



AS LEVEL HISTORY

7041/2N Revolution and dictatorship: Russia and the Soviet Union, 1917 –
1929
Report on the Examination

7041/2N
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Question 01

The topic of Stalin's rise to power was one which students were generally knowledgeable about. Overall, most students were more comfortable applying their own contextual knowledge to Source A rather than to Source B. This was the result of students having greater familiarity and confidence with both the content and the provenance of Source A.

The vast majority were able to provide some meaningful comment on Trotsky as the author of Source A. In Level 3, students most often commented that Trotsky was a key player in the struggle for power and his observations from 1924 are therefore very valuable to an historian. At a lower level, students were limited to providing very generic statements such as that Trotsky was a rival of Stalin's and was therefore 'biased'. These comments were generalist and unconvincing. Stronger responses were able to identify Trotsky's positive comments on Stalin, but also his rather bitter tone. At the higher levels, there were also some perceptive comments about Trotsky benefitting from hindsight and giving the impression that he could foresee the Stalinist dictatorship in 1924, which led to some students questioning how valuable this source was.

In relation to the content of Source A, students most frequently focused on Stalin building up a powerbase within the Party and linked this to Trotsky's comments on Stalin speaking 'their language' and 'organising around himself all the shifty characters in the party'. At the higher levels, students also picked up on the references to the Nepmen and kulaks and linked this to Stalin's support for the NEP in 1924. This linking of the content and the provenance of the source was a feature of more effective responses. A significant number of responses dealt with content and provenance in separate paragraphs, which was to the detriment of any evaluation and judgement as to the overall value of the source.

In relation to Source B, students were not expected to be familiar with the name of the author, but were expected to recognise the name of Bukharin as a close friend of the author. The main challenge of this source was the need for students to make an inference to link the source content to the question. Stronger responses were able to do this effectively by pointing out that the source reveals the divisions and weaknesses of Stalin's opponents, which contributed to his ultimate victory. Average to weaker students struggled to make that inference, and a number confused the 'faction' referred to in the source with the United opposition of 1927 between Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotsky. This misconception limited the overall mark achieved by some students for this question.

Question 02

This was comfortably the more popular of the two essay questions, which was not surprising given that the causes of the October/November Revolution is such a central topic in the specification. Most students engaged very well with this question and were able to provide a range of factors in response, which usually covered the weaknesses of the Provisional Government and the role of Lenin. Additional factors, which were often included, were the impact of the First World War and the role of Trotsky.

At the lower end, responses – whilst relevant – tended to be rather limited or generalised in approach. There may have been some comment about the weaknesses of the Provisional Government but this may not have extended much beyond the system of 'Dual Power' which arose. Likewise, in discussing the impact of the First World War, weaker responses tended to include general statements about economic shortages and defeats without much specific detail related to 1917 precisely. For example, the Russian defeats at the Masurian Lakes and Tannenberg were mentioned numerous times despite happening three years before the downfall of the Provisional Government.

Stronger responses provided much more precise factual content related to the events of 1917 and the collapse of the Provisional Government in October/November. These specific details often included the delaying of elections and of land redistribution, the disastrous June Offensive, the Kornilov Affair and Kerensky's ineffective actions in September/October to try to curtail the rising influence of the Bolsheviks. In relation to the role of Lenin, the better responses went beyond references to the April Theses and provided some effective details on Lenin's significance in returning to Petrograd in October to persuade the Bolshevik Central Committee to organise an immediate revolution.

For those students achieving Level 4 or Level 5, the differentiating factor between the two levels was most often the depth and substantiation of judgement provided. This most obviously happens in conclusion, but many Level 5 answers built towards the overall judgement through the essay, signposting the overall conclusion at various points through the main paragraphs. Level 4 answers tended to leave overall judgement merely to the conclusion, and may have only provided two or three sentences to explain this. Alternatively, some level 4 conclusions were more of a summary of what had already been written rather than adding clear overall judgement.

Question 03

Whilst not being as popular as 02, there were some very good answers to this question, which is also on a key topic within the specification. Stronger responses most often balanced the factor of the Kronstadt Rising with the economic impact of the Civil War and the significance of peasant revolts, not least in the Tambov region. There was a lot of effective understanding and explanation of the significance of the Kronstadt sailors within the broader context of the revolutionary period, and plenty of references to Lenin's famous quote about the rising as the 'flash that lit up reality'. Responses in Levels 4 and 5 were analytical in style, often providing effective evaluation as to the relative significance of the factors discussed. Most commonly, this resulted in conclusions which argued that whilst the Kronstadt Rising was clearly significant, it was itself the result of frustration with the wider economic and political problems which were engulfing the Communist regime by March 1921.

Weaker responses to this question had much less secure factual knowledge. Several weaker students muddled the Kronstadt Rising with the Tambov Revolt or with the July Days of 1917. Other students, who were struggling for relevant contextual knowledge to deploy, ended up writing about the impact of the NEP from March 1921 onwards which was not effectively linked to the focus of the question. It was possible to make this content relevant, as some more able students did, through arguing that the economic benefits of the NEP after March 1921 could be considered evidence that economic motivations were Lenin's most pressing priority in introducing the policy. Weaker students were not able to establish that connection to the question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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