
AS

History

7041/2N

Report on the Examination

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General comments

This second year of the AS specification has seen some improvements in terms of understanding how to address the requirements of the paper. However, there are some concerns regarding the grasp of the less typical areas of the specification, with just 114 students attempting 03 out of over 1800 who sat the paper; it is vital that all aspects of the specification are treated equally as all areas will eventually be tested across the examination series. There were also some general concerns regarding the level of detail students were able to offer in their answers; component 2 is a depth paper, therefore answers must show a wide range of specific knowledge in order to access the higher levels.

The comments which follow are indicative of some of the strengths and weaknesses commonly seen in responses across the paper.

Section A

Question 01

This question addressed AO2: the ability to analyse and evaluate primary source material within an historical context. There are three elements to this question: an evaluation of provenance and tone; an evaluation of content and argument (both of which require application of own knowledge to place this in context); and a comparison of the sources. Sometimes the comparison emerged in the conclusion, although for the best answers the comparison was made evident throughout the bulk of the answer. It was expected that all elements should be addressed, and it was a weakness of some answers that this did not always happen, and marks were reduced in particular when the comparative element was only superficially addressed. It was often the case that the evaluation of which source was the 'most valuable' resulted in generalised comments, with many students suggesting that, as the revolution happened contrary to Kamanev and Zinoviev's wishes Source B was clearly the least valuable, or that as Lenin was the leader of the Bolsheviks, Source A was instantly the most valuable.

When looking at the content of the sources students were quick to hone in on specific words or phrases, rather than exploring the overall argument of the source. This often led to a mis-interpretation of the messages portrayed in the sources and considerable leaps in assumption that a single word meant the author had a particular view, or that it the source was of considerably more/less value because of a single phrase. For instance, many believed that the 'proletarian party' referred to in Source B were a political group and thus the problems of the Provisional Government meant that Kamanev and Zinoviev were wrong in this assumption of strength, therefore Source B is not valuable.

On the whole, students had a better grasp of Source A, understanding the tone of urgency and the purpose of the source as a plea to the Bolsheviks to begin a revolution whilst the time was ripe, with strong support in the Moscow and Petrograd Soviets. Value was contextualised with understanding of the issues surrounding the Provisional Government in the aftermath of the July Days and Kornilov Affair. The strongest answers were able to see great value in Lenin's comment that it would be naive to wait for political power, arguing that the results of the later Constituent Assembly elections, with a low vote for the Bolsheviks, shows that he was correct in suggesting revolution was the only route to power. Good evaluations were able to suggest that as Lenin was attempting to persuade the rest of the Central Committee to agree to a revolt, the source may be less valuable as exaggeration of the situation may have been employed to win the others over, and that ultimately the revolution was most certainly not an 'armed uprising'. Weaker answers tried to

suggest that Lenin was simply power hungry, or only gave description of the situation prior to the revolution without using this to evaluate the source. If this was repeated for both sources then answers would not get beyond low L3 depending on quality of comparison and discussion of Provenance; overly descriptive answers did not get out of L2.

The main issues came with Source B as many students did not really grasp the argument being made by Kamenev and Zinoviev. There seemed to be a lack of understanding regarding how Marx expected the revolution to take place, and thus how Lenin had amended this ideology when carrying out a revolution on behalf of the proletariat. There was much confusion about the support base of the Bolsheviks, with failure to recognise that there was little support beyond the two major Soviets; though it must be said that the stronger answers could show value in that Source B corroborates the support base mentioned by Lenin and that ultimately relatively few people were needed to succeed in October/November 1917. Provenance was often basic, with bland suggestions that as a report it must be factual, or that anything written by Kamenev and Zinoviev must be inaccurate given what happened to them in the power struggle. The stronger answers were able to contextualise the source, recognising that, although eventually being the only two to vote against going ahead with the revolution, the fact that they had disagreed in the first place was valuable to show there was disagreement about the way forward and that there was potential for the revolution to fail, as evidenced by the long civil war which followed.

Overall the bulk of the marks for 01 fell around the mid to low Level 3 area, mostly for a poor grasp of Source B or use of generic statements about value and provenance. However, there was some evidence of students being able to offer a decent evaluation of both sources in context, with just under 30% of papers being awarded Level 4 and above, and a mean mark around average for component two.

Section B

Question 02

This was by far the most popular question in Section B, being completed by over 90% of students who sat the paper. On the whole, most students grasped the main features of the consolidation of power by 1921 and the issues faced by the Bolsheviks in doing so. The main issue came with the focus of the question as a large number of answers struggled to give significant detail on popular policies, hence a bulk of marks around the Level 3/Level 4 borderline for limited balance. Stronger answers could explain a number of decrees and why they won favour with the people of Russia, with the stronger answers able to counter-balance this with why some policies were unpopular, such as War Communism and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. There was evidence of good understanding of the Civil War and why the Bolsheviks won (or the Whites lost) and many concluded that the Red Terror had a large part to play in the consolidation of power for a group who ultimately were not that popular beyond the main industrial areas.

The weakest answers appeared to not understand what was meant by 'consolidation', instead offering much description of the build up to the revolution rather than 1918 to 1921. Some also lacked knowledge of the actually policies enacted, instead only able to offer detail about the promises made in the April Thesis rather than what was actually enacted once the Bolsheviks seized power. With that said, most students had a reasonable understanding of the question, with less than 15% of answers falling below bottom Level 3.

Question 03

As discussed in the general comments, very few students decided to answer this question, so although the statistics show that 03 performed, on average, very similarly to 02, this is a little misleading given the small sample.

The main issue with this question seemed to stem from a very brief knowledge of what constituted ‘Soviet foreign policy’ with most answers straying into general discussion about international relations in the 1920s; for instance many made reference to the Zinoviev letter, which ultimately had nothing to do with the Soviets. Level 4 and above came for the ability to offer something substantial on particular policies, such as the Treaty of Rapallo and Soviet involvement in China. However, a large number of those who attempted the question also struggled to link the policies discussed to ‘international security’, instead simply discussing strengths and weaknesses. These issues explain why the bulk of marks came more around mid-Level 3 for not being able to offer much on the focus of the question.

The strongest answers clearly understood the value of relations with Germany and the Anglo-Soviet trade agreement, but that later in the 1920s (as fears continued to rise about communism), issues in Europe and China left the Soviet Union increasingly isolated. Some also took the approach of balancing Lenin’s policy against that of Stalin. Overall, as with 02, just under 30% of those tackling this question did manage to get into Level 4 and above.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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