system was not Gorbachev’s intention. Gorbachev gained office as the economy worsened in the mid-1980s. Initially, he attacked corruption and incompetence within the bureaucracy and alcoholism in society, although the text does not offer any specific examples. *Perestroika*, which the text describes as “timid,” meant the abandonment of some price controls, greater independence for state enterprises, and the establishment of some profit-seeking cooperatives. *Glasnost*, viewed as “bold and far-

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Question 3 Historical Background (continued)

power, Gorbachev faced criticism from the “old guard,” which fought to preserve the structures of the Soviet system; democratic forces led by politicians like Boris Yeltsin, who demanded an acceleration of efforts to establish democratic institutions and a market economy; and regional unrest as the Baltic republics pushed in the direction of independence. The effort by hard-liners in August 1991 to halt changes in the constitutional arrangement failed, and the Soviet Union ceased to exist in December 1991.

Hunt credits Gorbachev with recognition of the country’s problems. His aim was reform not the elimination of socialism. By the mid-1980s, the Soviet Union suffered from low fertility rates; massive grain imports, because 20 to 30 percent of Soviet grain rotted in the fields, owing to the inefficient state-directed economy; industrial pollution; a huge bureaucracy that prevented innovation and failed to produce a decent standard of living; staggering military spending that at 15 to 20 percent of GNP reduced the availability of resources for consumer goods; and a cynical younger generation with no memory of Stalin or World War II. Hunt places these problems within the context of the 1960s, an era that saw criticism of certain features of postindustrial society—the concentration of bureaucratic power, environmental degradation that resulted from an emphasis on industrialization, and social inequality. Neither the Soviet Union nor the satellites ever addressed these concerns. *Perestroika* sought to raise the standard of living by promoting productivity, greater investment in modern technology and encouraging some market reforms like prices and profits. *Glasnost*, stirred in large part by the mishandling of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident, led to criticism of party officials, existing social problems, and, ultimately, the Soviet past. In local elections held in Moscow in 1989, not a single Communist was elected—a sign of the nation’s alienation from the regime. Gorbachev is credited for refusing to intervene militarily in the Eastern European revolutions of 1989 and with reducing Cold War tensions, withdrawing from Afghanistan, for instance, in 1989. By the end of the decade, nationality groups within the Soviet Union demanding political and/or cultural autonomy were increasingly challenging Soviet authority. Hunt compares such pressures with the difficulties experienced by the Habsburg Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Soviet leadership was confronted by more than 100 ethnic groups and 50 million Muslims. Throughout its history, the Soviet Union had attempted to create a Russian and Soviet identity while still respecting some local cultural traditions, but the efforts failed. Furthermore, *perestroika* failed to halt the breakdown of the economy (inflation, unemployment, and shortages of basic commodities). The system collapsed in 1991 in the face of ethnic violence (Tajikistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan), secession (the Baltic republics’ declaration of independence), the election of Boris Yeltsin as president of Russia, and a bungled coup in August by hard-liners (the latter is blamed for accelerating the collapse). Twelve of the 15 republics proclaimed the creation of a new federation, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Soviet Union dissolved on January 1, 1992.