

Chapter 6 sample Cambridge IGCSE questions with sample answers

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Cambridge IGCSE History 0470/11 Paper 1 Q8 a, b & c November 2010

West Berlin has many roles. It is more than a showcase of liberty, an island of freedom in a Communist sea. It is more a link with the free world, a beacon of hope behind the Iron Curtain, an escape hatch for refugees. We cannot and will not permit the Communists to drive us out of Berlin.

Kennedy speaking in 1960 before
he became President of the USA

a) What was the “Prague Spring”? (4)

The Prague Spring was a series of reforms introduced in Czechoslovakia in an attempt to liberalise the country. The reforms were introduced by Dubcek, who became Secretary of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Dubcek wanted to provide “socialism with a human face” and introduced reforms to reduce government control. He allowed public meetings and relaxed censorship, allowing criticism of the government and freedom of speech. As well as this, foreign travel was allowed and individuals were allowed to join newer trade unions with greater freedoms. This period of reform though was not welcomed by the USSR, who saw these attempts to introduce liberal reforms as a threat to its rule.

USSR premier Brezhnev sent in a heavily armed military force and removed Dubcek, bringing an end to the period of reforms and re-establishing strict communist rule.

b) Why did Berlin remain a focus of Cold War tensions during the 1960–2? (6)

The wall became a focus during the Cold War because of what it represented. It appeared to be a city that showed the differences between capitalism and communism. While the west created a wealthy city with all the consumer benefits that people in other western countries enjoyed, Soviet-controlled East Berlin was not prosperous and was under strict communist control. The great variation between the two was a real contrast and was used as propaganda by both to compare the regimes. The West tried to show how much better off people were living under capitalism, while the East tried to show that the West was an unequal society where some prospered but others suffered.

It also remained a focus of tensions due to the mass migration from East to West. Many skilled and professional East Germans crossed from East to West Berlin and on to West Germany in search of a better life and more job

opportunities with higher pay. Due to this, and also as part of attempts by the East to control West Berlin, the wall was erected in 1961.

The wall itself also meant Berlin remained a focus. There were many deaths as people tried to get over the wall and the West attempted to exploit its presence as negative propaganda against the East. In 1963, Kennedy visited Berlin showing both his personal support as well as that of America for Berlin. All this meant that Berlin remained a key focus during the 1960s.

- c) How significant was the part played by Solidarity in the loss of Soviet control in Eastern Europe? Explain your answer. (10)

The Solidarity movement had begun in 1980 as a result of unrest in Poland. While it was repressed after a year, it regained power and popularity when it returned in 1989. The party contested the elections in Poland and won every seat it contested. Eventually its leader, Mazowiecki, was elected as Prime Minister of Poland. His appointment was remarkable, as he was the first non-communist Prime Minister in Poland since 1945, and the first anywhere in Eastern Europe for 40 years. Under Mazowiecki a Solidarity-led government was formed, and Walesa, the humble leader from 1980, became President of the first non-communist government in post-war Poland. The significance of this lies in the example it gave to the rest of Eastern Europe.

However, arguably a bigger factor for the loss of Soviet control was the work of Mikhail Gorbachev. Once elected as premier of the USSR, he introduced a series of reforms to bring Russia forward in line with other countries and re-stimulate a faltering country. Gorbachev introduced glasnost which allowed criticism of the government. He also introduced perestroika, to encourage more competition in industry. He also stated he wouldn't stand in the way of allowing change in Eastern Europe. This meant that countries were free to hold their own elections such as the ones in Poland.

Overall Solidarity was crucial in showing other Eastern European countries the way to free themselves from communism. However, it was only Gorbachev's allowance and tolerance of such movements that led to a loss of Soviet control in Eastern Europe.

Sample exam-style questions with sample answers

- a) Describe the Hungarian revolution of 1956. (4)

After the Second World War Hungary had been controlled by the USSR. Its government was a puppet for Moscow and strict communist rule was enforced. When Stalin died in 1953 all people in Eastern Europe were given some hope that there would be change.

In 1956 the situation got worse in Hungary with the people feeling the effects of a bad harvest and rising prices at a time of a major fuel shortage. On 23 October 1956, students and workers took to the streets and demanded change. They wanted personal freedoms, more food, the removal of Russian control, and a democratically elected government.

