Russian & Soviet History

Please write on three of the following questions. You must write on at least one question from each of Part I and Part 2 (e.g. two Soviet and one imperial, or vice versa). You have a total of four hours. You are on your honor not to consult any other materials, including notes or papers stored on your computer. Please return your completed exam to the graduate office by 5:00 pm today. Good Luck.

Part I

1. "The seventeenth century in Russia is best understood as having constituted a kind of national identity crisis." Discuss.

2. Marc Raeff has argued that, while imperial governments sought to import and acclimatize the goals of the "well-ordered police state" from the West into Russia, "due to differences of environment and circumstances" their efforts "changed the nature and import of the cameralist theories and practices." Discuss with reference to the reigns of Peter I and Catherine II.

3. How have historians discussed and explained the social impact of industrialization in imperial Russia, both urban and rural? Who are the major figures in this historiography, and how have their interpretations differed?

4. The chief significance of the revolutionary epic of the 1860s and 1870s lies in its effect on the imperial regime: it destroyed the regime’s capacity to reform itself. Discuss this assertion and the historiography that grounds it.

Part II

1. Before the 1970s, historians viewed Lenin and the Bolsheviks as inherently dictatorial schemers who seized power in a 1917 coup and then deliberately installed a totalitarian regime whose roots were inherent in Bolshevism from the start. In the 1970s, historians revised this view of the Bolsheviks and of 1917 in significant ways. Now there seems to be a revival of the original position. Who has written on the subject and what kinds of evidence have been adduced in support of various arguments?

2. Historians have variously viewed Stalin as the heir to Lenin, an "un-Leninist" usurper, a Russian nationalist dictator, an internationalist revolutionary, a creator of bureaucracy, a product of bureaucracy, a brilliant strategist, a strategic incompetent, a wise politician, and a lunatic. Discuss various views of Stalin,
showing how they might relate to arguments about the role of personalities or “Great Men” in history.

3. The period after 1929 is often seen as a regressive, conservative shift in the position of women in the Soviet Union. Some historians have, for example, marked the change by the ushering in of a time marked by a “a woman’s place is in the home” thinking. Discuss Soviet women’s history, paying attention to the positions taken by various historians.

4. The “Stalin Revolution” that began in 1928-29 was a dramatic shift in economic policy direction, and historians have long debated its causes, results and, more basically, its necessity. Discuss the various interpretations of this event, indicating the positions of various historians on the main question surrounding the event.