

History route 2
Higher level and standard level
Paper 1 – Communism in crisis 1976–1989

Friday 6 May 2016 (afternoon)

1 hour

Instructions to candidates

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Answer all the questions.
- The maximum mark for this examination paper is **[25 marks]**.

Read all the sources carefully and answer all the questions that follow.

Sources in this paper have been edited: word additions or explanations are shown in square brackets []; substantive deletions of text are indicated by ellipses ... ; minor changes are not indicated.

These sources and questions relate to the consequences of Gorbachev's policies for Eastern European reform movements: the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Source A Victor Sebestyen, a journalist, writing in a book for general readership, *Revolution 1989: The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (2009).

For four decades the Soviet Union had regarded Berlin as the most prized possession in its empire. It had cost the most blood to win in the Second World War, and it stood as a solid symbol of Soviet power. It was central to the Soviets' strategic interests. Nothing of importance was supposed to happen in East Berlin without the Soviet Union knowing about it – and approving it. Yet Berlin was not a priority for the top leaders in Moscow on the day East Germany slipped peacefully out of Soviet influence. Gorbachev did not know the Berlin Wall had fallen until he woke up the next day ... East Germany was always in crisis these days; they had not anticipated an immediate threat to the existence of the state ... Apparently, in that day of errors in Berlin, nobody had kept the Soviets informed.

Source B Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet leader and Egon Krenz, the East German leader, in a recorded conversation in Moscow (1 November 1989).

Gorbachev: The situation in East Germany is moving at an increasing speed. Is there a danger of being left behind the reforms? Remember, we said in Berlin that to be behind is always to lose ...

Krenz: Many problems have accumulated over the years. But the main mistake was probably that we did not draw serious conclusions from the new processes of social development which began in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries ...

Gorbachev: If Honecker [the previous leader of East Germany] had been willing to make the necessary changes in policy on his own initiative two or three years ago, everything would have been different now.

Krenz: He saw in you a threat to his authority ...

Gorbachev: We need to find formulas that would allow people to realise their human needs ...

Krenz: We have already taken a number of steps. First, we gave orders to our border guards not to use weapons at the border, except in the case of a direct attack against our soldiers. Secondly, we have drafted changes to the foreign travel restrictions.

[Source: "Soviet Record of Conversation between M. S. Gorbachev and the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), Egon Krenz," November 01, 1989, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Notes of A.S. Chernyaev, Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, f. 2, op. 2. Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya (National Security Archive) <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112516>]

Source C David Williamson, a history teacher, writing in the article “Berlin: The Flash-Point of the Cold War, 1948–1989”, in the British journal for students *History Review* (2003).

Only with the coming to power of Gorbachev, who was determined to end the Cold War, was pressure put on East Germany to liberalise. Once this process started in the autumn of 1989, an uncontrollable demand built up for further reforms, especially the right to travel to West Germany. In October a reformist government under Krenz was formed, and on 9 November – in a desperate attempt to rally support – this conceded to all East German citizens with a passport the right to an exit visa valid for any frontier crossing, including Berlin. This was supposed to take effect from the morning of 10 November but it was announced prematurely to a press conference on the evening of the 9th, and at 11pm the border guards, facing a crowd of 20,000, opened up the crossing points. The fall of the Berlin Wall became the symbol of the popular revolutions that ended Communist power in Eastern Europe.

Source D Frederick Taylor, an historian, writing in the article “The Rise and Fall of the Berlin Wall”, published in *US News and World Report* (2008).

Then came Gorbachev, a humane, reformist Soviet leader ... Other Communist-ruled countries began to liberalize ... [but] not East Germany. Demonstrations grew into huge rallies demanding freedom to travel. The East German Communist Party tried sacking the leader of East Germany, Honecker [and] a new leader, Krenz, tried to position himself as the “East German Gorbachev”. The East German state, on 9 November 1989, decided to announce some relaxation of the decades-old travel restrictions, hoping to calm the situation and snatch a breathing space. Wrong again. At the press conference it was wrongly stated that travel restrictions would be lifted “with immediate effect”. Within minutes, East Berliners rushed to the border posts with West Berlin. The guards, overwhelmed, phoned for instructions. The leadership had no stomach for a massacre. Soon, masses of eager East Berliners pressed past the unresisting officials into the freedom of West Berlin ... Berlin was reunited; the Cold War had come to an end.

Turn over

Source E

West Germans on top of the Berlin Wall at the Brandenburg Gate in front of East Berlin border guards (November 1989).



1. (a) What, according to Source A, was the attitude of the Soviet Union towards East Germany? [3]
(b) What is the message conveyed by Source E? [2]
2. Compare and contrast the views expressed in Sources C and D about the events leading up to the fall of the Berlin Wall. [6]
3. With reference to their origin and purpose, assess the value and limitations of Source B and Source C for historians studying the consequences of Gorbachev's policies for Eastern Europe. [6]
4. "The fall of the Berlin Wall occurred only because Gorbachev had come to power in the Soviet Union." Using the sources and your own knowledge, to what extent do you agree with this statement? [8]