History Department Summer Independent Learning 2024.

Task 1:

Use your planning sheet to write up the AO1 section of your History coursework. Your coursework must:

- Be word processed
- Be no longer than 2,200 words. Remember, exceeding the overall word count automatically results in a 10% markdown.
- Must be footnoted.
- Include bibliography (footnotes and bibliography do not contribute to the word count).
- The deadline for this will be the first week of Y13.

Ensure you have selected and completed the three AO2 primary sources which you wish to include in your final answer. The word limit for all three AO2 sources should not exceed 1,200 words.

You are also encouraged to spend extra time completing additional reading/research to develop your understanding/arguments. What do you know that other students might not? For each monarch, ensure you have accessed the wider reading on Teams.

Task 2:

Complete the reading looking at the impact of Stalin's policy of collectivisation. This will be the first topic we will cover in September.

Consider: Why did Stalin collectivise the peasantry?

What was the impact of collectivisation?

Stalin and the Soviet Economy

1 Background

Stalin's economic policy had one essential aim, the modernisation of the Soviet Union, and two essential methods, collectivisation and industrialisation. The collectivisation of agriculture, which substituted State ownership of the land for individual peasant-proprietorship, was a means to an end. It was intended to serve the needs of the industrialisation drive, which began with the introduction of the first Five-Year Plan (FYP) (1928–32). In 1929 Stalin defined collectivisation as 'the setting up of *kolkhozy* [collective farms] and *sovkhozy* [state farms] in order to squeeze out all capitalist elements from the land'. The *kolkhozy* were to be run as co-operatives in which the peasants would pool their resources and share the labour and the wages; the *sovkhozy* were to contain peasants working directly for the State, which would pay them a wage. In practice there were only minor differences between these two types of farm. Both were to be the means by which private peasant-ownership was ended and agriculture was made to serve the interests of the Soviet State. The plan was to group between 50 and 100 holdings into one unit. The reasoning was that large farms would be efficient and would allow the effective use of agricultural machinery; the motorised tractor became the outstanding symbol of this proposed mechanisation of Soviet farming. In addition to increasing the supply of cheap food for home consumption and sale abroad, efficient farming would decrease the number of rural workers needed and thus release workers for the new factories.

*In 1926 the justification for Stalin's crash programme of collectivisation and industrialisation had been provided by the momentous decision of the Party Congress of that year to undertake 'the transformation of our country from an agrarian into an industrial one, capable by its own efforts of producing the necessary means'. Stalin was to turn that resolution into reality. The Revolution in 1917 had succeeded in placing the Bolsheviks in power, but had not determined what their future policies should be; hence the arguments over the NEP, 'Permanent Revolution' and 'Socialism in One Country'. What Stalin's massive restructuring of agriculture and industry did was to clarify the situation. From 1928 onwards, with the introduction of collectivisation and industrialisation, there were no doubts concerning the Soviet Union's economic strategies and objectives. The Soviet State would centralise and control the nation's economy. This momentous decision is often referred to by historians as 'the second Revolution'.

It is also frequently defined as 'revolution from above'. To understand the implications of this description it is necessary to put Stalin's

industrialisation drive in the context of Marxist ideology. In his analysis of the class war, Karl Marx had maintained that a society's political and social system was a direct product of its economic structure; it was on its economic base that its political and institutional super-structure rested. In theory, 1917 had been a revolution from below. The Bolshevik-led proletariat had broken the remnants of old-style Tsarist oppression and had begun to construct a state in which the workers ruled. Bukharin and the Right had used this interpretation to argue that, since the USSR was now a proletarian-based society, the economy should be left to develop at its own pace, without interference from the government. In marked contrast, Stalin's economic programme from the late 1920s onwards proposed the inversion of this process. He stood Marxist theory on its head. Instead of the economy determining the character of the political system, the political system would determine the character of the economy.

*This is not to suggest that the centralising of economic planning under Stalin was entirely novel. In Lenin's time the central planning agency, *Gosplan*, had been introduced. However what was different about Stalin's plans was their scale, speed and intensity. Under Stalin, State control was to be comprehensive and all-embracing. Historians are still not entirely sure of Stalin's motivation. He had no great reputation as an economic thinker before 1928 and seems to have relied heavily on the theories of Preobrazhensky, the leading economist among the Left Bolsheviks. Perhaps the strongest probability is that Stalin saw a hard-line policy as providing the means of consolidating his political authority over Party and government. As was seen in Chapter 2, it is not possible entirely to separate political and economic considerations when studying the power struggle of the 1920s. It is also noteworthy that when he introduced his radical economic changes Stalin proclaimed that they marked as significant a stage in Soviet Communism as had Lenin's fateful decision to sanction the October rising in 1917. This comparison was obviously intended to enhance his own status as a revolutionary leader following in the footsteps of Lenin. However, it would be wrong to regard Stalin's policy as wholly a matter of political expediency. Judging from his speeches and actions after 1928, he had become convinced that the needs of Soviet Russia could be met only by the collectivisation and industrialisation programme that he initiated. That was the essence of his slogan, 'Socialism in One Country'. The survival of the Revolution and of Soviet Russia depended on the nation's ability to turn itself into a modern industrial society within the shortest possible time. Stalin expressed this with particular clarity in 1931 when he sought to justify the speed of the social transformation that was being brought about by collectivisation and industrialisation:

