

**1st Specimen set of source questions, with model answers, for:  
Prescribed Subject 1 The USSR under Stalin, 1924 to 1941**

In each case, the model answers that follow the questions should gain maximum marks.

The sources relate to the struggle to succeed Lenin.

**Source A** An extract from **My Life** by Leon Trotsky, first published in 1930

Stalin is gifted with practicability, a strong will and persistence in carrying out his aims. His political horizon is restricted, his theoretical equipment primitive. His work of compilation, "The Foundations of Leninism", in which he made an attempt to pay tribute to the theoretical traditions of the party, is full of *sophomoric* errors. His ignorance of foreign languages compels him to follow the political life of other countries at second-hand. His mind is stubbornly *empirical* and devoid of creative imagination. To the leading group of the party (in the wider circles he was not known at all) he always seemed a man destined to play second and third fiddle.

*sophomoric* means like a high-school student  
*empirical* means relying on observation, not theory

**Source B** An account by Louis Fischer, an American journalist, of a meeting with Stalin in 1927, published in **Men and politics: An Autobiography** by Louis Fischer, 1941

Trotsky waves the magic wand of a magnetic personality and captures his *interlocutor*. Stalin does not. But as he talked to us hour after hour my respect for his strength, will, and faith grew. He built up this impression as he built up his political position - slowly, methodically, brick by brick. Nothing Stalin said throughout the interview was brilliant. He was pedestrian, solid and simple. His statements interested professors of economy and would have been intelligible to factory hands. The questions had been submitted to him in advance, and he probably prepared the answers in advance. Sometimes he did not grasp the meaning of the question and rambled before he reached his pith, but finally he did get to the point. His replies were always long and thorough. His mentality lacked the witty epigram or the remark with insight which can light up a whole field of thought. He ploughed long and deep. His complete composure, the complete absence of nerves, and his calm voice reflected inner power. One could see that he might be a man of iron.

*interlocutor* means the person he's speaking to

**Source C** An extract from an interview conducted by Dmitri Volkogonov, official Soviet military archivist, with one of Stalin's secretaries, quoted in **Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy**, 1989, Moscow

Everyone was on the side of Zinoviev, who flung at Trotsky, "Can't you see you're surrounded? Your tricks won't work, you're in the minority, on your own." Trotsky was enraged and Bukharin tried to calm things down. It was often the case that before a session Stalin would meet Kamenev and Zinoviev and agree a position. In the Secretariat we called these meetings of the troika the "ring".

## Questions

1. (a) What does Source C reveal about how Stalin was able to outmanoeuvre Trotsky in the struggle to succeed Lenin? (2 marks)

*In answering this question, summarise in your own words what the source reveals.*

Source C reveals that Stalin was able to outmanoeuvre Trotsky because he had formed an alliance with two other party leaders, Zinoviev and Kamenev. The last but one sentence makes it clear that Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev co-ordinated their attacks on Trotsky. Zinoviev's comment to Trotsky, that he was "surrounded...on your own", shows that the three men, the "troika" worked together to isolate Trotsky.

- (b) According to Source E, what offences does the Conference of the Communist Party believe Trotsky has been guilty of? (3 marks)

*Don't be put off by the political language used in Source E. Read it carefully and then put into your own words the main offences with which Trotsky is charged.*

Firstly, Source E charges Trotsky and his allies with undermining the authority of the Central Committee of the Party by making allegations that the Party had become dominated by officials, in other words that bureaucrats were running the Party, rather than decisions being made more democratically. Secondly, Trotsky and his supporters are accused (and found guilty) of disrupting party unity by criticising party officials and by forming a separate faction within the Party. The Conference condemns the latter as a breach of the resolution of the Tenth Party Congress (1921) against the creation of factions. Finally, Trotsky is condemned for rejecting Marxist-Leninist principles and acting in a "petty-bourgeois" fashion, meaning that he has behaved like the middle-class, liberal politicians whom the Bolsheviks had defeated.

2. To what extent do Sources B and D confirm Trotsky's evaluation of Stalin's abilities and character as outlined in Source A? (6 marks)

*In answering question 2 you might start by explaining the main features of Trotsky's evaluation of Stalin's abilities and character as outlined in Source A.*

Trotsky starts by identifying certain assets that Stalin possessed, namely that he was practical, had a strong will and was persistent in applying himself to tasks. However, Trotsky spends much more time criticising Stalin's negative attributes, arguing he lacked imagination, was no theoretician, had little knowledge of the outside world and was a poor writer. He writes Stalin off as a mediocrity, someone who seemed "destined to play second and third fiddle" rather than to lead.

*Then go on to point out the similarities and differences between Trotsky's evaluation and the impression given by Sources B and D.*