MA99 EDUCATION

National Study: Russia and the Soviet Union 1917 to 1941: Summary

02

NSW MODERN HISTORY STAGE 6 SYLLABUS 2017 FOR HSC 2027

1. 1917: two revolutions in one year

CAUSE OF COLLAPSE	IN ONE LINE
War strain	Millions of casualties, food and fuel shortages, and a Tsar blamed personally for defeat.
Autocracy	Nicholas II shared power with no one and reformed too little, too late, after 1905.
Dual power	The Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet both claimed authority after February, and neither could govern alone.
The war continued	Kerensky's decision to stay in the war let the Bolsheviks campaign on Peace, Land and Bread.

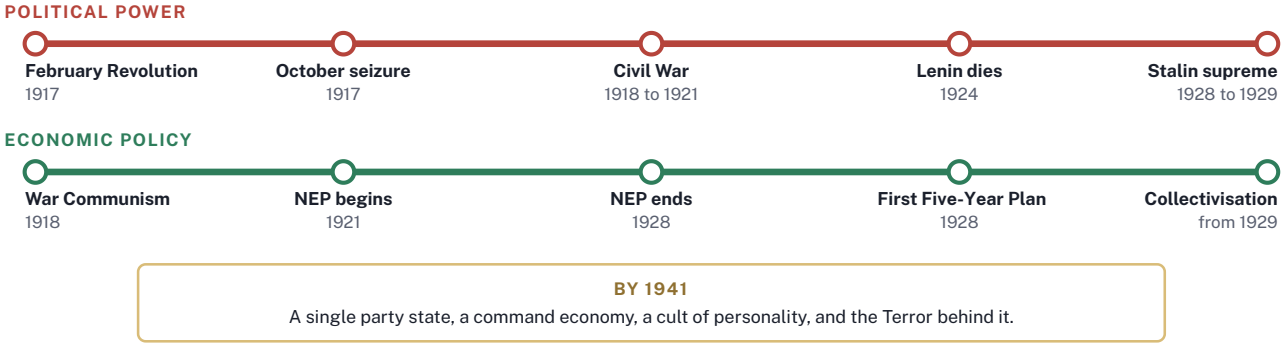


Figure 1 · Political power and economic policy on two tracks. Read across, not down.

2. From collapse to Bolshevik power, 1917

February 1917 (8 March New Style): strikes and mutiny in Petrograd force Nicholas II to abdicate on 2 March (15 March New Style).

Dual power follows: the Provisional Government (under Prince Lvov, then Kerensky from July) and the Petrograd Soviet. Lenin returns in April with the April Theses. October 1917 (7 November): Bolshevik forces, organised by Trotsky, take Petrograd with little resistance. The Second Congress of Soviets issues the Decree on Peace and the Decree on Land.

3. Consolidation and Civil War, 1917 to 1921

The Constituent Assembly is dissolved by force in January 1918 after the Bolsheviks lose the election. The Cheka is created in December 1917. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk takes Russia out of the war in March 1918 at heavy territorial cost. The Reds defeat the divided Whites in the Civil War of 1918 to 1921 through interior lines, a unified command under Trotsky, and War Communism, which also helps cause a famine that kills about five million people in 1921.

4. Lenin, the NEP, and the power struggle

The Kronstadt mutiny of March 1921 pushes Lenin to replace War Communism with the New Economic Policy, restoring limited private trade and a grain tax in place of requisitioning. Lenin dies in January 1924, leaving no agreed successor. Stalin, using his post as General Secretary to build support in the party machine, defeats Trotsky by 1927 with Zinoviev and Kamenev, then defeats Zinoviev and Kamenev, then turns on Bukharin and the right by 1929 to end the NEP. The Lenin Enrolment of 1924 to 1925 lifts party membership from about 446,000 to over one million. The USSR was created on 30 December 1922 as a union of the Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian and Transcaucasian republics, after Lenin opposed Stalin's plan to make the others autonomous parts of Russia.

5. Stalin's rule to 1941

Forced mass collectivisation from 1929 ends private agriculture and targets kulaks for dekulakisation; peasant resistance and requisitioning help cause the 1932 to 1933 famine, in which several million die, especially in Ukraine. The Five-Year Plans from 1928 drive rapid, forced industrialisation, built on harsh labour discipline and the Gulag system. The murder of Kirov in 1934 opens the Great Terror: the Moscow show trials of 1936 to 1938, the purge of the Red Army officer corps, and roughly 700,000 executions, alongside a cult of personality that presents Stalin as Lenin's infallible heir.

