



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2023

Pearson Edexcel International Advanced
Level in History (WHI02/1C)

Option 1C: Russia, 1917-91: From
Lenin to Yeltsin

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Publications Code WHI02_1C_ER_2301

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Introduction

It was pleasing this January to see a number of well-informed and well-written responses from candidates on IAS Paper WHI02 1C which covers the Russia, 1917-91: From Lenin to Yeltsin. The paper is divided into two sections. Section A contains a compulsory two-part question for the option studied, each part based on one source. It assesses source analysis and evaluation skills (AO2). Section B comprises a choice of essays that assess understanding of the period in depth (AO1) by targeting five second order concepts - cause, consequence, change/ continuity, similarity/difference and significance.

Although the January entry is much smaller than the summer entry, performance had much common with previous series. Candidates found Section A more challenging than Section B. Some candidates were still not clear on what was meant by 'value' and 'weight' in the context of source analysis and evaluation. Performance in Section A was also affected by the absence of the detailed knowledge base required to add contextual material to support/challenge points derived from the sources. Most candidates did use their time effectively and, although a few responses were quite brief, there was little evidence on this paper of candidates having insufficient time to answer questions both sections. The ability range was diverse, but the design of the paper allowed all abilities to be catered for. Furthermore, in Section B, most responses had an analytical focus and there were very fewer that were wholly descriptive essays which were devoid of analysis and, for the most part, responses were soundly structured. The most common weakness in Section B essays was the lack of a sharp focus on the precise terms of the question and/or the second order concept that was targeted. This meant that some candidates wrote at length on topics that were only peripherally related to the question or which did not cover the whole time period.

It remains important to realise that Section A topics are drawn from highlighted topics on the specification whereas Section B questions may be set from any part of any Key Topic, and, as a result, full coverage of the specification is enormously important. There was little evidence on this paper of candidates having insufficient time to answer questions from Sections A and B.

The candidates' performance on individual questions is considered in the next section.

Question 1 (a)

Most candidates understood the question and were able to comprehend the source and comment on what it revealed about the outcome of Gorbachev's economic reforms in the years 1985-91. There were some well-focused responses that drew out

inferences that adopting a more capitalist structure in the economy led to significant success for Gorbachev and that Gorbachev's economic reforms improved the standard of living for Soviet citizens. The best answers developed the inferences with well-selected context to establish their validity. However, many candidates did not include any contextual knowledge in their response and this did depress their overall achievement. Some candidates wrote at length about previous leaders' economic policies. e.g. Stalin or Khrushchev, but this was not relevant to the question set. Similarly, lengthy descriptions of the collapse of the Soviet Union did not have the necessary focus on the outcome of Gorbachev's economic policy and were not used to develop the evidence in the source. Candidates would do well to remember that contextual knowledge does need to be used to explain and develop the inferences drawn from the source and not just to provide free-standing knowledge. Many candidates were able to use the attributes of the source effectively to develop their ideas about the value of the source from an American magazine. In this way many candidates were able to access the lower marks in level 3. Those candidates who discussed the limitations could not be rewarded for that part of their answer as it is not the focus of part a responses.

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This is a level 3 response. It makes valid points on the provenance of the source in its consideration of value and links them to the evidence in the source. It develops a valid inference about the positive outcome of Gorbachev's reforms and link that to contextual knowledge of *perestroika*.

Question 1 (b)

Most candidates understood the source material and were able to select from it to consider the purpose of education under Stalin. Many candidates were able to draw some inferences, for example, considering that education was successful in indoctrinating children. Many were also able to expand on the source material by developing contextual evidence on Stalin's education policy. However, an absence of contextual knowledge was very evident in this January series in comparison to previous years. Many candidates demonstrated secure evaluation skills, drawing on the provenance to reach judgements about the value and limitations of the source. Fewer candidates were able to use the content of the source to discuss claims and really develop and interrogation of the source.

