

History

Answers and commentaries

A-level (7042)

2N Revolution and dictatorship: Russia, 1917 — 1953

Marked answers from students for questions from the June 2022 exams. Supporting commentary is provided to help you understand how marks are awarded and how students can improve performance.

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Answers and commentaries

Please note that these responses have been reproduced exactly as they were written by the student.

This resource is to be used alongside the A-level History Component 2N Revolution and dictatorship: Russia, 1917–1953 June 2022 Question paper and inserts.

Question 1

With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the problems of having a Dual Authority in Russia in the months March to May 1917.

[30 marks]

Mark scheme

- L5:** Shows a very good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to present a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. The answer will convey a substantiated judgement. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **25–30**
- L4:** Shows a good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with an awareness of the historical context to provide a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. Judgements may, however, be partial or limited in substantiation. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **19–24**
- L3:** Shows some understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance together with some awareness of the historical context. There may, however, be some imbalance in the degree of breadth and depth of comment offered on all three sources and the analysis may not be fully convincing. The answer will make some attempt to consider the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **13–18**
- L2:** The answer will be partial. It may, for example, provide some comment on the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question but only address one or two of the sources, or focus exclusively on content (or provenance), or it may consider all three sources but fail to address the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **7–12**

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L1: The answer will offer some comment on the value of at least one source in relation to the purpose given in the question but the response will be limited and may be partially inaccurate. Comments are likely to be unsupported, vague or generalist. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **1–6**

Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Student responses

Response A

The provenance of source A initially has very little value since due to Lenin being in exile, he has no concept or experience of how the Dual Authority is actually working and so does not have much of a foundation to criticize it. Value is added however by the fact that it comes from Lenin himself, therefore showing the view that a key Bolshevik member had at the time. In addition, although being published in Pravda lowers the reliability due to it being propagandist, it is still valuable because it shows the influence that Lenin has and how the Petrograd soviet will likely still follow him. The overall tone of the source is very favourable to the Soviet and very negative towards the Provisional Government because Lenin is trying to further his goal of a need for second revolution. The source is accurate in describing the Provisional Government's representation since it was made up of right wing ex-Duma members and initially headed by the aristocrat Prince Lvov. This shows that the Dual Authority would not function due to the differing ideologies and since the members have no concept of the problems for everyday Russians. The source is slightly inaccurate when it claims the Petrograd Soviet is connecting with peasants since although it does show the conflicting ideas of the Dual Authority since the Provisional Government was against peasants seizing land, they continued anyway. On the other hand, the Soviet couldn't actually connect with the peasants since its power base was mainly in urban sectors and the proletariat. There is more value towards the end of the source since the Provisional Government continually delayed elections, which the Soviet could use to claim they were no different from the unilateral dictatorship of Tsar Nicholas II, thus showing the distrust between the two powers. Overall the source is fairly valuable since it highlights the ideological problems in the Dual Authority, although it does speak about the influence of the Petrograd Soviet among peasants in more of a hyperbolic way.

The provenance of source B initially lends value since being an article, its purpose is to be informative about the current state of the Dual Authority. The value is then diminished since it is a newspaper for the proletariat meaning that it will be simplified due to the majority of readers not being particularly educated in government affairs since they are purely factory workers or soldiers. Some value is regained since it comes from the Petrograd Soviet, meaning that it provides an idea of how they viewed the Dual Authority and the Provisional government. The tone of the source is critical yet optimistic since it recognised the problems within the country but presents more Soviet involvement as the solution to fix it. The source is accurate about the state of the army since it was in shambles. Huge losses such as 300,000 at Tannenberg and the deaths of experienced generals such as Aleksander Samsonov crippled the army and caused very low morale which would lead to 1.5 million desertions. The source is also accurate in how powerless the Provisional Government was for dealing with issues. As shown when Kornilov marched on Petrograd with 6 army regiments so Kerensky, leader of the Provisional Government after Lvov, had to release and arm Bolshevik prisoners to fight for him. However, the source loses accuracy when it criticises the disorderly seizure of land since it hints that this was independent of the Soviet whereas it was actually the Soviet themselves supporting peasants seizing land from the Kulaks. Overall, the source is very valuable since it

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pushes how the current Dual Authority was not equipped to handle the state of post-Tsarist Russia and how ineffective the Dual Authority actually was.