6. Society and culture to 1941

Religion: church valuables seized in 1922, the League of the Godless from 1925, churches closed from 1929. Education: Pioneers and Komsomol, strong literacy gains, schools stressing discipline. Women: legal equality in marriage and divorce in 1917, the Zhenotdel closed in 1930, abortion banned in June 1936. Nationalities: korenizatsiia, then eleven union republics in 1936 and the purge of local leaders in 1937 and 1938. Censorship: Glavlit from 1922, the Writers' Union from 1932, socialist realism from 1934.

7. Foreign policy to 1941

The Comintern (1919) served revolution, while the state made deals: Rapallo with Germany in April 1922. After Hitler took power the USSR joined the League of Nations (1934), signed pacts with France and Czechoslovakia (1935) and backed the Popular Front and the Spanish Republic. Munich (September 1938) excluded it. Litvinov was dismissed on 3 May 1939, and Molotov and Ribbentrop signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact on 23 August 1939, with a secret protocol dividing eastern Europe. The USSR took eastern Poland in September 1939, fought Finland from 30 November 1939 and annexed the Baltic states in 1940. Germany invaded on 22 June 1941.

Key dates and figures to memorise

2 March 1917 (15 March New Style) Nicholas II abdicates · 25 October 1917 (7 November, new style) Bolsheviks seize power · March 1918 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk · 1918 to 1921 Civil War · March 1921 Kronstadt mutiny and start of NEP · 1922 USSR created (30 December) · January 1924 Lenin dies · 1928 First Five Year Plan and end of NEP · 1932 to 1933 Ukrainian famine, several million dead · December 1934 Kirov assassinated · 1936 abortion ban (June) and Stalin Constitution (5 December) · 1936 to 1938 the Great Terror, about 700,000 executed · 23 August 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact · 22 June 1941 German invasion

Bolshevik party members numbered only a small minority of the population in 1917, yet took and held power within months. The Red Army grew from almost nothing in 1918 to several million men by 1921.

About this resource

MA99 EDUCATION

Scope

NSW Modern History, Year 12. Written to the NSW Modern History Stage 6 Syllabus (2017), National Study: Russia and the Soviet Union 1917 to 1941, for students sitting the HSC in 2027. A new Modern History syllabus is first examined in HSC 2028. Every worked context uses the historical record, with every source quotation of fifteen words or fewer and every invented illustrative source labelled as invented, and every number was recomputed from its inputs before printing.

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MA99 EDUCATION

National Study: Russia and the Soviet Union 1917 to 1941: Practice Questions

02

NSW MODERN HISTORY STAGE 6 SYLLABUS 2017 FOR HSC 2027

1. Instructions

How to use this workbook. Work through the sections in order. Time yourself on the short answer questions and check your recall against the Glossary before you look anything up. Save the full extended response for when you have worked through the shorter questions, and give yourself the full time you would get in the examination.



Figure 1 · How the 227 marks are spread across the four sections. Section C is a bank of six: choose one or two per sitting.

2. Section A · Short answer, 2 to 3 marks

Answer in one or two sentences. Aim for a fact, correctly used, in every sentence.

Question 1

2 MARKS

What was dual power, and which two bodies shared authority under it?

Question 2

2 MARKS

Name two long term weaknesses of Tsarist rule exposed by the First World War.

Question 3

2 MARKS

What did the Decree on Land do, issued on 26 October 1917?

Question 4

2 MARKS

Why did the Bolsheviks dissolve the Constituent Assembly in January 1918?

Question 5

3 MARKS

What was War Communism, and name one of its consequences.

Question 6

2 MARKS

Why did Lenin introduce the New Economic Policy in 1921?

Question 7

2 MARKS

What post did Stalin hold that let him build support across the party after 1922?

Question 8

2 MARKS

What was dekulakisation?

Question 9

2 MARKS

What event in December 1934 gave Stalin the pretext to launch the Great Terror?

Question 10

3 MARKS

What is meant by a cult of personality? Give one example from Stalin's Russia.

Question 11

3 MARKS

What was the Comintern, and why did it matter for Soviet foreign policy?

Question 12

3 MARKS

Which republics formed the USSR in December 1922, and what disagreement between Lenin and Stalin shaped the Union?

Question 13

2 MARKS

What did the secret protocol of the Nazi-Soviet Pact provide?

