

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

HISTORY A

H505

For first teaching in 2015

Y219/01 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates. The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report. A full copy of the question paper can be downloaded from OCR.

Paper Y219/01 series overview

Almost all responses adhered to the correct convention and answered both questions from either Section A or Section B. On occasion, students selected one or more questions from both sections. Both questions were equally popular; candidates attempting either Section One or Section Two.. Key words were sometimes misspelt. For example, Lenin and Kerensky. In addition, the level of supporting knowledge was also commonly generalised. In some cases, important roles and events were misunderstood. For example, Lenin's role after the November Revolution was sometimes discussed with reference to events prior to the fall of the Provisional Government. This demonstrates the significance of chronological understanding to meet the demands of the question.

Question 1 (a)

1 (a) Which of the following was of greater importance in Stalin's rise to power?

- (i) His position in the party
- (ii) The weaknesses of opposition

Explain your answer with reference to both (i) and (ii).

[10]

This response required an understanding of the power struggle. Candidates occasionally went beyond 1928 and realistically this was anachronistic as Stalin was the recognised authority by 1928/1929. The question also specifies Stalin's 'rise to power' as the point of focus. Stalin's position in the party did yield some good explanation. This stemmed primarily from his administrative roles; for example, his role in the Orgburo and his role as General Secretary. Candidates sometimes related this to the Lenin Enrolment of 1923. This was linked to Stalin attaining patronage and his role as General Secretary, his understanding of the mood of the party, being able to deliver the votes, etc. More limited responses were generalised in the language used; for example, some candidates did not correctly identify Stalin's role as General Secretary and used general terms for this role. This question also provided an opportunity to explore Stalin's vacillation within the party. This was best explained with reference to the alliance with Kamenev and Zinoviev, and the debates surrounding 'socialism in one country', 'permanent revolution', and the continuation of NEP. However, this was less common and key terms like 'triumvirate' were commonly absent or not correctly used. The funeral was also commonly discussed and sometimes well-linked to Stalin's role, he knew the details and how to take advantage of them, and this stemmed from his central role within the party. The range of responses varied and Exemplar 1 demonstrates the necessity for responses to use precise information to directly address the question.

Weaknesses of opposition were discussed with frequent reference to Trotsky. Points identified were his Menshevik background, Jewish nature, and non-attendance at the funeral. Other candidates were also discussed, namely Kamenev, Zinoviev and Bukharin. The best responses explained what made these candidates weak; forming a faction, clinging to NEP, underestimating Stalin, etc. However, there was a degree of illustration in some cases and more limited responses did not outline a range of weaknesses. It was fine to explain a range of weaknesses surrounding one candidate, or weaknesses relevant to more than one contender. What was necessary was an accurate degree of coverage and depth to effectively evaluate the weaknesses of Stalin's opposition. These parts of the response sometimes slipped back into a consideration of Stalin's strengths, commonly his personality traits hence, there was some drift away from an evaluation of opposition weaknesses.

Exemplar 1

From the start of his political involvement, he was a strong believer in the theories and writings of German Communist Karl Marx, much like Lenin. This led him down the path of joining Lenin's Bolshevik Party and proving to be a devoted asset, after being involved in high risk actions such as bank robberies in order to fund the Party and build the party into what a ruling, ^{young,} capable of ~~futting~~ ^{running,} Russia.

This response is limited because it does not accurately and explicitly address the question. This part shows a very limited and generalised application of information that does not address the factor.

Question 1 (b)

(b)* To what extent was Lenin a successful leader following the November Revolution of 1917?
[20]

To achieve a Level 4 or above, this response required a balanced analysis of Lenin as leader of Russia and the Soviet Union. Therefore, the response needed to explain successes and failings to achieve balance. Responses commonly focused on a range of actions taken by Lenin. There was a significant number of responses centred on Lenin's November and December decrees, most commonly the Land Decree, and the Decree on Peace. The land question was then explained with reference to the peasant land seizures and sometimes related back to Lenin's April Thesis. Likewise, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was used to address the issue of peace. Usually, these were evaluated as a success for Lenin. Brest-Litovsk was hailed a success for addressing the ongoing issue of war that had plagued the Provisional Government. However, at times Brest-Litovsk was described as a failure due to the terms of the treaty. It was fine for students to relate these issues to the April Thesis because this helped to explain Lenin's actions as a success or a failure. However, some responses focused solely on the April Thesis in isolation, not making connections between Lenin's promises and the decisions he made as leader of Russia. This was not directly related to the question and therefore not credited as valid analysis because the question demanded an evaluation of leadership following the November Revolution.

Other prominent areas covered were War Communism and the New Economic Policy. The coverage of these was usually quite generalised. War Communism was evaluated as both a success and a failure, usually a success due to grain requisitioning measures providing the grain to feed the workers and the Red Army, and a failure due to the opposition caused and/or the suffering related to the famine. The generalised nature of the responses meant that the attempted analysis often omitted specific details, for example, numbers affected by the famine and its wider impact were sometimes omitted or inaccurate. Exemplar 2 shows some precision and a clear question focus and uses the famine to illustrate an evaluation of Lenin's social successes and failures.

The New Economic Policy was commonly dealt with as a failure due to the factionalism caused or the economic effect of the scissors crisis. There was a significant lack of accuracy in dealing with this policy and it was often confused with the effects of War Communism. For example, candidates sometimes linked the New Economic Policy to a fall in grain output.

The Cheka and Lenin's use of terror was another common area of focus. Explanation was evident but commonly generalised to include few specific details about the measures taken. More analytical responses made these explanations with supporting knowledge about the estimated numbers killed by the Cheka, their methods, the Bolshevik use of prison camps, and the show trials of Mensheviks and SRs.