1 It is sometimes asked whether it is not possible to slow down the

tempo somewhat, to put a check on the movement. No, comrades, it is not possible! The tempo must not be reduced! On the contrary we must increase it as much as is within our powers and possibilities. This is dictated to us by our obligations to the working class of the whole world. To slacken the tempo would mean falling behind. And those who fall behind get beaten. But we do not want to be beaten. No, we refuse to be beaten! One feature of old Russia was the continual beatings she suffered because of her backwardness. She was beaten by the Mongol *khans*. She was beaten by the Turkish *beys*. She was beaten by the Polish and Lithuanian gentry. She was beaten by the British and French capitalists. She was beaten by the Japanese barons. All beat her – because of her backwardness, military backwardness, cultural backwardness, political backwardness, industrial backwardness, agricultural backwardness. They beat her because to do so was profitable and could be done with impunity. Do you remember the words of the pre-revolutionary poet: 'You are poor and abundant, mighty and powerless, Mother Russia'. Those gentlemen were quite familiar with the verses of the old poet. They beat her, saying 'You are abundant, so one can enrich oneself at your expense'. They beat her, saying 'You are poor and powerless, so you can be beaten and plundered with impunity'. Such is the law of the exploiters – to beat the backward and weak. It is the jungle law of capitalism. You are backward, you are weak – therefore you are wrong; hence you can be beaten and enslaved. You are mighty – therefore you are right; hence we must be wary of you. That is why we must no longer lag behind.

We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or we shall be crushed. This is what our obligations to the workers and peasants of the USSR dictate to us.

This impassioned appeal to Russian history subordinates all other considerations to the one driving need of national survival. It was by reference to this appeal that Stalin would later justify the severity of the imposed collectivisation of Russian agriculture.

2 Collectivisation

At its introduction in 1928, collectivisation was referred to as 'voluntary'. Stalin claimed that it was the free choice of the peasants, but in practice it was enforced on a very reluctant peasantry. In effect, Stalin had adopted the ideas of the extreme Left. He justified collectivisation by playing on the natural antipathy of the Bolsheviks towards the peasants. In a major propaganda offensive, he identified a class of 'Kulaks', who were holding back the workers' revolution. These

Kulaks were defined as rich peasants who had grown wealthy under the NEP. They monopolised the best land and employed cheap peasant labour to farm it. By hoarding their farm produce and maintaining artificially high food prices, they were exploiting the needs of the workers and poorer peasants to make themselves increasingly prosperous. Unless they were broken as a class, they would prevent the modernisation of the USSR.

However, the concept of a Kulak class has been shown by scholars to have been a Stalinist myth. The so-called Kulaks were really only those industrious peasants who, by their own efforts, had proved somewhat more efficient farmers than their neighbours. In no sense did they constitute the class of exploiting land-owners described in Stalin's propaganda campaign against them. Nonetheless, given the tradition of landlord oppression going back to Tsarist times, the myth of a Kulak class proved a very potent one and provided the pretext for the coercion of the peasantry as a whole – middle and poor peasants, as well as Kulaks.

*Stalin justified his measures towards the peasants in terms of Party principles. Bolshevism was a proletarian creed. It taught that the days of the peasantry as a revolutionary social force had passed. The future belonged to the urban workers. October 1917 had been the first stage in the triumph of this proletarian class. Therefore it was perfectly fitting that the peasantry should, in a time of national crisis, become wholly subservient to the demands of industrialisation. That subservience took the form of a simple formula. The USSR needed industrial investment and manpower. The land could provide both. Surplus grain would be sold abroad to raise investment funds for industry; surplus peasants would be recruited into the industrial labour force.

