



History 7042
Specimen Question Paper 2N (A-level)
Question 01 Student 3
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 2N (A-level): Specimen question paper

01 With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the Bolshevik Revolution between 1917 and 1921.

[30 marks]

Student response

Source A is an adaptation from Lenin's 'Theses for Peace', and comes directly from Lenin. This earns the source is valuable as Lenin was the leader of the Bolshevik Revolution, and thus offers a firsthand view into Bolshevik activity at the time. However, the adaptation has been printed in an official Communist newspaper, meaning it is likely to be a one sided view and focus predominantly, or even solely, on positives regarding the Bolsheviks.

Regarding the content of the source, it argues that the Soviet Government has the support of the workers and peasants, legitimising the Bolshevik takeover and proving the success of the Socialist revolution. The source also argues that despite fighting and chaos, the Civil War will eventually be won by the Bolsheviks. Finally, the source also argues that the bourgeoisie, who posed resistance to the Bolsheviks, would be dealt with and removed. The value of the source is increased here as its sources promises are arguments are supported, apart from the first, as the Bolsheviks faced opposition from the Greens. However, they went on to win the Civil War, and the use of the Cheka was effective in removing the bourgeoisie opposition.

The tone is an authoritative one, yet has little reason to be. Regarding the first argument, the Bolsheviks only received 20% of the vote in January 1918, a month before this thesis was written, thus disproving the claim the Bolsheviks had the support of the workers and peasants, limiting the source's value. That they had little support from the said groups can be deduced from the fact that the middle class (bourgeoisie) only made up a small proportion of the electorate.

In conclusion, this source is slightly valuable as it shows a Bolshevik view of Russian society at the direct time of writing. However, the source is claiming the Bolsheviks have legitimacy (perhaps down to the one sided provenance) whilst in reality they don't.

Source B is written by an American journalist, Bessie Beatty, and is an extract from her book 'The Red Heart of Russia'. Beatty wrote the book in 1918 when she was living in Russia. The source has limited value as she is foreign, and unlikely to be able to converse with the bourgeoisie or peasants/workers about their feelings about the Bolsheviks. Furthermore, Beatty defended the Bolsheviks in front of a US Senate Committee, so the source is likely to be biased in favour of the Bolsheviks. This limits the source as a balanced view of the Bolsheviks cannot be built from it.

The source states that the Bolsheviks have a problem with corruption in Russian society – the Cheka were having to deal with plenty of black market activity - and that the economy is not working, proven by the fact people are offering flour to passers-by – indicative of food

shortages. The source also portrays a chaotic and slightly anarchistic aura of Russia, with mobs running riot and inflicting the death penalty as they pleased. This suggests that the government had little control over proceedings. This is supported further by the fact the Cheka were holding mass murders, as part of a slightly desperate reign of terror. The source also tells of gross inequity, as 'a few men waxed hideously rich upon the hunger of many'.

The tone of the source places emphasis on the success on the Bolsheviks in dealing with the problems that they faced. The source is quite subjective and uses emotive wording, limiting the value of the source as some factual detail may be missed. The source holds a partisan view towards Russian society.

In conclusion, the source is of limited value as even though it provides an interesting and useful account of proceedings in Russia e.g the economy and mob superiority, it is subjective towards the Bolsheviks and highlights their successes in dealing with problems, ignoring the likely failures that happened.

The final source is an adaptation from the main publication of the Kronstadt rebels, the Kronstadt Izvestia. Regarding the provenance, it is a contemporary source. The sailors originally backed the October revolution in 1917, and had fought alongside the Bolsheviks to ensure the revolution occurred. However, the continuation of War Communism after the Civil War annoyed the Kronstadt as they considered the Bolsheviks to be using War Communism to set up a political dictatorship.

The content and argument of the source is that the Bolshevik government is not working effectively. The communist party has failed as a government by failing to address the hunger problems in society, and the economic distress which led to black market activity. Additionally, it argues that the Bolsheviks have turned their back on the promise they made - 'all power to the Soviets' - and therefore betraying the revolution they initiated.

The tone of the source is very emotive and critical of the Bolsheviks. The source is strongly disillusioned with the Bolshevik, and appears angry as they consider the Bolsheviks to be counter-revolutionary. The Kronstadt sailors are claiming to be a more authentic and legitimate representation of labourers.

In conclusion, the source is valuable to the historian as it shows an albeit biased, but accurate, representation of Russian society at the time of writing. It proves that despite Lenin's Theses for Peace, in which he claimed popularity across the electorate, the Bolsheviks were not fully popular and faced serious opposition, especially as the Kronstadt sailors uprose (albeit unsuccessfully) in March, the same month that this newspaper was published.

Commentary – Level 3

Expression and meaning are not always clear, but the answer does attempt to assess provenance, tone and content in each case. There is lack of precision; what for example, was the election of January 1918 which is referred to? It is also assertive in places, referring frequently to tone without providing any examples to support this judgements. Some of the inferences made, especially in relation to Source B, are unconvincing and unsupported. It is a Level 3 answer.