



AS

History

7041/2N Revolution and dictatorship: Russia and the Soviet Union, 1917-1929

Report on the examination

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Question 01

The topic on the Russian Civil War is a popular one with students and therefore the question and sources proved to be accessible with most answers achieving Level 3 or above.

In relation to source A, most students were able to provide a balanced assessment of the provenance arguing that the source potentially has some strengths as evidence from a peasant directly affected by the war in 1920, however also arguing that the source is likely to have been manipulated by Trotsky for propaganda purposes.

The more successful answers linked these points about provenance directly to aspects of the content, often arguing that the impression given of the Cossacks' behaviour is valuable, but the description of the Red Army seems overly positive. Answers in mid-Level 4 and above supported these points about content and provenance with some well-selected contextual knowledge, particularly on the Red Army's use of grain requisitioning and revolts by peasant against this such as in the Tambov region. In addition, a particularly good point in some stronger answers was that the provenance of the source is valuable as evidence of Trotsky's skills as a propagandist which also contributed to the Reds' victory in the war.

In relation to Source B, almost all students argued that the provenance is valuable due to the private nature of this correspondence and the fact that it was written by one of the leading figures of the Whites. However, some students struggled to achieve balance in relation to the provenance of Source B and only a few pointed out that Wrangel appears to be blaming the soldiers and officers for the problems faced by the Whites rather than the senior leadership of the army. In relation to the content of the source, students were very keen to pick up on the word 'disorganisation' in line 2. In Level 3 responses this was supported by some contextual comment about the geographical spread of the White Army, although this tended to be rather general. Answers in Level 4 and above were able to be more precise about what 'disorganisation' meant in the context of this particular source, for example pointing out that the White Army in the south had been in retreat since being pushed back from its advance on Moscow. These higher-level answers also explained that 'disorganisation' was ideological as well geographical.

Almost all answers reached the judgement that Source B is more valuable than Source A. In Level 3, these judgements were often little more than a sentence or two at the end of the answer. Most judgements relied more on the differences in provenance rather than in content. The most successful answers combined an assessment of both provenance and content to achieve more fully substantiated judgement.

Question 02

This was the more popular of the two essay questions, which was not surprising as the topic of the February Revolution and the abdication of Nicholas II is a well-known part of the course. As a result, most answers achieved Level 3 or above. The small number of responses in Level 2 tended to be limited by the fact that they did not address the factor in the question. These students were intent on writing a general explanation of the factors leading to the abdication without any specific explanation of the strikes and protests in Petrograd in February 1917.

Answers in Level 3 showed some understanding of the events of February 1917, although this tended to lack depth and specific evidence. There was also some confusion or lack of clarity over whether the 'Tsar' and 'his government' should be considered together. In relation to this topic, it was much more effective to consider 'Tsar' and 'government' as one entity. Level 3 answers also tended to be somewhat generalised on other factors. For example, many wrote about the failures of Russia in the First World War, but this was not linked explicitly to the events of February 1917. Instead, there tended to be rather vague statements that this made the Tsar less popular and therefore caused his abdication. In a similar vein, there was plenty of comment in Level 3 answers about Rasputin and how his influence made the Tsar less popular. However, there was very little awareness that Rasputin was killed in December 1916 and therefore his significance in February 1917 is not as strong as other factors.

Answers in Level 4 and above provided more specific information about the events of February 1917, for example including details about the protests growing in size on International Women's Day and becoming more dangerous following the mutiny of the Petrograd garrison. There was also some good evidence on Rodzianko's telegram to the Tsar and Nicholas' lack of awareness of the severity of the situation. These stronger answers also provided more precise evidence linking wider factors to the events of 1917, for example, explaining that the Tsar and the Duma had had tense relations for several years which reached a peak in February 1917, and that it was members of the Provisional Committee of the Duma that received the Tsar's abdication at Pskov.

In attempting judgement, most Level 3 answers and lower Level 4 ones tended to dismiss the importance of the protests of February 1917 and instead stated that longer term factors were more important. The more analytical answers at mid-Level 4 and above tended to show an understanding that the abdication of Nicholas II was a combination of longer- and shorter-term factors which came together in the events of February 1917.

Question 03

Although this was the less popular of the two essay questions, it was still answered by a significant number of students. As for question 02, the topic is a well-known and accessible one and therefore most answers achieved Level 3 or above. In another similarity to question 02, the small number of answers in Level 2 tended to ignore the factor in the question (propaganda) and write a more general explanation of Stalin's rise to power.

Answers in Level 3 provided some relevant content and comment on propaganda, although this did tend to be rather brief. Usually, this was made up of references to Lenin's funeral and possibly Stalin's development of a 'cult of Lenin' afterwards. Level 3 answers did not tend to provide much further comment on propaganda in the years after 1924. When introducing other factors in balance, these Level 3 responses tended to do so in a rather generalist way, providing some relevant content and detail but only linking it to Stalin's rise to power in general rather than providing a more explicit link to the precise focus of the question.

Answers in Level 4 and above, were more able to comment on propaganda in a broader context. Most commonly this entailed an explanation of Stalin's slogan 'Socialism in One Country' and how this helped Stalin to win the ideological battles of this period. Some students also commented on the emergence of Stalin's cult of personality towards the end of this period which reinforced his 'Great Turn' and the defeat of the Right Opposition. When discussing other factors, these stronger answers were more able to link such points to the focus of the question and provide some analytical comment on the relative importance of other factors in relation to propaganda. Most often this was to comment that other factors, such as Stalin's use of his position as General Secretary to build up a powerbase within the Party, were more important than propaganda as the power struggle was largely carried out within the confines of the Party organisation and propaganda was more focused on the wider public.

Almost all students concluded that propaganda was not crucial to Stalin's rise to power. At Level 3 such judgement tended to be limited to a brief assertion of this nature and then a further assertion of which factor was more important. Stronger responses were able to provide more substantiation of the overall judgement, often explaining why another factor was more important than propaganda.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.