



History 7042
Additional Specimen Question Paper 2H (A-level)
Question 03 Student 1
Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0

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 2H (A-level): Additional specimen question paper

03 How successful was the Terror in destroying counter-revolution in the years 1792–1795?

[25 marks]

Student response

The Terror which was proclaimed in France in September 1793 was a form of government by fear, designed to rid France of both its external and internal enemies. Although enemy armies were often described as bands of 'counter-revolutionaries', the term is more usually applied to the 'enemies within' and the Terror was largely successful in responding to these. These counter-revolutionaries were the French men and women who, for differing reasons, took a stand against revolutionary change, often opposing the weakening of the monarchy and its destruction in September 1792 or the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, which bound the Church to the State, from July 1790. Some, so-called counter-revolutionaries were not, in fact, against the revolution at all, but opposed the highly-centralised revolutionary government established by the Jacobins in the course of 1793. Others who were so branded were simply unfortunate. Anyone might be called counter-revolutionary for some petty crime or for falling foul of someone in authority.

The advent of the government of the Terror was sparked, at least in part, by the outbreak of various counter-revolutionary revolts in the course of 1793 and in every case, the Terror proved successful in crushing those risings. The most serious was a rising in the Vendée which began in March 1793 and brought together various royalist and Catholic Chouan rebellions in a large-scale protest against demands for a levy of 300,000 men to fight the external war effort. From massacres of local officials, juring priests and National Guardsmen, the rising developed into full-scale warfare with troops under the leadership of local nobles. However, the establishment of a number of 'instruments of Terror' during 1793 – representatives on mission, watch committees, a Revolutionary Tribunal, a Committee of General Security and another of Public Safety, gave the Jacobin-led revolutionary government sufficient power to take prompt and effective action to quell revolt. An army of 100,000 was sent to Nantes in October and by December 1793, the core of the Vendéean army had been destroyed. Not only was the revolt crushed, the Terror permitted exemplary vengeance to be taken. Under the representative on mission, Carrier, nearly 8,000 were guillotined and a further 2,000 drowned in the 'noyades' on the River Loire between November 1793 and January 1794.

The Terror was equally effective in destroying the federalist revolt which occurred in reaction to the expulsion, in June 1793, of the Girondins, moderate revolutionaries who had represented the provinces in opposition to the sans-culottes-controlled Jacobins in the National Convention. There were troubles in 60 of the 83 French départements as Jacobin officials were expelled, imprisoned or murdered. Such federalist troubles merged with some more truly counter-revolutionary activity, as in Toulon where royalists appealed for help from France's Anglo-Spanish enemies and proclaimed Louis XVII as King. These revolts were largely crushed through the use of the Watch Committees, who monitored residents and the armées révolutionnaires, comprised of volunteer sans-culottes whose mission it was to destroy all counter-revolutionary trouble. Spies, agents and representatives on mission all helped to root out the activists and impose 'revolutionary justice'. Vengeance was also swift. In Lyons, the representatives on

mission, Collot d'Herbois and Fouché used mitrailleurs to enact mass killings by canon and try to wipe Lyons off the map. Although this was not quite achieved, the Terror, nevertheless, firmly destroyed any threat of opposition for the rest of the revolutionary period. There were similar reprisals in Marseilles, whilst in Toulon, a young General Bonaparte helped recapture the city and ensure a massacre of rebels on Toulon's Champ de Mars.

The destruction of large-scale counter-revolutionary activity was accompanied by many more individual guillotining whereby the Law of Suspects, which helped establish the Terror in September 1793 was used to maximum effect to remove those accused of treason. While the Watch Committees drew up lists of suspects, the Committee of General Security issued warrants and the Revolutionary Tribunal passed sentence. In this way the 'counter-revolutionary' threats posed by Marie-Antoinette, the expelled Girondin deputies, and the duc D'Orléans (who despite his early support for revolution had a son who defected to the enemy) were removed in the last months of 1793 and many ordinary citizens also met their ends – often for trying to avoid the draft imposed by the Levée en masse of August 1793. Grain-hoarders and refractory priests were similarly shown little mercy and the CPS yielded to a considerable amount of sans-culotte pressure during the early months of the Terror, passing the Law of Maximum, Law of Suspects and accepting a de-christianisation campaign whereby counter-revolutionary religious objects as well as refractory clerics were destroyed.

The success of the Terror in destroying counter-revolutionaries culminated in the attacks of June 1794 which followed the Law of Frimaire, extending the powers of the CPS. In this phase, all who opposed Robespierre were branded counter-revolutionary and Hébert, Danton, Desmoulins and their followers all fell under the blade of the guillotine. The final, 'Great Terror' after the Law of Prairial in June-July 1794 had all counter-revolutionaries transferred to Paris with the single political accusation 'enemy of the people' to be followed by the rare verdict of acquittal – or more common one of death. Nearly 1,300 death sentences were passed in 2 months with 36% of these being nobles, 25% clergy and 40% bourgeoisie.

Overall, the Terror would seem to have been overwhelmingly successful in destroying counter-revolution, and yet counter-revolution never entirely went away. The development of the 'White Terror' under the Directory from 1795 stands witness to the survival of royalist sentiment as the muscadins and jeunesse dorée sought revenge on the former proponents of the Terror. The Chouans survived to continue harassing future governments while remaining federalists in the cities and Vendéean peasants also formed gangs and militias to drive out or murder the local Jacobins who had inflicted the Terror on them. Some reactionary groups, such as the Companies of the Sun in Nîmes or Companies of Jesus in Lyons were royalist, but others simply sought vengeance. There was, for example, a violent massacre in Lyons in May 1795 when Jacobin prisoners were hauled from their cells and murdered.

It cannot, therefore, be said that the Terror was completely successful in destroying counter-revolution, but on balance its successes far outweighed its failures. On the positive side, the Terror brought measures that allowed prompt action against internal enemies, such as Marie Antoinette (figurehead for the Austrian armies) or the Girondins who were believed to be undermining war effort. It restored order in the Vendée, and established central government control in areas of federal revolt. The Economic Terror allowed action against counter-revolutionary hoarders, while measures against the 'draft-dodgers' and deserters ensured no counter-revolutionaries undermined the war effort. However, the destruction of counter-revolution came at a price. The Terror brought much violence and destruction, while some representatives on mission engaged in sadistic behaviour. Indeed, many innocent people (including some passionate revolutionaries) lost their lives. It can even be suggested that the Terror was fundamentally unnecessary, given that Carnot's levée en masse had already begun in August 1793 and it should have been possible to crush revolt in the provinces without the central forces the Terror being

brought into play from September 1793. The Terror may be said to have perversely helped in bringing further divisions to the Republic, hardening the attitudes of those who had been lukewarm in their opposition and so leading to the White Terror which was led by those formerly branded 'counter-revolutionaries'.

Commentary – Level 5

This is a very thoughtful answer with impressive detail and clear evidence of judgement in relation to the question. It sets out clearly the almost indiscriminate nature of those judged to be counter-revolutionaries and offers impressive detail of the revolts in the Vendee and the Federalist revolts. Other aspects of the breadth of Terror are referred to, but not in the same detail and depth (for example, the de-christianisation campaign has only a brief and undeveloped reference). This is the least effective part of the answer. There is an excellent and balanced assessment of the success of the Terror with clear and appropriate supporting detail. This is a low Level 5 answer.