



History

Paper 2N (AS) Additional Specimen Question
Paper

Question 02 Student 3

Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0 18/03/16

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 2N (AS): Additional Specimen question paper

02 'The fall of the Provisional Government in October 1917 was entirely due to its own failings.'

Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

[25 marks]

Student response

The provisional government came about after the February revolution and the tsars abdication. This was a particularly challenging position to take up as the tsar had left Russia and there were many political figures who were keen on overthrowing the provisional government. On the other hand it did fail to fulfil promises or take complete control and thus it failed. To say its downfall was entirely its own fault is quite an exaggerated statement.

When the provisional government was set up it was weak, it failed to control the soviets which popped up all over Russia which in the end would be their downfall. One of the key issues they failed to resolve with power was dual authority with the Petrograd Soviet. The soviet was seen in some way to control the actions of the government, for example in order number one which stated that military policies were allowed to be controlled by the government only when did not contradict orders and decrees of the soviet. The incapability of the provisional government to clamp down on these soviets as well as failing to stop the forming of national minority governments meant they had restricted power. The power seized of them by the soviets made them stronger and more capable of uprising against the provisional government which can lead to the mindset that the provisional government were to blame for their own downfall.

Secondly the provisional government failed to deal with issues associated with the revolution. For example the government didn't halt the war effort continuing in a failing battle against Germany. This was one of the main issues with the tsars reign and the fact it was continuing made the public furious losing the governments support which would be won over by groups such as Bolshevik or by the soviets, strengthening them and making the fall of the provisional government an even easier task.

They also lost support by not dealing with food shortages or the distribution of land, this attribute also lead to the diminishing provisional government support and finally their overall downfall, leading us to believe they are to blame for their own demise.

The government itself was one of the professionals and politicians, not representatives of the working class who this revolution was about. This made them unpopular as they were not an elected government who would share the thoughts of the revolutionaries. For example the provisional government didn't give the land the peasants demanded through the revolution as this would inflict upon their own privileges as an upper class government. This overall attitude and the association of anti-revolutionary ideas spread hatred through the people who would go on to overthrow them, if it wasn't for the set up made by the government it could be said the revolution wouldn't have occurred. Examples of where we see the weakness in the provisional government is when Kornilov claimed to take Petrograd and the government was incapable of stopping him as they had little support behind

them whereas the Petrograd soviet stepped in as the “defenders of Petrograd”. From this we see the lack of popularity and strength from their own actions seeping through.

On the other hand the provisional government had come into power of a nation stricken by poverty and left completely bankrupt by the tsar. From this they were unable to solve problems of poverty as quick as people had expected them to, they wouldn't afford to import anymore and as much as land could have been given much of it was of poor growing quality which in a time of failure would be a futile effort. As much as any party in power could have attempted to deal with their issue the issue there was no quick route to solving the problem bar very short term which would leave the nation in an even more desperate situation. The provisional government was unable at this time to deal with the ideals of the revolution and its fair to say no one else in power would be able to either due to Russia's financial state and its unfair to state that the failures due to specifically their failings as they were problems that were there before they took control.

The provisional government found they were not in a position to halt the war. As much as the army was completely failing and fighting battles they would inevitably fail the war brought in financial benefits for the government. The war gave Russia war credits from the allies for their involvement in attacking Germany. If Russia stopped fighting this financial support, which the Tsar had become dependent on, would be seized. This would leave Russia's economy in either further ruin and this war credits were needed as a base for the provisional government to work of. As much as this lost support the government would destroy Russia's finances which would also lose support. In this situation any party or government would become disliked which could go on to their down fall and this we can argue that the failings of the provisional government were not entirely its fault.

A main reason for the fall of the provisional government was other parties who promised the Russian people a bright future. It was easy to do as much as it was not the governments fault Russia was stricken with poverty and through this people wanted better. Lenins return was something the government couldn't combat as the April theses gave people a party to fight behind for a 'true revolution'. The Bolsheviks exploited Russia's position using slogans 'Peace, Bread and land' aspects they promised to deal with, something the provisional government couldn't because of the financial crisis put onto them. The provisional government tried to shut down the Prada and stop the Bolsheviks and other parties from spreading further word but it was impossible to do as there were too many and a large proportion of the population listened in a hope that these other parties would solve their problems. These parties would exist whoever was in charge as whoever took over would be unable to fulfil the desires of the revolution and therefore as a result this shift in support would always occur, something that cannot be put to the blame of the provisional governments actions.

To conclude the provisional government failed to install power and take complete control of Russia, it didn't deal with soviets and couldn't solve the three main issues; Peace, Bread and land. However it should be understood that any party or government in this position would feel that they too could not solve these problems nor clamp down on a true authority when there is no real legitimacy behind them. Parties would always try to overthrow these powers and people would support them as Russia was a disgrace and people wanted a rapid change, what they realised is that no power could, therefore I disagree that the fall of the provisional government was due to their own failings but more the position they had to take up was one that would inevitably collapse.

Commentary – Level 4

The answer is balanced and increasingly effective, clearly challenging the proposition by carefully

arguing why some policies, especially the continuing of the war, were not just a matter of 'failing'. Generally, the arguments against the proposition are more effective than those in support of it, which tend, at times, to be partial, not fully developed and assertive in places. The relationship between the Government and the Soviets lacks precise explanation and references to 'the people' need to be more cautious. Overall, this is a Level 4 answer.