



History

Paper 1H (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 01 Student 1

Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0 05/01/16

Specimen Answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

Paper 1H (AS): Specimen question paper

01 With reference to these extracts and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two extracts provides the more convincing interpretation of the reforms of Alexander II between 1855 and 1881?

[25 marks]

Student response

Both extracts comment on the reforms conducted by Alexander II and the success and impact they had on Russia. Extract A however, takes on a more positive view in which it argues that the reforms pushed Russia into the west and Alexander gained the title as one of the greatest reformers in history. The source states that the emancipation was one of the main successful reforms, that westernized Russia, Emancipation, carried out in 1861, freed 23 million slaves, previously bound to the land, and allowed them to travel and participate in enterprise, gaining ultimately independence. To corroborate this argument put forward, economically, emancipation allowed Russia to transform and modernize, subsequently causing an industrial revolution in the 1890's. This was due to the fact that the labor force significantly increased, as ex-serfs were able to partake in business, moving around Russia and diversifying, leading to internal money based markets to now develop, similar to the west that was already prospering and had experienced an industrial revolution. Moreover, emancipation, caused the economy to develop and prosper, therefore resulting in more internal investment from France an example being the trans Siberian railway. This significantly westernized the country and brought them into the modern world, showing Alexander to be a great reformer as he developed Russia and increased its economy and subsequently its position on the world stage. Moreover, emancipation caused the birth of the Kulaks, which were a group of entrepreneurial serfs who bought land from less prosperous serfs and created higher yields, therefore increasing the exports of the country, further causing the economy to prosper. Further corroborating this argument, politically Alexander was a great reformer as he allowed for autocracy to remain as the serfs were free from being bound to the land therefore gaining support and retaining autocracy, avoiding revolution or civil unrest. Due to the ability of worker to move into urban areas and industrialize, transport networks were also established therefore increasing communications across the empire, subsequently developing the country. Extract A, also suggests that emancipation was not the only successful reform but the judicial reforms and military reforms were also successful and contributed to the title of the great reformer that Alexander achieved. To corroborate this argument it can be noted that the military was in fact significantly reformed and improved as a result. The reforms included conscription for all classes over the age of 20 the length of service being reduced from 25 years to 15 years and service seven years in the army and nine as a result of the military colonies were abandoned Beca better medical care and modern weaponry were also introduced. As a result the military significantly improved and this westernized Russia and allow them to catch up with the manpower is resulting in victories in the Turkish war and many others. Moreover the judicial system was also reformed successfully. Summer forms here included a new legal system in 1864 where local hot to set up and district courts and the Senate where stab list for major offenses. Principle of

equality before the law was established and judges were given better training and pay freedom of the press is extended to legal reporting and criminal cases were heard before barristers with the trial presented in front of a jury. All reforms conducted by Alexander the second improve the country significantly and allowed it to catch up with the modern world creating a fairer, more advanced, well structured society, which no longer followed old fashioned ways but instead caught up with the west and modernized to allow Russia to develop and prosper.

On the other hand however the argument presented fails to comment on the unsuccessfulness of some of the reforms conducted by Alexander the second. One example of this, is the fact that emancipation could be argued to, instead of westernizing and modernizing the country, in fact stagnated the economy and caused more problems than it solved. This is due to the fact that economically, it caused more problems as peasants were unable to leave the mir and were crippled by redemption payments which entailed paying a set amount over 25 years with the 6% interest rate, causing them to be economically worse off. The tsar is also not seen as a great reformer to the people of Russia at the time as there was much resentment towards him, leading to civil unrest causing the years of the red Cockerell where there was 647 rights in four months destabilizing the country, rather than modernizing it and stagnating the Russian economy for the next 30 years. Moreover, the nobility suffered rather than benefited from emancipation as the redemption tax given was not enough to compensate for the loss of the workers, and therefore many landowners faced serious bankruptcy some becoming bankrupt within 20 years therefore very little investment was made in Russia meaning what the modernisation of the economy was not possible. To further challenge the argument presented, although Alexander initially did carry out a process of success reforms after the assassination attempt in 1866, he began a reactionary policy in which he carried out the process of counter reforms sending the country backwards rather than in the direction of the west. Examples of this, is the fact that control of the education system was given to the church and the zemstva lost all control of schools. As a result of this maths Latin and Greek were encouraged, whilst all the critical subjects like history and English were banned in order to suppress the public and stop modernisation and change. Censorship was also tightened: all the student organizations were monitored, teacher training colleges were set up to increase control on behalf of the tsar and there was extreme reluctance to organize lectures in education for women. The third section also gained more powers and were able to persecute ethnic minority as well as suppress those who rejected the idea of autocracy. This challenges the argument presented, as the fact that Alexander allowed members of the government such as Tolstoy and Shuvalov to implement these counter reforms, meant the country did not in fact modernize but instead went backwards, causing the economy to decline and the social structure to be crippled. The fact that Alexander could not stick to his reforms and carry them out successfully challenges the view presented that he was in fact a great reformer and suggest instead, that he did not go far enough and panicked as soon as opposition rose, suggesting he was a weak leader and therefore not one of the greatest reformers of all time.