In response, the Russians appointed Nagy prime minister in the hope that he would be seen as liberal enough for the protestors. However, Nagy's declaration via public radio that Hungary would withdraw itself from the Warsaw Pact was too much for the Russians. On 4 November, Soviet tanks entered Budapest to restore order. Some 30 000 people were killed, Nagy was tried and executed and Soviet rule was re-established.

- b) Why did the Solidarity movement succeed while other similar movements failed? (6)

The Solidarity movement succeeded for several reasons. The first of these was the mass support it was able to attract. Between 1980 and 1981, 10 million people from all aspects of Polish life including students, workers, and intellectuals joined the trade union. Some 80 per cent of Poland's workforce were members. Never before did a popular movement gain such support, and this can be seen as a reason for its success.

Solidarity was also successful in appealing to a wide range of people by championing national issues, not local ones. By doing this they secured the support from a range of the population and affected the most important industries in the country. They also managed to maintain this support through superb organisation. The movement had a committee, spokespeople, and even a newspaper, the *Solidarnosc*. Printed on the shipyard printing press, it enabled them to spread their message.

Finally Solidarity succeeded because of timing. The initial uprising of the Solidarity movement in 1980 didn't succeed in the long term. While it did achieve some success and such widespread support, it wasn't until 1989 that it was able to establish control over Poland and bring about all of the change it wanted. This came at the right time as by 1989 Gorbachev had allowed Eastern Europe a greater freedom meaning there was more freedom and opportunity for movements such as Solidarity. Before then, as events in Prague and Hungary showed, the USSR was too repressive.

- c) "There were more similarities than differences between the revolts in Hungary and Czechoslovakia." To what extent do you agree with this statement? (10)

There were clear similarities between the two uprisings. Firstly both came from a long-standing resentment of Soviet rule since occupation after the Second World War. In both cases people had grown tired of the repressive nature of the USSR-backed governments that had been put in place. In terms of the rebellions themselves, they also set about to achieve similar things. Both wanted to lessen Soviet influence in their respective countries as well as giving the people personal freedoms and a greater sense of democracy. The results were also similar; in both cases Russian troops moved in to restore order and the leaders, Nagy in Hungary and Dubcek in Czechoslovakia, were removed.

While both revolts were therefore similar, there are also crucial differences. While both groups of rebels wanted more freedoms, in Hungary these changes included withdrawing from the Warsaw Pact and Soviet influence.

Czechoslovakia did not want to go that far and made it clear at the time. There were also differences in how the people of both Hungary and Czechoslovakia responded to the Russians. In Hungary the people armed themselves and fought when the Soviets attacked. In Czechoslovakia, following orders from the government, the people did not fight back. In Czechoslovakia there were several protests after the Russian invasion including suicides.

Overall the two revolts had different levels of resistance in terms of how far they were willing to take their opposition to the Russians, although were more similar in the nature of the revolutions themselves.

Do it yourself: how could each of the following exemplar responses be improved?

Describe why the Berlin Wall was built.

The Berlin Wall was built to separate East and West Berlin and keep apart the two sides. The Russians, led by Stalin, wanted to keep the two parts of Berlin SEPARATE from each other if he couldn't rule over them both.

How could this response be improved?

This answer is very short, and relies too much on the same generalised point about separating the two sides. A better answer would give several specific points about *why* the wall was built, making reference to the growing tensions between the two sides. Things you might include in your answer would be:

1. the mass migration from East to West which meant Stalin wanted to stop people leaving
2. the better living conditions in the West compared to those in the East.

Why did the “Prague Spring” fail?

The Prague Spring failed due to the strength of the Soviet response. The uprising had begun well, with good support from lots of different groups within Czechoslovakia. This meant that the Russians felt they had to intervene to restore communist rule. The Russians ordered tanks, with support from other countries across the Warsaw Pact, into Prague to restore order and crush the rebellion. Knowing they stood no chance, the Czech government ordered its armed forces not to resist the invasion. This strength of the Russians meant that the Czechs stood no chance.

How could this response be improved?

This answer is good in that it addresses one key factor. However, for a b) question worth 7 marks you need to explain at least two reasons. To improve it you could consider:

1. the timing of the revolt: Russia was worried that the reform culture of the Prague Spring would spread to other countries
2. the demands the Czechs asked for were too liberal in the eyes of the USSR—some of their ideas went against key Soviet policy
3. it was an isolated incident at the time—other Warsaw Pact countries, rather than supporting the Czechs, actually formed part of the invasion.