3. Section B · Structured response, 7 to 8 marks

Write a short paragraph for each, with a clear topic sentence stating your answer before you support it.

Question 14

7 MARKS

Explain why the Bolsheviks were able to seize power in October 1917 despite being a minority party.

Question 15

8 MARKS

Explain why the Reds defeated the Whites in the Russian Civil War.

Question 16

7 MARKS

Explain the aims and effects of the New Economic Policy.

Question 17

8 MARKS

Explain how Stalin used his position within the party to defeat his rivals between 1924 and 1929.

Question 18

8 MARKS

Explain the causes and consequences of the 1932 to 1933 famine.

Question 19

7 MARKS

Explain the aims of the Five-Year Plans and the methods used to achieve them.

Question 20

8 MARKS

Explain the role of terror in maintaining Stalin's rule between 1936 and 1938.

Question 21

8 MARKS

Explain why the Soviet Union signed the Non-Aggression Pact with Nazi Germany in August 1939.

Question 22

7 MARKS

Explain how Soviet policy towards religion changed between 1917 and 1941.

Question 23

7 MARKS

Explain the changes in the position of Soviet women between 1917 and 1936.

Question 24

7 MARKS

Explain how the Soviet state controlled literature and the arts in the 1930s.

4. Section C · Extended paragraph, 15 marks

These want two or three factors weighed against each other, not a list. State a thesis in your first sentence.

Question 25

15 MARKS

To what extent was the First World War responsible for the collapse of Tsarism in February 1917?

Write your response in a separate writing booklet.

Question 26

15 MARKS

Evaluate the significance of Trotsky's leadership to the Bolshevik victory in the Civil War.

Write your response in a separate writing booklet.

Question 27

15 MARKS

To what extent was Stalin's victory in the power struggle after 1924 due to the mistakes of his rivals rather than his own ability?

Write your response in a separate writing booklet.

Question 28

15 MARKS

Evaluate the extent to which collectivisation achieved its stated economic aims.

Write your response in a separate writing booklet.

Question 29

15 MARKS

To what extent was ideology the main influence on Soviet foreign policy between 1917 and 1941?

Write your response in a separate writing booklet.

Question 30

15 MARKS

Assess the success of Soviet policy towards the non-Russian nationalities between 1922 and 1941.

Write your response in a separate writing booklet.

5. Section D · Full extended response, about 1000 words

Examination style

A 25 mark extended response of about 900 to 1000 words, matching Section II of the HSC paper. The Exemplar Extended Response models a thesis, three factors and a judgement.

Question 31

25 MARKS

Evaluate the impact of Stalinist economic policy on the Soviet Union in the period to 1941.

Write your response in a separate writing booklet.

Before you write, note: a strong response weighs industrial achievement against human cost, does not treat the Five-Year Plans and collectivisation as a single policy, and reaches a stated judgement rather than a balanced non answer.

5.1 Further extended response prompts for later practice

- Assess the reasons for Stalin's victory in the power struggle following Lenin's death.
- To what extent did the nature of Stalin's rule between 1928 and 1941 depend on terror?
- Evaluate the significance of ideology, as opposed to personal power, in shaping Bolshevik and Stalinist rule to 1941.
- Assess the effectiveness of Soviet foreign policy between 1917 and 1941, including the Nazi-Soviet Pact.
- To what extent did social and cultural change in the USSR between 1917 and 1941 transform Soviet society?
- Evaluate the reasons for the creation of the USSR in 1922 and its significance for the nationalities of the Soviet state.

5.2 Twelve minute drill: planning under time pressure

Pick one Section C or Section D question you have not yet answered. Do not write the response. Do only the plan, to time.

MINUTES	WHAT YOU DO
0 to 1	Read the question twice. Underline the instruction word and the time period.
1 to 4	Write a one sentence thesis that answers the question directly.
4 to 9	List three factors, each with one piece of specific evidence: a date, a figure, or a named event.
9 to 12	Write your judgement sentence: how far, and why that is your final answer.

> If your thesis sentence takes longer than a minute to find, you do not yet know the topic well enough. Go back to the Topic Notes before your next attempt.

Track your attempts

Track your attempts

Come back every few weeks and date each attempt to track improvement.