Extract B takes on the opposing view, instead suggest that the reforms were not in pursuit to westernize Russia but as a response to the Crimean war - more as a reactionary reform rather than a voluntary one. Looking at the argument suggested, it is true that after Russia was defeated in the Crimean war they were humiliated and seen as a weak on the world stage. Russia, for the first time had been identified as outdated and behind compared with the modernizing western countries. A serf conscripted army with old-fashioned weapons and slow, outdated tactics did not stand up to the modern west and therefore Alexander was forced to reform in order to retain power to make the country great again. It is true that the army, in comparison to Europe, was weak due to the fact it was serf conscripted and therefore no motivation or modern tactics were being used. The reforms

targeted at the military were therefore a result of the Crimean War due to the fact that serious adjustments were made such as all were conscripted rather than only serfs and the length of service was decreased significantly from 25 years to 16 years. In the years following the reforms, the army was tested in order to try and prove itself and in fact the reforms were not actually successful due to a slow, difficult victory Turkish war in 1905 and defeat in 1914 in World War I. The military defeat on home soil, during the Crimean War, caused a reactionary period in which Alexander did all in his power to try and retain Russia's autocratic dominance. This further supports the argument put forward that the reforms had no plan and were administered in a clumsy piecemeal fashion due to the fact that they were put in place as a desperate measure when it was found that Russia were forced to modernize if they wanted to retain power. To corroborate the argument further the fact that the reforms satisfied no one can be supported by the reality of the emancipation. 2-3 million serfs who were freed was in fact not able to leave the Mir as they were not awarded with internal passports and were subsequently left suffering in poverty resenting the tsar and not industrializing due to them being unable partake in enterprise but owning no land to continue farming, therefore stagnating the economy. No one was satisfied in the long term either, due to the fact that many reform policies were in fact retracted and therefore more opposition groups were created rather than the people of Russia being in support for the Tsar. In terms of people involved with education, ethnic minorities, peasants and landowners, they were not satisfied by the end of the reforms due to the fact that they have been further oppression shown as the opportunity for change had been shown and experienced by many but then been taken away. Ethnic minorities had been stripped of their rights and freedom that they previously possessed under the reign of Alexander 11: an example being the Finnish population, who had previously been allowed a diet, but had this taken away after the Polish revolt in 1863. Moreover, females in education and many others were oppressed as they were no longer able to study critical subject and monitored strictly with an increase in censorship. Overall the argument to suggest that no one is satisfied can be supported by the fact that all reforms were eventually retracted showing just how messy and reactionary Alexander was rather than the great reformer he is portrayed to be.

The argument however can be challenged due to the fact that a cautious and reluctant reformer, as Alexander is portrayed would not emancipate the serfs due to the commitment and boldness it required. Emancipating the serfs, meant that 23 million peasants were free, going against the social structure that been in place for years previously, that had held autocracy up and kept it in place. The consequences and social change were huge and the fact the tsar still emancipated them knowing what was to come suggests he was in fact a great reformer with plans to modernize rather than a reactionist. As soon as the serfs were emancipated, transport links had to be improved banks had to be put in place for people who would never before earned money, jobs had to be created trade links had to be made stronger and industrialisation had to occur in order to support the growing labor force created. If Alexander had not been a great reformer and instead being cautious, then such activity would not have happened as such change would not have been possible therefore counteracting the argument instead suggesting he was a great reformer with plans to westernize Russia. Moreover, the argument can be challenged as it suggests that no one was satisfied with the reforms put in place by Alexander 11, when in fact some members of society did benefit. Many nobles were satisfied with the increase in land they received and redemption payments given due to the emancipation. Moreover kulaks also prospered in this new Russian society, being able to buy land of less prosperous present therefore creating surplus grain allowing them to own more land, improving farming procedures, and therefore creating more income due to an increase in exports. In addition, members of the church and autocratic followers including the sores assistance and Alexander's tutor were satisfied with the regime as they were able to take control of Russia and control it in autocratic old-fashioned manner by the end of the reforms conducted by Alexander the second. In the time where judicial reforms a

military forms were put in place, many benefited from experiencing fair trials and having better, safer and more beneficial experiences in the military. On the whole serfs also benefited and in the long term it was a humanitarian necessity that they were freed.

In conclusion I would argue that extract B does give an insight on how some of Alexander reforms went in fact unsuccessful and suggests many were reactionary rather than in a plea to westernize and with the view of being a genially great, fair and successful reformer. Extract B also outlines the motives behind the reforms (Crimean war). It does successfully comment on the change between reforms and counter reforms and recognizes the fact that autocracy still remains a predominant feature of Russian society. However, overall I would agree with extract A, which puts forward the idea that Alexander was a great reformer. This is due to the fact it recognizes the main successes of his reforms e.g. the Emancipation military reforms and judicial reforms and outlines the fact that all of these push Russia into modernizing and westernizing. It recognizes the fact that reforms were on the whole successful and necessary and allowed prosperity as a country for some time however also comments on the idea that the reforms although six-foot successful in the short term could cause major problems for Russians the side in the long trial which is found to be true when Alexander the third comes into power lead into the revolution and crumble of autocracy and Russia as an autocratic power in 1917.

Commentary – Level 4

Importantly, the answer clearly identifies how the interpretations contrast and clearly identifies how the interpretations are supported and developed. Additionally, use of knowledge of context is extensive and generally accurate, although the answer is lengthier than what might be expected in exam conditions. The major weaknesses of the answer are those of overstatement and exaggeration. In seeking to agree, for example, with Extract A, the assessment is subsequently contradicted by the section which deals with the limitations of the interpretation. It is overstated to claim that Russia was a 'fairer, more advanced and well structured society'. The answer then needs to be more nuanced, confirming where the interpretation can be confirmed but not overstating this.

Given the accurate representation of the interpretations and extensive knowledge of context, the answer has strengths to be placed at the bottom of Level 4.