The provenance of source C is not particularly valuable since it being a pamphlet means that it will be more of a summary designed to take little time to read so it will be light on key facts about the Dual Authority. Since Price only lived in Russia from 1917-1921, he won't be able to separate problems from the Tsarist regime and problems from the Dual Authority since he was not present to experience them first-hand. Being written for the Marxist British Socialist Party also lowers the value since it will be heavily propagandistic and they won't have an in-depth idea about the workings of Russian politics. This links to the tone which is set in quite a liberating way and since Price potentially wants to use Russia as an example to follow for Britain. The source is accurate in how the Petrograd Soviet immediately grabs for power over the Provisional Government, as shown with order no.1 which stated that the workers should only follow the Provisional Government if they approved of it. Further problems in the Dual Authority are shown when the source mentions how the cost of living has continued to rise since at this point it had risen by 300%. The source is not valuable however in how it presents the Dual Authority as always being led by the Soviet, since after the July days (3-5 July) the Bolsheviks were blamed which caused Trotsky to be imprisoned and forced Lenin and Stalin to flee to Finland; severely weakening their influence. Overall, the source is moderately valuable since it highlights how unequal the Dual Authority was and how problems in Russia were continuing despite a change in power, although it does exaggerate how successful the Petrograd Soviet was in keeping control and order.

This is a Level 3 response

The comments on provenance for all three sources are rather superficial and not wholly convincing. There is an attempt to comment on tone - this is ineffective on Source A, descriptive on Source B, but a little better on Source C as it is linked to the preceding comment on provenance here. There is an attempt to deploy contextual knowledge in relation to all three sources, however this contains some inaccuracy and irrelevance. Therefore, overall, there is some understanding of all three sources, and some analysis in relation to the question, though this is not fully convincing.

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Response B

Lenin's letter in source A suggests that the Provisional Government contains representatives of capitalist landlords, which holds validity. Wealthy aristocrats such as Prince Lvov were part of the provisional government and indeed it could be argued that people like him made it seem that the Provisional Government represented the bourgeoisie whereas the Petrograd Soviet represented the proletariat. This highlights a problem of having dual authority to a historian as it accentuates the fact that unless there was one faction with control there was always going to be diversity of opinion, especially when class was involved. In addition, Lenin's tone in his letter is one of authority and defiance; he states with an authoritative tone that there 'can be no Dual Authority' – it is his opinion that Dual Authority doesn't 'guarantee' freedom which is valid to an extent as at this point Russia wasn't free from the devastations of WW1. However, there are limitations to the validity of this source, especially when Lenin describes the Petrograd Soviet as a 'weak workers government'. This subjective statement is limited as actually, due to order No.1 March 1st 1917 the Petrograd Soviet had control over the military. By having military control, the Petrograd Government therefore had a lot of control, so it would be unfair of Stalin to suggest the 'workers government' was weak. Moreover, Stalin is in exile in Switzerland at this point, he isn't present in Russia. Therefore, only by word of mouth is he able to cast these assertions. Lenin isn't experiencing the dual authority in Russia first hand, and, perhaps what is less known to him is that the Petrograd Soviet didn't mind sharing power with the Provisional Government, it ended up being Lenin in the period of March to May 1917 that ended up pushing people against dual authority. To add to this, Lenin wrote this letter on 7th March 1917, when dual authority had just begun, therefore decreasing his credibility as he has made a judgement very quickly that 'workers must not support the new government', before waiting to see if the new government is effective.

Overall, Source A holds limited value to a historian studying the problem of dual authority in Russia as Lenin wrote this letter at the very beginning of dual authority. Plus, he isn't present in Russia at the time of writing the letter, therefore showing his inability to cast a fair judgement on what the situation of dual authority actually was like.

