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History

Paper 1H (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 02 Student 1

Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.1 08/09/15

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## **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**

#### **02 'Tsarist authority remained strong in Russia between 1881 and 1904.'**

**Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.**

(25 marks)

#### **Student Response**

One may suggest that tsarist authority remained strong between 1881 and 1904, largely due to the Temporary Laws of 1881 that gave tsarist officials far reaching powers in the Empire; the power to detain individuals without trial and to ban public gatherings. These were enforced throughout 1881 to 1905. It could be suggested that these laws were fundamental in lessening public influence throughout the period, thus strengthening tsarist authority throughout 1881 to 1904. One may suggest that the strengthening of tsarist authority in this manner was further enhanced by the appointment of the new post of Land Captain in 1889, selected from amongst the nobility to control the peasants' affairs. One may suggest, on account of the peasantry making up the vast majority of the Russian population at the time, this served to demonstrate the strength of tsarist authority between 1881 and 1904 by further weakening public influence and the measure demonstrating the extent of the strength of tsarist authority that existed through being capable of introducing these measures relatively unchallenged.

The censorship policies that were imposed and the policy of Russification further served to demonstrate the strength of tsarist authority in the same manner, imposing severe policies that greatly affected public life and were maintained to a great extent throughout the period. Russification policies not only imposed great alterations to Russians, but imposed Russian language, religion and culture on non-Russians. One may suggest that this was most clearly demonstrated through the anti-semitic measures such as the May Laws of 1882, which restricted Jewish access to higher education (universities lost the right to self-govern in 1884), banned Jewish settlements in rural areas and denied Jewish voting rights in zemstvo elections. Though a sense of great tsarist authority was felt through these limitations, one may suggest that authority was most clearly demonstrated by the pogroms that occurred throughout the period and the State's hesitation to get involved in dispersing the attacks, leading to two million Jews leaving Russia between 1881 and 1914. This suggests that whilst there was a clear suggestion of tsarist authority between 1881 and 1904, this authority was felt so strongly by a large proportion of the population that they sought drastic measures to escape the measures that it was capable of imposing.

One may also suggest that tsarist authority was further demonstrated by the extent to which the controversial economic changes imposed on public life, namely state capitalism and the policies of Vyshnegradsky and Witte. Vyshnegradsky introduced measures that cut public spending, increased import duties and increased taxes on the peasantry. Witte aimed to promote industrialisation as essential for political and strategic reasons, believing industrial might determined military power and would improve Russia's transport. He retained high import duties, implemented a State-sponsored railway, created over a hundred technical schools and contributed to urbanisation amongst other policies. This led to the much needed industrialisation being driven by the State and the

consequential growth of a capitalist class with a vested interest in the survival of tsarism. Meanwhile, the hands that would power the industrialisation were subjected to poor working and housing conditions, a surge of urban migration, little entitlement to challenge due to infringed political rights, largely no voting rights, the threat of arrest without trial and strict censorship which prevented spreading awareness. One may therefore suggest tsarist authority remained strong in Russia between 1881 and 1904.

However, one may suggest that the tsarist authority was not entirely stable namely due to the development of opposition in the time period. This is largely shown in the emergence of opposition groups such as the Socialist Revolutionary Party in 1902, the Bolshevik-Menshevik split of 1903 and the Union of Liberation in 1904, despite the political infringement and increase in State control. One may suggest as a result that these infringements were insufficient and the strength of tsarist authority in Russia was limited. One may also infer a sense of weakness in the tsarist autocracy in controlling the emergence of the opposition groups through the political uprising, Bloody Sunday in 1905. One may suggest from this event that tsarist autocracy was limited in its strength in 1881 to 1904 through the instability that materialised in this event; one may suggest that the protest was a demonstration of public discontent that had emerged throughout the previous years, thus suggesting that the tsarist authority was insufficiently strong to maintain public support. One may suggest that, whilst tsarist autocracy was sufficiently strong to impose measures by force, the strength was undermined by the loss of the limited public support for the regime and, as such, tsarist authority did not retain maximum potential strength in the period. It may also be suggested that tsarist authority did not remain strong in Russia on account of the large military defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905. This suggested a deficit in military organisation. In addition, the sense of defeat further weakened public support and internal weaknesses in the system. One may therefore suggest that the strength of tsarist authority was not fully retained during 1881 to 1904.

Whilst one may identify weaknesses in tsarist authority in this period, one may ultimately suggest that these weaknesses were overcome as the retained strength was sufficient to do so. It may be suggested that this was as a result of there being no detrimental weaknesses posed to the 'pillars of tsarism' on which tsarist strength was dependent. At the end of the period, the strength of the secret police was sufficient to largely defend censorship and survey public opinion; the bureaucracy remained largely loyal; the nobility also, through being appointed to positions such as Land Captain and through development in industry which gave them a vested interest in tsarism's survival and the Russian Orthodox Church still played a large part in everyday Russian life. The authority of tsarism, though the cause of social discontent particularly among the lower classes, may be suggested to have retained strength in 1881 to 1904 as a whole on account of the harsh policies which were imposed, in which the pillars of tsarism were protected, the nobility developed a vested interest and the public's ability to publicise discontent was largely reduced. One may suggest that, as such, tsarist authority remained largely strong between 1881 and 1904.

#### **Commentary – Level 4**

This is a good AS answer. It attempts to provide a relevant and balanced response, seeking to analyse ways in which authority was strong or weak. Supporting information is largely appropriate, although the assessment of economic change is unconvincing. It does not, however, seek to define what was meant was 'authority' nor, fully, how this changed over the period. It has the qualities of a Level 4 response.