



History

Paper 1H (A-level) Specimen Question Paper

Question 03 Student 1

Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.1 12/08/15

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 (A-level): Specimen question paper

03 'The Bolshevik state under Lenin, between 1918 and 1924, was just as ruthless as the Communist state under Stalin, between 1918 and 1941.'

Assess the validity of this view.

(25 marks)

Student Response

The Bolshevik state under Lenin was not as ruthless as the Communist state under Stalin because of the intentions behind the actions each leader committed. Lenin, during his rule, created repressive policies such as the 1921 Ban on Factions and the creation of the secret police, the Cheka. However, Stalin furthered these policies and groups to become an elite way of him controlling the population and fulfilling his paranoid need to eliminate his 'enemies'.

In 1917, Lenin created a group of secret police called the Cheka in order to remove the threats that people posed within Russia. However, this could be seen as less ruthless than Stalin's NKVD as the Cheka dealt with situations that were occurring at local level and were 'allowing' the country, or the wealthier class within the country, to feel safe from the anti-revolutionary groups that had survived the revolution and sought to bring back tsarism. Though Lenin did authorise purges of those he saw were a threat, he did not appear to demonstrate the same ruthless and paranoid attitude of Stalin who, using the NKVD, gave quotas to them for executions, exiles and interrogations of the general populace. This led to a higher death rate within Stalin's Communist country than Lenin's Bolshevik one.

However, Lenin did embark on the Red Terror during the Civil War in which a large amount of people were terrorised and purged as they were seen as threats to the state. Though it could be argued that the Red Terror merely demonstrated Lenin's pragmatic nature as it was a necessary regime to keep the country from becoming unstable and falling into a period of chaos. This demonstrates that Lenin was a capable leader but reduces the idea that he was intentionally ruthless as it was necessary for the country to be under this strict control. On the other hand, Stalin continued his terror throughout his control of the state, starting at the beginning of the 1930s with the period of dekulakisation and grain requisitioning that led to famine in the early 1930s, showing that he was a much more ruthless leader.

Lenin's rule was, however, just as ruthless as Stalin's in his requisitioning of the media to control the message to the people. Lenin closed down any non-Bolshevik newspapers and ensured that the message to the people went against his political and class enemies, aiming to reduce the impact of any revolt against him that they might ensue upon. In this respect, he was much the same as Stalin, though Stalin sought to create quotas and terrorise the country into submission, he attempted to use the media to do this. He embarked upon the Great Retreat in which he bombarded the country with new education rules and a censorship

on the arts back to a period of time that was transferable to one hundred years before. Stalin also took advantage of Lenin's Ban on Factions during his rule to ensure that anyone that spoke out against him could and would be punished by his NKVD. These were usually done by Stalin as Show Trials that allowed the populace to see that anyone could be caught up in the Great Terror of Stalin's time. This could be seen as his repression on the media as it indicates any opposition was bad and had to be removed.

In conclusion, Lenin was not as ruthless as Stalin was during his rule as he didn't appear to have the same intentions of ruthlessness that Stalin had in his rule. This is because, although Lenin embarked first on the Red Terror, its casualties were less than that of the Great Terror in the 1930s and appear to have more of a reason than Stalin's casualties did, as Lenin needed to keep control of the country while Stalin had control of his country and just sought to eradicate any possible resistance, claiming that members of the public were anti-Leninists and should be purged and denounced by their close friends and family. Further still, the quotas that Stalin created for the populace meant that a lot of managers lied about their output that led to a lack of produce staying within Russia. Stalin wanted to create a better world image for Russia and so increased their exportation, even when the country couldn't cope with it. Therefore, Lenin's ruthlessness could be seen as pragmatic and Stalin appears to have merely added to the foundations that Lenin set, thereby making Stalin appear to be more ruthless than Lenin in his rule.

Commentary – Level 3

This has the potential for an excellent response but lacks range and development. It has a clear central argument seeking to show how Lenin and Stalin differed, but also how Stalin used precedents established by Lenin. It lacks, however, sufficient range to meet the criteria for Level 4, despite the clear analysis and judgement advanced.