Question 1

Question: Evaluate the interpretations in both of the passages and explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of the successes and failures of the Provisional Government.

Passage A

With successive reshuffles that gave moderate socialists more influence, the Provisional Government lasted more than seven months. This in itself as quite an achievement, for it had little power and faced enormous problems. The Soviet’s Order No. 1 threatened to deprive the government of an effective army. The old police, by general consent, had been disbanded, but the militia which was to replace them never became an effective force. The Soviet, because it controlled the workers’ organisations, could deny vital services if it so chose; thus the measures taken by the Provisional Government needed the acquiescence of the Soviet leaders if they were to be effective. The Provisional Government, co-opted from the members of a Dumas elected on a narrow franchise and consisting of gentlemen favouring a western-style parliamentary democracy, could hardly claim to be a popular government, even though it was popularly accepted for the time being.


Passage B

Although it had ruled Russia for over 300 years, the Romanov dynasty collapsed in just a few days. Its passing was mourned by few of its former subjects. There was no serious attempt to reinstate Nicholas II, not even by Nicholas himself! The whole country seemed to breathe a sigh of relief, and looked forward to a better future they believed Russia’s new government would bring. There was, in the words of historian Christopher Read, a ‘nationwide honeymoon. For the only time in its history, the Russian Empire was united’. Kerensky, the sole socialist member of the new Provisional Government, wrote in his memoirs of the new atmosphere of hope in Russia. Despite the good intentions of Kerensky and his colleagues, it proved difficult to create a new order which satisfied all Russians. The new Provisional Government had to face those same problems, exacerbated by Russia’s involvement in the war that the tsarist government had failed to solve, as well as to meet the eager expectations of 160 million people. In fact the Provisional Government proved quite unable to deliver what was expected. It was increasingly seen as a product of the old regime and as unrepresentative of the Russian people. Perhaps it would have been impossible for any government to succeed in the circumstances it inherited. The government lasted only a few weeks before being replaced by another, and then another. The ‘honeymoon’ was soon over and its authority gradually slipped away.

Peter Oxley, Russia 1855-1919: From Tsars to Commissars, Oxford University Press, 2001
Question 2: Choose TWO of the THREE essays:

a. To what extent were national minorities treated more favourably by the communists than the tsars in the period from 1855-1964?

b. Assess the view that the causes of opposition under the tsars were different from those under the communists in the period from 1855-1964.

c. How far was there more change than continuity in the way Russia was ruled in the period from 1855-1964?