University of California, Los Angeles  
European M.A./Ph.D. Written Exam  
March 27, 28, 29, 2007  

RUSSIAN AND SOVIET HISTORY  

Please answer one question from Part I and one question from Part II. You are allowed a total of four hours to complete this exam (two hours per question). You are on your honor not to consult any materials, including notes or papers or anything stored in your computer. You are also on your honor not to discuss the exam or its content with any faculty or student until the exam period is over.  

Part 1  

1. Discuss the Slavophile-Westerner controversy and its echoes in later Russian thought.  

2. Several historians have made the observation that in Europe east of Germany, the role of an indigenous bourgeoisie has been taken up by two other social groupings: the bureaucracies and the intelligentsia. Thus, between the urban and rural masses on the one hand and the gentry or aristocracy on the other, the only mediators were either representatives of state power or critics of that power. Do you think this generalization holds for Russia between 1815 and 1917? If not, please suggest another framework in its place.  

3. Given Russia’s social composition during the late 19th and early 20th century, it would appear that revolutionary populism was a more suitable doctrine for the radical intelligentsia than Marxism. How do you account for the success of Marxism in the Russian milieu? How did Marxists adopt their doctrine to Russian conditions?  

4. What were the dominant themes, patterns or goals of Russian foreign policy from 1854 to 1914, and how successful was Russia in terms of the objectives it pursued?  

5. Since the 1960s, several historians have disputed the long-held assumption that World War I was the direct cause of the collapse of the old regime in Russia. Write an essay outlining the major positions in this debate, and analyzing what you believe to be the major factors behind the monarchy’s demise.  

6. 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.  

Part 2  

1. The Stalin period 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 woman's place is in the home" thinking. Discuss Soviet women's history, paying attention to the positions taken by various historians.
2. Discuss the specific differences between "mainstream" and "revisionist" interpretations of Soviet political history. Pay particular attention to the 1929-1939 period, discussing not only specific events but also the overall differences in approach; what makes an argument "revisionist" in Soviet historiography?

3. The Bolsheviks went from being a small splinter group at the beginning of 1917 to the ruling party of Russia by the end of the year. How have historians explained this phenomenon?

4. Recently historians of the Stalin period have debated the question of popular resistance to the regime. Discuss various viewpoints on this question, providing a definition of "resistance" in the process.

5. Discuss the New Economic Policy (NEP) of the 1920s, including its provisions, the reasons for its adoption, the party's understanding of it, and the reasons for its termination. Was NEP viable?

6. 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.