DATE	QUESTION ATTEMPTED	MARK OR SELF ASSESSMENT

DATE	QUESTION ATTEMPTED	MARK OR SELF ASSESSMENT

6. Marking guidance

Mark your response accurately before you look at the Exemplar. The criteria for the longer items are MA99's own, written in the style of HSC marking guidelines. Figures given as estimates are the ranges most commonly cited; say that they are estimates when you use them.

6.1 Section A

Q	MARKS	WHAT A FULL MARK ANSWER CONTAINS
1	2	The sharing of authority after the February Revolution of 1917 (1) between the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet, whose Order No. 1 gave it control over the soldiers (1).
2	2	Any two, each specific: an autocracy unable to govern in wartime (Nicholas as commander in chief from 1915, the influence of Rasputin); economic backwardness shown in transport breakdown, shortages and inflation; an army short of munitions and leadership; a land hungry peasantry.
3	2	It abolished private ownership of the landlords' estates without compensation (1) and handed the land to peasant committees and soviets to redistribute, legalising seizures already under way (1).
4	2	The Bolsheviks won only about a quarter of the seats against the Socialist Revolutionaries' larger share (1), and the Assembly would not accept Soviet power and the Bolshevik decrees, so it was closed after its first day (1).
5	3	The economic system of 1918 to 1921 (1): grain requisitioning, nationalised industry and a ban on private trade (1). One consequence, for example famine in 1921, the Tambov peasant revolt or the Kronstadt rebellion of March 1921 (1).
6	2	To end the economic collapse and the unrest shown at Kronstadt and in Tambov (1): requisitioning was replaced by a tax in kind and private trade and small enterprise were allowed, a retreat to restore production (1).
7	2	General Secretary of the party, from April 1922 (1), which let him control appointments and so build a following of loyal officials (1).
8	2	The campaign from late 1929 to eliminate the kulaks, the better off peasants, as a class (1), by shooting, deportation or seizure of property, applied in practice to anyone resisting collectivisation; about 2.1 to 2.3 million people were deported between 1930 and 1933 (Werth, Hildermeier) (1).
9	2	The assassination of Sergei Kirov, the Leningrad party leader, on 1 December 1934 (2).
10	3	The presentation of a leader as all wise and all powerful through propaganda (1 to 2). Example, specific: Stalin as the father of the peoples in posters and poetry, the Short Course history of 1938 rewriting his role, or cities renamed in his honour such as Stalingrad (1).
11	3	Founded in Moscow in March 1919 to spread revolution abroad (1). It tied foreign communist parties to Moscow's direction, as the Twenty-One Conditions of 1920 show (1). It mattered because Soviet policy ran on two tracks, the Comintern for revolution and the state for ordinary diplomacy and trade, and by the 1930s the Comintern served Soviet state interests, as with the Popular Front adopted in 1935 (1).
12	3	The Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian republics and the Transcaucasian Federation (1), joined by the Treaty approved by the First Congress of Soviets on 30 December 1922 (1). Stalin wanted the others to enter the Russian republic as autonomous units, and Lenin opposed this and backed a union of formally equal republics (1).
13	2	It divided eastern Europe into German and Soviet spheres of influence (1). It placed Finland, Estonia, Latvia, eastern Poland and Bessarabia in the Soviet sphere (Lithuania added in September 1939) and divided Poland along the Narew, Vistula and San rivers (1).

6.2 Section B

Q	MARKS	WHAT A FULL MARK ANSWER CONTAINS
14	7	Linked reasons: the Provisional Government's weakness (it kept fighting the war and delayed land reform and elections); the Kornilov affair of August 1917, which armed the Red Guards and boosted the Bolsheviks; Bolshevik control of the Petrograd Soviet under Trotsky and its Military Revolutionary Committee; clear slogans such as peace, land and bread; Lenin's leadership; and an organised minority acting in the capital against little resistance.