Source B – this article in Izvestia accentuates that not everyone part of the Petrograd Soviet was against joining forces with the Provisional Government. This source portrays a tone of honesty without bias, where the Executive Committee is willing to 'join the Provisional Government' in doing what is best for the country at the time. This thoughtful, honest tone increases the validity of the source as while it may seem it was in the Petrograd Soviet's interest to end war, what is necessary is the joint effort of those in government. Izvestia states that the 'Provisional Government' itself feels "powerless". This article is highlighting the struggles of dual power, stating it is 'not enough'. This is valid as the problem of war was massive which caused many of the problems at home such as the lack of 'bread'; this bread rationing being one of the main causes of the Feb/March Revolution (depend whether you're using Gregorian or Julian Calendar). Therefore as the source suggests the war was becoming an increasing problem which the Provisional Government was struggling to deal with hence why the Petrograd Soviet 'submitted terms by which representatives of the Soviet would join the Provisional Government'. There the validity to a historian is paramount as it shows by '16th May 1917' where the dual authority had only been present for just over two months, the Provisional Government already had a lack of control over occurrences such as a 'war', 'land', 'the

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army' and 'livestock'. However, it is important to acknowledge the value is limited where this came from Izvestia, the newspaper of the Petrograd Soviet. It is likely that events would have been over-exaggerated and while the army was 'breaking up'; it fails to acknowledge that they themselves, the Petrograd Soviet are the ones who has control over the army. Therefore all blame can't be passes onto the Provisional Government.

While Source B does highlight problem with dual power, such as acknowledging it is not enough to gain the confidence of the people, the Petrograd Soviet fails to take any responsibilities in the problems, After all, dual power isn't just about the Provisional Government, but it's about the Petrograd Soviet too. Therefore, this source is only valid to an extent. A historian should remember that the Petrograd Soviet bears responsibility for failures too.

Price in Source C has quite an arrogant tone in favour of the Petrograd Soviet when explaining the problems in Russia at the beginning of dual authority. His last words are ' the Soviet was always set to triumph'. He has written these words in 1918 which is after the Soviet triumphed. Therefore there is the possibility that he shaped in opinion on the basis of the shape the facts around him too. This limits the validity of the source as if the Soviet hadn't of triumphed, then one may infer that Price's words in this pamphlet may have been slightly different. He's acting like he knew they were going to triumph, even before they did, this fails to take into account the Petrograd's Soviet's own problems such as their mutining military in May 1917. Consequently, this was written 'for' the 'Marxist British Socialist Party'; therefore the source is likely to have been written with Marxist ideology in mind. However, even though Price wrote this in 1918, so not during the present struggles of Dual Authority in March to May 1917, as the provenance suggests he was living in Russia in 1917. Therefore he was able to see first hand the problems of having Dual Authority in Russia which a historian may find more valid as opposed to someone who wasn't living in Russia at the time. Moreover, Price's credibility is increased when he states that the 'great peasant-proletarian-soldier man' mas already 'imposing in will upon the timid Provincial Government' as 'early as March 1917'. With Order No1. on March 1st, the Petrograd Soviet gained control over the army; therefore they had already negotiated having power with the Provisional Government and it meant in the future the Petrograd Soviet could use their control over the army to their advantage. Furthermore, the value of this source is increased when Price writes by 'May' 'thousands of Provincial Soviets' felt the need for action. This is supported by the fact that as the war continued, more and more people were getting fed up over 'the ever-increasing cost of living' and the starvation experienced by many.

Overall, it could be argued while Price was a socialist it didn't mean he couldn't give honest views. A historian should take his views seriously as he highlights the problems of dual authority from the ground where people were starving and were struggling with inflation (increasing cost of living). This is a problem caused by dual authority as if the Petrograd Soviet were in power solely, then based on their promises these problems could be minimised. However, the Prov Gov wanted the continuation of war, which meant the continuation of the problems.

This is a Level 5 response

This response demonstrates a very good understanding of all three sources in relation to content, argument, provenance and tone. It also combines these different aspects very effectively to support the evaluation of each source. The response shows a strong awareness of the historical context, using contextual knowledge to assess points relating to both content and provenance. The assessment of each source is balanced and culminates in a substantiated judgement, which demonstrates an impressive command of the source material and the historical context in relation to the question.

Question 3

‘The quality of life for both workers and peasants suffered as a result of Stalin’s economic policies in the 1930s.’