One part of the formula was correct; for generations the Russian countryside had been overpopulated, creating a chronic land shortage. The other part was a gross and deliberate misrepresentation. There was no grain surplus. Indeed, even in the best years of the NEP food production had seldom matched requirements. Yet Stalin insisted that the problem was not a lack of food supplies but their inefficient distribution. He asserted that the apparent food shortages were the result of grain-hoarding by the rich peasants. This argument was then used to explain the pressing need for collectivisation as a way of securing adequate food production and distribution. It also provided a moral justification for the onslaught on the Kulaks, who were condemned as grain-monopolists, exploiters of poor peasants, and enemies of the Soviet nation in its struggle to modernise itself in the face of international, capitalist, hostility. In some regions 'de-Kulakisation' was undertaken with enthusiasm by the poorer peasants, since it provided them with an excuse to settle old scores and to give vent to local jealousies. Land and property were seized from the minority of better-off peasants, and they and their families were

physically attacked. Such treatment was often the prelude to arrest and deportation by the official anti-Kulak squads, authorised by Stalin and modelled on the gangs who had persecuted the peasants during the 'Terror' in the Civil War period (1918–20). The OGPU (which had succeeded the Cheka as the State security force, and which would be renamed the NKVD in 1931) was entrusted with the recruitment and organisation of these squads.

To the mass of the peasantry the renewal of terror as a deliberate policy also served as warning of the likely consequences of resisting the State reorganisation of Soviet agriculture. The destruction of the Kulaks was thus an integral part of the whole collectivisation process. As a Soviet official later admitted: 'most Party officers thought that the whole point of de-Kulakisation was its value as an administrative measure, speeding up tempos of collectivisation'.

*In the period between December 1929 and March 1930, nearly 60% of the peasant farms in the USSR were collectivised. As a result, something little short of a civil war broke out in the countryside. Peasants in their millions resisted the attempted collectivisation. Such was the savagery and the degree of suffering that Stalin called a halt, blaming the troubles on over-zealous officials, 'dizzy with success'. Many of the peasants were allowed to return to their original holdings. However, the delay was only temporary; having cleared his own name by blaming the difficulties on incompetent local officials, Stalin restarted collectivisation in a more determined, if somewhat slower, manner. Western analysts tend to treat Soviet statistics with caution, but, with due allowance for marginal inaccuracy, the following data reveal the extraordinary character of collectivisation. The table indicates that by the end of the 1930s virtually the whole of the peasantry had been collectivised.

Percentage of Peasant Holdings Collectivised in the USSR, 1930–41

1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1941
23.6%	52.7%	61.5%	66.4%	71.4%	83.2%	89.6%	98.0%

*Behind these remarkable figures lies the story of a massive social upheaval. The peasantry was disorientated and alienated. It either would not or could not co-operate in the deliberate destruction of its traditional way of life. The consequences were increasingly tragic. The majority of peasants ate their seed corn and slaughtered their livestock. There were no harvests left to reap or animals to rear. The Soviet authorities responded by still fiercer coercion, but this simply made matters worse: imprisonment, deportation and execution could not replenish the barns or restock the herds. The ignorance of farming techniques among those Party members (called the 'Twenty-five

Thousand' after the number forming the first contingent) who were sent from the towns to restore food production levels, only added to the disruption. By a bitter irony, even as starvation set in, the little grain that was available was being exported as 'surplus' to obtain the foreign capital that industry demanded. By 1932 the situation on the land was catastrophic, as the following figures show. They are Western estimates based on Soviet statistics.

Consumption of Foodstuffs (in kilos per head)

	Bread	Potatoes	Meat & Lard	Butter
1928	250.4	141.1	24.8	1.35
1932	**214.6**	**125.0**	**11.2**	**0.7**

Comparative Numbers of Livestock

	Horses	Cattle	Pigs	Sheep and goats
1928	33,000,000	70,000,000	26,000,000	146,000,000
1932	**15,000,000**	**34,000,000**	**9,000,000**	**42,000,000**

These figures refer to the USSR as a whole. In the urban areas there was relatively more food available. Indeed, a major purpose of the grain requisition squads was to maintain adequate supplies to the industrial regions. This meant that the misery in the countryside was proportionally greater, with areas such as the Ukraine and Kazhakstan suffering particularly severely. The devastation experienced by the Kazhaks can be gauged from the fact that in this period they lost nearly ninety per cent of their livestock.