Finally, the success in the Civil War was a factor used to explain Lenin's success as a leader. Limited responses outlined Bolshevik success in the Civil War with explanations based on Trotsky's role. Better explanations related this success to Lenin's role. The best responses explained the significance of Red propaganda and Lenin's role in creating unity and improved morale.

Exemplar 2

Finally, it can be argued that perhaps ~~that~~ Lenin was unsuccessful in dealing with the social issues that haunted Russia. By 1920 famine ~~had~~ was widespread and had contributed to the depletion of the workforce by 60%. Furthermore, Petrograd and Moscow were only relieving $\frac{1}{13}$ of their food and fuel requirements, reaching the lowest rationing of 50 grams of bread a day. This is significant as it gave rise to a negative image of the Bolsheviks, contributing to the rise of opposition that led to the end of war communism. The Tambov rising illustrates how famine and in particular the ~~Bolshevik~~ Lenin's inability to deal with famine led to peasant armies led by the social revolutionary Antonov rising against the Bolsheviks. The Tambov rising attacked Red sympathisers and grain requisitioning squads leading to 2000 deaths and a year to be suppressed. This showcases the gravity of the famine that had led to 5 million deaths as the ~~Bolsheviks were~~ ^{Lenin was} no longer able to enforce his economic objectives. Finally, the famine also led to

This part of the response uses social issues to evaluate Lenin's achievements following the November Revolution. It is effective because it is substantiated by relevant evidence and focused on the question.

Question 2 (a)

2 (a) Which of the following was of greater importance in the maintenance of the Bolshevik regime under Lenin?

(i) The NEP

(ii) The Cheka

Explain your answer with reference to both (i) and (ii).

[10]

Generally, students recognised the Cheka as the Bolshevik secret police and were able to explain how this aided the maintenance of the Bolshevik regime. This was commonly a generalised link that lacked specificity. (See Exemplar 3). More sophisticated responses accurately identified key terms linked to the Cheka to explain their role. Few candidates mentioned Dzerzhinsky, torture methods, numbers killed, etc. to explain the role the Cheka played. Accurate supporting knowledge was a discriminating factor that improved the quality of responses.

The NEP was commonly linked to War Communism. In limited cases there were factual errors, sometimes confusing the effects of each policy. Other limitations were caused by illustrative responses where the role of NEP was not explained with reference to the maintenance of Bolshevik power. When elements of the New Economic Policy were linked to the maintenance of the Bolshevik regime, the question was well-addressed.

Judgements varied but the quality was usually limited by a lack of precision in dealing with at least one of the factors.

Exemplar 3

		<p>The Cheka was the Bolsheviks secret police force. The importance of this in the maintenance of the Bolshevik regime was that it enabled them to the party to implement its policies like NEP. That was because the Cheka had removed any opposition to the opposition who were called saboteurs sabotage sabotage sabotage Saboteurs or 'wreckers', that rose against the Bolsheviks</p>
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This response illustrates a very basic awareness of the role of the Cheka. However, there is generalisation and misunderstanding. The arrest of 'saboteurs' and 'wreckers' was an OGPU and NKVD focus under the Five-Year Plans. This part of the response is limited and illustrates the need for precise support to construct an effective argument.

Question 2 (b)

(b)* How important was Russia's continuing involvement in the First World War after March 1917 in bringing about the November Revolution? [20]

The question requires an awareness of a range of causes surrounding the fall of the Provisional Government. The response needed to focus on the continuation of World War One, the named factor to make sure that a more than partial response was achieved. The question also required an awareness of at least two other factors that caused the November Revolution. Those commonly identified were the role of Lenin, Provisional Government weaknesses and the role of the Kornilov Affair. Provisional Government weaknesses addressed their failures to deliver land reform, elections and an end to the war soon enough. Exemplar 4 explains the problems caused by the delay on land reform.

The most limited responses were generalised. These did not provide specific information to support the explanations made surrounding the various causes. In particular, the named factor, the continuation of World War One, was usually supported by generalised responses about famine. The discriminating factor that helped candidates to analyse and evaluate effectively was again the level of accurate supporting knowledge to develop the arguments made. For example, when dealing with the war at this stage, accurate responses focused on the June Offensive and sometimes the prior resignation of Miliukov surrounding the continuation of the war. The named factor was sometimes linked to Bolshevik strengths, for example Lenin's April Thesis was linked to how the slogans 'Peace, Land and Bread' made the Bolsheviks a popular force and a viable alternative. Such responses related Lenin's promises to the wider context and the prevailing issues weakening the Provisional Government. More sophisticated responses addressed the significance of ending accommodationism, although this was rare. There were some good explanations surrounding the significance of the Kornilov Affair and relating this to both Kerensky's weaknesses as well as Bolshevik strengths.

The most limited responses did not recognise the demands of the question, and that events after March 1917, bringing about the November Revolution, had to focus on the fall of the Provisional Government and not the abdication of the tsar.

Exemplar 4

Hastily the failure of the PG to reform the land system played an important, though less than war, role in bringing about the November revolution. This is because one other main desire of the Russian people was for land to be redistributed to the peasants, with many hoping this would happen after the March revolution. However, this did not (partly because many PG members were land owners who did not want to give their land up) which caused revolts in the countryside with many ~~take~~ peasants taking control of local gentry's land.

Exemplar 4 shows part of an explanation relating to the Provisional Government delay on land reform. This response is relevant and goes on to explain how this delay harmed the Provisional Government and contributed to an increase in Bolshevik support.

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