Q	MARKS	WHAT A FULL MARK ANSWER CONTAINS
15	8	Red strengths: the central core with Moscow, Petrograd, the railways and industry; a unified command and Trotsky's Red Army, using former Tsarist officers watched by commissars; War Communism to supply it; the Cheka. White weaknesses: divided geographically and politically, linked with the return of the landlords, which the peasants feared; foreign intervention that was limited and gave the Reds a patriotic cause.
16	7	Aims: restore production and pacify the peasants after War Communism. Effects: agriculture and industry recovered to roughly pre war levels by the mid 1920s; Nepmen and richer peasants prospered; the scissors crisis of 1923; the party divided between left and right over whether the NEP was a retreat.
17	8	The General Secretary's control of appointments built loyal delegates; alliances used and discarded: with Zinoviev and Kamenev against Trotsky, then with Bukharin against the United Opposition, then against the Right in 1928 to 1929; the 1921 ban on factions turned opponents into splitters; the Lenin enrolment brought in new members who owed him their position; Lenin's Testament was not published.
18	8	Causes: forced collectivisation, grain procurement quotas enforced as the harvest failed, dekulakisation removing experienced farmers, the slaughter of livestock, the August 1932 law on theft of socialist property, and internal passports that stopped peasants leaving. Consequences: several million deaths, with estimates commonly around 5.5 to 8 million across the Soviet Union, the worst in Ukraine and Kazakhstan; the debate over intent (the Holodomor as genocide, argued by historians such as Conquest and Applebaum, against those such as Davies and Wheatcroft who stress policy failure).
19	7	Aims: rapid industrialisation to close the gap with the West, military security, building socialism. Methods: Gosplan targets, priority for heavy industry, new industrial cities such as Magnitogorsk, the Stakhanovite movement from 1935, harsh labour discipline, Gulag labour and propaganda; the first plan (1928 to 1932) was declared complete in four years.
20	8	The show trials of 1936 to 1938 (Zinoviev and Kamenev, then Bukharin), the purge of the Red Army including Tukhachevsky (1937), the NKVD under Yezhov working to quotas; about 680,000 executions in 1937 and 1938 on Soviet archival figures. Role: removed possible rivals and the old Bolsheviks, spread fear so that no opposition could organise, and replaced them with a younger generation that owed everything to Stalin.
21	8	Context and aims: collective security had failed, with Munich in September 1938 settled without the USSR and Litvinov dismissed on 3 May 1939; fear of facing Germany alone, and the need for time to rearm; the secret protocol offering Finland, eastern Poland, the Baltic states and Bessarabia; keeping war off Soviet territory. Outcomes: Germany invaded Poland on 1 September, the Red Army entered eastern Poland on 17 September, the Winter War began on 30 November, and Germany invaded on 22 June 1941. A strong answer weighs a defensive reading against an opportunistic one and says which the evidence supports better.
22	7	Early measures: the decree of 18 December 1917 ending church control of marriage, restrictions in 1918, and the seizure of church valuables from February 1922, with trials and executions of clergy. The League of the Godless from 1925, which became militant in 1929. The 1929 law, church closures, melted bells and the continuous work week. The 1936 constitution promised freedom of conscience. A strong answer says persecution intensified with collectivisation.
23	7	Legal equality in marriage and divorce in December 1917; the Zhenotdel from 1919, closed in 1930; abortion legalised in November 1920 and banned in June 1936, with recorded abortions falling from 1.9 million in 1935 to 570,000 in 1937; the unveiling campaign in Central Asia from 1927. A strong answer separates legal gains from the loss of independent organisation and the turn to motherhood and family by 1936.
24	7	The takeover of presses, theatres and cinemas after 1917 and Glavlit in 1922; the Union of Soviet Writers set up on 23 April 1932, with rival groups dissolved; the First Congress of Soviet Writers in August 1934, Gorky presiding, Zhdanov introducing socialist realism; the Writers' Union as a model for film, theatre and the arts, and the Central Committee's veto over publication. A strong answer links control of culture to the cult of personality.

6.3 Section C

Q	MARKS	INDICATIVE CONTENT, AND WHAT THE JUDGEMENT MUST WEIGH
25	15	The war as the catalyst: defeats and millions of casualties, food and fuel shortages in Petrograd, inflation, transport collapse, Nicholas at the front and the Tsarina and Rasputin discredited at home. The long term causes it accelerated: autocracy's refusal to reform after 1905, a frustrated Duma, peasant and worker grievances. The immediate events: bread protests from 23 February 1917, strikes, the Petrograd garrison's mutiny, and the generals advising abdication. A strong judgement treats the war as the accelerator of existing weaknesses.