*Starvation, which in many parts of the Soviet Union persisted throughout the 1930s, was at its worst in the years 1932–33, when there occurred what is best described as a national famine. Collectivisation had induced a degree of peasant despair that for a devastating period destroyed the always tenuous stability of Russian agriculture. In large areas of the USSR the uprooted peasantry had simply stopped producing, either as an act of desperate resistance or through sheer inability to adapt to the bewilderingly new and violently enforced regime. Few peasants understood the economic logic, still less the ideological justification, of it all. The cruel fact was that as a subordinate part of a grand industrial design Soviet agriculture had been burdened with a task that it could not fulfil. The result was that for a significant period it ceased in any meaningful sense to function at all. So great was the migration from the rural to the urban areas that a system of internal passports was introduced in an effort to control the flow. Some idea of the horrors can be obtained from the following eye-witness account:

1 Russia today is in the grip of famine. I walked alone through villages and twelve collective farms. Everywhere was the cry, 'There is no bread; we are dying'. This cry came to me from every part of Russia. In a train a Communist denied to me that there
5 was a famine. I flung into the spittoon a crust of bread I had been eating from my own supply. The peasant, my fellow passenger, fished it out and ravenously ate it. I threw orange peel into the spittoon. The peasant again grabbed it and devoured it. The Communist subsided. . . .
10 The government's policy of collectivisation and the peasants' resistance to it have brought Russia to the worst catastrophe since the famine of 1921 swept away the population of whole districts.
(report by a Reuter correspondent, 29th March 1932)

It was only from such descriptions by Western visitors that news of the horrendous events in Russia at this time became known. The official Stalinist line was that there was no famine. In the whole of the contemporary Soviet press there were only two oblique references to the famine. This conspiracy of silence was of more than political significance. As well as protecting the image of Stalin the great planner, it effectively prevented the introduction of any measures for remedying the distress. Since the famine was deemed not to exist Soviet Russia could not publicly take steps to deal with it. For the same reason it could not appeal, as had been done during the 1921 famine, for assistance from the outside world. Thus it was that what Isaac Deutscher, the historian and former-Trotsykist, called 'the first purely man-made famine in history' went unacknowledged in order to avoid discredit falling on its perpetrator. Not for the last time, a large proportion of the Soviet people was sacrificed on the altar of Stalin's reputation.

*De-Stalinisation in the 1950s revealed Stalin's crimes against the Party. However, it was not until the 1980s that Stalin's offences against the Russian people began to be publicly admitted in the USSR. In the atmosphere of *glasnost*, associated with the Gorbachev reforms of the late 1980s, it became possible to say the previously unsayable. In 1989 the Soviet historian, Dmitri Volkogonov, produced the first unexpurgated Russian biography of Joseph Stalin. In his book Volkogonov confirmed many of the suspicions long entertained in the West of Stalin's inhumanity. Of special interest in relation to the collectivisation period was Volkogonov's discovery from official Soviet records that Stalin went into the countryside on only one occasion, in 1928, and visited a factory only twice.

Leaving aside humanitarian considerations, it is difficult to justify collectivisation even on economic grounds. Historians find little evidence to indicate that it provided the Soviet Union with the capital

accumulation anticipated at the time of its introduction. The basic weakness was that there was never a genuine surplus that could be sold to raise capital. Although the famine had eased by 1939, agriculture continued to produce less than was required to feed the Soviet population. Although there was an increase in grain production, stocks of other food stuffs declined. There has been significant speculation among economic analysts that a policy of state taxation of an uncollectivised peasantry would have produced a much higher level of investment capital, while avoiding the social dislocation and misery of Stalin's measures. (This was the very policy that had been urged by Bukharin and the Right.) At a more mundane level it has been observed that if, instead of trying to increase grain production by means of fighting the class war, Stalin and his officials had encouraged the peasants to use effective rat poison and properly ventilated barns the consequent saving of food stocks would have made collectivisation unnecessary. This, of course, is to overlook the ideological dimension of Stalin's land programme and to give no place to his deep sense of vindictiveness towards the Russian peasantry.

Even allowing for the occasional progressive aspect of collectivisation, such as the spread of the MTS (Machine Tractor Stations), the overall picture is unimpressive. By 1939 Soviet agricultural productivity had barely returned to the level recorded for Tsarist Russia in 1913. But the most damning consideration still remains the famine, which, at least in its most excessive forms, was avoidable. Western calculations of the number of Soviet peasants who died as a direct result of the famines of the 1930s vary between ten and fifteen million.

3 Industrialisation

Stalin's programme of industrialisation for the USSR is best understood as an attempt to establish a war economy. He declared that he was promoting a great leap forward, as a war on the inefficiencies of Russia's past, as a war against the class enemies within, and as a preparation for war against the nation's capitalist enemies abroad. The war image also explains the form that Soviet industrialisation took. For Stalin, industry meant heavy industry. He saw iron, steel, and oil production as the genuine measures of industrial growth, as it was these products that provided the sinews of war. He believed that the industrial revolutions of western Europe and North America had been based on iron and steel production. Therefore the USSR would adopt a similar industrial pattern in its drive towards modernisation. The difference would be that, whereas the West had followed the capitalist road, the USSR would take the path of socialism. This was not mere political rhetoric. It has to be remembered that Stalin's industrialisation drive coincided with the period of economic stagnation in the West, known as the Great