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Mark scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

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Student responses

Response A

Stalin's economic policies of collectivisation in agriculture and industrialisation through the Five Year Plans, completely changed the Soviet economy and had a major impacts on the people. Both workers and peasants suffered due to their respective economic policies, as a hidden return to serfdom. Workers were worked to death, with small increases in wages and living standards. Peasants also suffered due to collectivisation as they lost freedoms and were repressed. However, workers did benefit from incentives and education, while peasants saw a modernisation of the countryside.

The peasantry suffered greatly under collectivisation as they were forced in serfdom and the resentment caused major death. Dekulakisation saw the liquidation of an entire portion of the peasant population and had damaging and lasting effects. It caused millions of deaths for kulaks, while others were made into slaves for the gulag system. It also may be seen as a causal of famine, as peasants killed their livestock and burned their crops to not be identified as kulaks. This led to famines and the collectivisation process of the 1930s represented a recovery of lost output rather than expansion of agricultural production. In the Ukraine, the man-made famine of the Holodomor can be seen as an exasperation of the starvation and death. Furthermore, the peasants lost their political and social freedoms, as party officials and NKVD officers enforced internal passports, which disallowed the peasants from leaving collectives. Due to strong grain requisitioning, Stalin's economic policy caused major famine and death in the countryside. Dekulakisation and constant fears of deportation or silencing from secret police lead to a decline in peasants lives as they died from famine and were repressed.

Alternatively, the peasants may have been seen to benefit from certain aspects of the collectivisation process. Electricity production increased ten fold during the 3 Five Year Plans, which brought electricity and mechanisation to the agricultural sector. There were revolutionary as peasants now could have electric lights and productivity gains from using tractors. This also provided some liberation to some peasants who could join the industrial workforce as less peasants were needed on fields with mechanical tools. Peasants also benefitted from increased education, which was also used to indoctrinate the Communist message, to eradicate illiteracy. Education would provide the foundation for an intelligent and productive communist utopia. Although dekulakisation caused major death, it did not satisfy the peasants who had represented the kulaks and class differences; which were eradicated and all peasants become equal. Although some peasants did benefit from collectivisation, these are not enough to outweigh the death and repression faced by the majority of peasants.

Workers also greatly suffered under Stalinist economic policies as they worked extremely hard but were rarely rewarded. Working days and hours increased, lateness and damaging machinery became criminal offences. These gave examples of how Soviet worker's lives were solely aimed towards production, as their rights and quality of life were neglected. Consumer industries were neglected during the 1930s, and the stagnation or small increase in real

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wages made it so worker's were not fully rewarded for their sacrifices. Housing shortages and cramped living spaces also made disease spread quickly and privacy was non-existent. Women's conditions were made even worse by Stalin's 'Great Retreat', where women were expected to both work in factories and look after children. Furthermore, women were physically and sexually assaulted in the factories, whilst liberties gained in the 1920's were stripped away. Workers were also represented by the NKVD and the Orwellian spy network of informers made no one safe, as many risked being sent to labour camps. This demonstrates that workers, especially women, suffered as their living standards saw small to no increases, whilst they were increasingly repressed.

Workers did benefit from the Five Year Plans due to education and wage differentials. Education provided a mean to eradicate illiteracy and provided workers and their children the opportunity to become literate. The Stakhanovite movement and wage differential did allow skilled workers, who had benefitted from education and training, to move up the Soviet industrial ladder. Therefore, some were able to improve their living standards through improved wages and housing.

To conclude, both workers and peasants suffered greatly under the economic policies of Stalin as collectivisation caused millions of deaths and the dislocation of entire section of the peasantry. The Five Year Plans made workers increase their workload, while lacking rewards and incentive for the normal person. Repression and the NKVD played major roles in worsening the quality of life for workers and peasants as they were always fearful of death. Education and modernisation of the Soviet economy and society can be seen as benefits of the economic policies, but these are not enough to outweigh the decay on living standards from famine in the countryside and poor housing in towns and cities. Therefore, economic policies worsened the lives of workers and peasants during 1930s.

This is a Level 5 response

The response demonstrates a very good understanding of the question throughout, building a balanced assessment which culminates in a substantiated judgement. The essay is well-organised and effectively delivered, and is supported by a very good range and depth of contextual evidence. The conceptual understanding demonstrated is nuanced and sophisticated, for example demonstrating an awareness of different 'classes' of peasants, the specific experiences of Soviet women in industry, and the more positive experience of Stakhanovite workers.