Q	MARKS	INDICATIVE CONTENT, AND WHAT THE JUDGEMENT MUST WEIGH
26	15	Trotsky as Commissar for War: building the Red Army to millions, using former Tsarist officers under commissars, discipline, the armoured train. Other factors to weigh: the Reds' central position, White divisions and their association with the landlords, the Cheka and War Communism, Lenin's leadership. The judgement says how far Trotsky was decisive rather than one of several causes.
27	15	Stalin's ability: control of appointments as General Secretary, tactical alliances, a centrist position, the appeal of socialism in one country. Rivals' mistakes: Trotsky's arrogance and his absence from Lenin's funeral, the failure to use Lenin's Testament, Zinoviev and Kamenev underestimating Stalin, Bukharin's late realisation. A strong answer shows how the two interacted.
28	15	Aims: secure grain for the cities and for export to fund industrialisation, eliminate the kulaks, modernise farming. Outcomes: state grain procurements rose, funding exports and investment, and Machine Tractor Stations spread; but output fell, livestock numbers roughly halved between 1928 and 1933, and famine followed; the harvest recovered later in the decade. A strong judgement separates control of grain, which was achieved, from productivity, which was not.
29	15	Ideology: the Comintern of 1919 and the aim of spreading revolution, the doctrine of socialism in one country, the Popular Front of 1935. National interest: the trade pacts of 1921, Rapallo in April 1922 with Germany, the League of Nations in 1934, the French and Czechoslovak treaties of 1935, the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 23 August 1939 and the annexations that followed. The judgement says in which phases ideology led and in which it served security, and how far the two can be separated.
30	15	Aims and gains: korenizatsiia and local languages, literacy gains such as Tajikistan from 4 per cent in 1926 to nearly 83 per cent by the late 1930s, the eleven union republics of 1936. Limits and costs: a centralised party and state, the Kazakh population falling by about 20 per cent between the 1926 and 1939 censuses, the purge of Central Asian leaders in 1937 and 1938, and the turn to Russian patriotism. A strong answer judges success by the policy's own aims and by its effects on the peoples concerned.

Criteria for a 15 mark response

MARKS	CRITERIA
13 to 15	Answers the question directly with a sustained judgement. Detailed and accurate evidence, factors weighed against each other, precise terms.
10 to 12	A judgement supported by accurate evidence, with some weighing of factors.
7 to 9	Some explanation with relevant evidence; the judgement is thin.
4 to 6	Mainly description with some relevant information.
1 to 3	Limited or general information.

6.4 Section D

Q	MARKS	INDICATIVE CONTENT, AND WHAT THE JUDGEMENT MUST WEIGH
31	25	Achievements: rapid growth in heavy industry (steel output from about 4 million tonnes in 1928 to about 18 million in 1940), urbanisation, a defence industrial base for the war that began in 1941. Costs: the famine of 1932 to 1933, forced and Gulag labour, neglect of consumer goods, falling living standards in the early 1930s, poor quality and falsified statistics. The top band separates the Five-Year Plans from collectivisation and reaches a stated judgement rather than a balanced non answer.

Criteria for a 25 mark response

MARKS	CRITERIA
21 to 25	Sustained, logical and cohesive response that answers the question directly and defends a clear judgement. Detailed, accurate and relevant knowledge, well chosen evidence, and precise historical terms. Historians' views are used where they help the argument.
16 to 20	Logical response with a judgement. Accurate knowledge and relevant evidence, mostly sustained, with some analysis of the factors against each other.

MARKS	CRITERIA
11 to 15	Some analysis, with generally accurate knowledge and some evidence. Tends to narrate, and the judgement is stated rather than argued.
6 to 10	Mainly narrative or descriptive. Some relevant information and limited judgement.
1 to 5	Limited, general or inaccurate information.

6.5 A worked plan for question 29

Use this to check the shape of your own plan, not to copy. The plan fits a 15 mark response of about 450 words.

PART	WHAT IT DOES	EVIDENCE IT USES
Thesis	Ideology shaped what Soviet leaders said and hoped, but security and survival decided what they did, in every phase after 1921	None yet: the thesis answers the question in one sentence
Paragraph 1: ideology	The Comintern of 1919 and the Twenty-One Conditions of 1920 show a policy built on spreading revolution	March 1919, July to August 1920
Paragraph 2: national interest	The NEP needed trade, so Rapallo (April 1922) and the pacts with Turkey, Afghanistan and Persia put state interest first	April 1922; the 1921 trade pacts
Paragraph 3: the test case	The Popular Front of 1935 and the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 23 August 1939 show ideology bending to fear of Germany	July 1935; 23 August 1939; the secret protocol
Judgement	Ideology was the language, security was the logic; the two were closest in 1919 and furthest apart in 1939	A single sentence that answers how far

After you mark it

Circle every question where you lost more than a third of the marks. Those are your next session, in that order. A question you got right twice can wait; a question you got wrong once cannot.

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