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This response achieved a good level 4. It demonstrates secure evaluation and uses context effectively to show an awareness of the different values and concerns of the time. It develops several reasoned inferences. It does not really interrogate the evidence and therefore it does not achieve full marks.

Question 2

This was the most popular essay question. Some candidates produced very effective answers, considering the successes of War Communism in terms of feeding the army and providing weapons, as well as implementing communist ideology, and assessing this against obvious failures such as rapidly declining production, particularly on the farms, that resulted in famine and rebellion. Candidates also considered the success of the NEP in terms of increasing both industrial and agricultural output and securing the support of Nepmen and peasants and contrasted this with the ideological failures and economic problems such as the 'scissors crisis'. Many candidates displayed secure knowledge of the time period (although a number confused the details of the 'scissors crisis' and erroneously claimed that it was caused by high agricultural prices and low industrial prices), however, a significant proportion of candidates wrote at length about Stalin's Five year Plans and collectivisation. Whilst the launch of the First Five Year Plan in 1928 did have relevance, the outcomes over the next four years did not, and as collectivisation was launched in 1929, this was entirely out of the period. In some cases, candidates wrote a potted history from the last years of Tsarist Russia to the establishment of Stalin's regime with little regard for economic policy. It is important in planning and writing answers that candidates are clearly aware of the parameters of the question

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This response achieved level 4. It has good focus on the period set and assess Lenin's economic policies for both successes and failures. It reaches clear supported judgements. It is a good example of how the launching of the Fiver Year plans can be used to address the question without losing focus on the period set.

Question 3

Most candidates had knowledge of Khrushchev's regime and were able to consider some of his reforms. The most successful responses had a secure focus on the reform of government and were able to assess the success of a range of reforms including de-Stalinisation, extending control over the secret police, reducing the power of Party officials by dividing the Party into agricultural and industrial departments and in

reducing power at the centre in favour of granting more to the regions. Those that achieved level 4 had a clear focus on success/failure and were able to develop clear criteria for judgement. Some candidates paid insufficient attention to the wording of the question and considered not only political reforms, but also economic, social and cultural. These responses thus tended to be underdeveloped in examining the main focus of the question.

Question 4

There was only one partial response to this question.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

Section A

Value of Source Question (1(a))

- Candidates must be more prepared to make valid inferences rather than to paraphrase the source
- Be prepared to back up inferences by adding additional contextual knowledge from beyond the source
- Move beyond stereotypical approaches to the nature/purpose and authorship of the source e.g. look at the specific stance and/or purpose of the writer
- Avoid writing about the deficiencies of the source when assessing its value to the enquiry.

Weight of Source Question (1(b)/2(b))

- Candidates should be prepared to assess the weight of the source for an enquiry by being aware that the author is writing for a specific audience. Be aware of the values and concerns of that audience.
- In assessing weight, it is perfectly permissible to use contextual knowledge to support/challenge statements and claims made in the source
- Try to distinguish between fact and opinion by using your contextual knowledge of the period
- Knowledge should be integrated with the source evidence, to discuss the inferences drawn and their validity in the light of the contextual understanding of the period.
- In coming to a judgement about the nature/purpose of the source, take account of the weight you may be able to give to the author's evidence in the light of his or her stance and/or purpose

- In assessing weight, it is perfectly permissible to assess reliability by considering what has been perhaps deliberately omitted from the source. However, simply stating that a source is limited because it does not cover certain events or developments does not establish weight since no source can be comprehensive.

Section B

Essay questions

- Candidates must provide more factual details as evidence. Weaker responses lacked depth and sometimes range
- Take a few minutes to plan your answer before you begin to write your response
- Pick out three or four key themes and then provide an analysis of (for e.g.) the target significance mentioned in the question, setting its importance against other themes rather than providing a description of each
- Pay more careful attention to key phrases in the question when analysing and use them throughout the essay to prevent deviation from the central issues and concepts
- Pay careful attention to the date range in the question. Plan the answer with a focus on this range and avoid lengthy exploration of events outside of the time period set
- Try to explore links between issues to make the structure flow more logically and the arguments more integrated.