Question 4

'When Stalin died in 1953, the Soviet Union was in a very strong international position.'

Assess the validity of this view.

[25 marks]

Mark scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Student responses

Response A

When Stalin died in 1953, although the Soviet Union (SU) was strong in terms of military advances and economy potentially making the SU a superpower, it was not so much in a strong position in terms of foreign alliances, which was a crucial factor in international aspects as foreign nations with great power had a lot of influence.

Once Stalin died, there had never been any resolution of the tensions between the big three in the grand alliance. The USSR, GB and USA, despite all being major powers and commonly defeating Germany, came to many disagreements. In 1943, when it became clear the war would be won, the big three began meeting at conferences. This is when tensions began. At Tehran 1943, they agreed to not make separate peace with Hitler, despite GB and USA not wanting this agreement. When Churchill and Stalin met in 1944 in Moscow, they had disagreed on Poland's future, and this similarly happened the following year at Yalta when the big three discussed Germany and Poland's future. Finally at Potsdam, no final peace agreement was made, and this was the beginning of the build up of tensions. Following from this, after the war: it was clear GB and USA opposed the SU's expansion of communism, and Stalin saw this as very hostile. Actions such as Churchill's iron curtain speech which expressed the fear of division within Europe over Soviet establishment, and the Truman Doctrine of USA issuing containment of communism built up tensions, causing the USSR to stray further from these powerful international nations, weakening the SU's international position. Matters worsened to the point that Stalin imposed the Berlin blockade to cut off road and rail connections from Berlin and the West, followed by the Berlin airlift where aid was flown into the city. After 316 days Stalin lifted the blockade, however relationships between the big three had reached an all time low, with the possibility of the cold war, and this weakened relationship was never resolved before Stalin died, hence why the SU can be argued to not be in a very strong position internationally.

In terms of military concerns, there is potential to argue that the SU was in fact in a strong international position after Stalin's death. This is because Beria's development and testing of the SU's first atomic bomb was successful, giving the SU an advantage as owning nuclear weapons greatly boosted its position in relation to international nations. As well as that, the armed forces of the USSR had reached around 2.7 million, meaning it was a sturdy and powerful force to defend the country. With the USSR being so geographically superior in comparison to other nations, and having a buffer zone of satellite states neighbouring the USSR to protect it from future invasion from the west, imposing the soviet bloc, the USSR's military status was extremely strong making it fair to argue that the SU was in a strong international position.

Before Stalin died, the last attempt to reform the Russian economy was Gosplan's 4th 5 year plan. This was successful due to the fact some targets were met or exceeded, such as rebuilding consumer goods production and transport systems, however, there's the potential to argue that by the time Stalin died, the economy was still in ruins. This is supported by the

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fact that rebooting agriculture was a slow and difficult process, due to the fact mass bombings destroyed land, only 40% of collective farms were still around, and due to the fact 20 million civilians died in the war, there was a lot less workers on the land. Also, in 1946 it was a dry year, causing a poor harvest and even famine in some areas like Ukraine. Stalin's purges and dekulakisation had reduced the amount of skilled workers, so much so his successors felt they needed some type of decree to win over farmers again once he died. For these reasons, the Russian economy was not fixed by Stalin's death, which is why the SU wasn't in a very strong international position as it still had a weak financial state.

To conclude, although by Stalin's death in 1953 the SU had vast military power due to war releasing its capability of becoming a rapid industrial war machine, the SU's economy and relations with other nations who had strong international positions had not been solved by 1953, hence why the SU was not in a strong international position.

This is a Level 3 response

The first main paragraph on the final years of the Second World War is rather narrative in style and not well linked to the focus of the question – this use of contextual knowledge lacks precision. The paragraph on the nuclear bomb, military expansion and satellite states is more effectively focused on the situation at the time of Stalin's death. However, the paragraph on the economy lacks focus on the question until the very last sentence. This is not analytical in style. Overall, the response demonstrates an understanding of the question and related context, but lack focus and precision.

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