

# History Revolutions GA 3: Written examination

---

## SPECIFIC INFORMATION

### Section A

In this section most students were able to answer the questions within the defined time periods. Time was well judged as few students wasted time with lengthy answers requiring them to use additional space. However, it was obvious that students need reminding that this section of the exam is testing their knowledge. To score highly students must provide a range of points. As a guideline, more successful answers contain four or five points and were arranged as a series of flow-on sentences.

#### Question 1

Strong answers contained a range of different events and circumstances which contributed to a revolutionary situation. There was generally a sound sense of the causes of conflict and tension and the relationship to the revolutionary situation. Many students wasted time and space with introductions using the question wording. More successful approaches went straight into the answer. It is also pointless quoting historians as this is not required.

In some cases students still wrote outside the question timeframe. This was exemplified in some weak general descriptions of differences between Estates. In the context of China, the term 'Nationalism' was not really understood by some students. This may reflect a need for students to revise the terms or concepts more carefully. Overall, excellent answers recognised the range of variables that contributed to cause the outbreak of revolution, whereas lower-scoring answers, focused on one or two events or ignored the focus on 'conflict'.

#### Question 2

This question was not handled very well and students were not confident of their facts about the new society. There was an apparent expectation of a question on the 'snapshot' period and students should be reminded that there are no certainties about what will be asked from area of study 3. It is important that they be prepared to write on any aspect of 'Creating a New Society'.

Responses to what was asked were not well handled. The focus was to 'Outline **how** the Revolutionary Government responded ...' and not many answers did this successfully. The more successful answers demonstrated a rich knowledge of four to five points, often naming policies enacted by the revolutionary government. Whereas other lower-scoring answers were superficial, generalising on one or two points or were very brief, inaccurate and often outside the timeframe. For example, successful students answering on France, outlined that the Revolutionary Government responded to Counter Revolution with laws such as the Law of Suspects, Law of 22nd Prairial, *Levee en Masse*, Law of Maximum and Dechristianisation, and *Representatives en Mission* hunted down suspects who were handed over to the Revolutionary Tribunal, where the verdict was only death or acquittal. Students giving less successful answers, for example on China, failed to focus on the peasants and their 'livelihood'.

There is an overall need for better preparation of factual information and attention to question focus. Examples of successful responses are shown below.

#### 1d.

Popular discontent was growing in Russia for many years due to changes in the social and economic structures which were not matched by changes in the nature of government. The 1905 revolution was an expression of popular discontent at the ineptitude of the tsar and his refusal to concede to constitutional government manifested in a coalition of all sectors of society. The tsar broke the revolutionary 'coalition' with his October Manifesto which granted civil liberties and a representative body, the Duma. However, the Duma's power and representative ability were deliberately curtailed by the tsar who opposed any limitation to the autocracy. The Fundamental Laws including Article 87 and the June 1907 electoral Law changes gave the Duma power over only parts of the budget and biased the electoral system towards the wealthy. The tsar's refusal to take the Duma seriously alienated the population.

#### 2c.

The new regime responded to counter-revolutionary activity with repressive authoritarian measures. The Federalist revolt was brutally suppressed in the Vendee and Lyon by armed troops taken from the front. Revolutionary Tribunals and representatives-en-mission were set up in towns and cities to monitor suspected counter-revolutionaries and conduct trials. These fanatical and repressive instruments killed thousands in political trials. In addition, the dominance of the Parisian Sans Culottes forced the government to tolerate the Armee Revolutionaries which seized grain from hoarders and violently suppressed support for refractory priests with their brutal Dechristianisation campaign.

## Section B

### Part 1

Students must attempt far more analysis with comprehension rather than paraphrasing or describing. For example, in the question on China, students would mention that the poster celebrated the safe arrival of the CCP in Yenan following the Long March and survival of bandit suppression campaigns by the KMT and recognised the importance of Mao's leadership during this time. In ii. students should have been able to use evidence to explain that the support for Mao was a consequence of land redistribution in the period up to 1949 and treatment of peasants generally compared to the treatment by the KMT.

Students generally seemed to struggle with the timeframes given in the questions, and better focus is required. Most success seems to be with the graphics and their content rather than historian's views, suggesting that more practice with historian's perspectives and measuring against evidence is required during the course.

### Criteria performance

#### Criterion 1

Understanding of ideas, leaders or movements was not very accurate in the analysis of Acton and Soboul. There needs to be more knowledge/information given to illuminate answers. All representations provided an opportunity to highlight ideology yet only the best answers referred to **ideas**.

In the question on Acton there was scope to discuss Lenin's interpretation of Marx, yet few students used the cue of 'organising the masses' to discuss Lenin's concept of a vanguard who would lead the revolution. Few used the cue of 'unstoppable revolutionary movement' to discuss the nature of a spontaneous rising by the masses which could be viewed from a non-soviet perspective as occurring despite Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

In the question on Soboul few students were prepared to challenge the contention that the Sans Culottes were leaders of the revolution and offer their own view supported by their knowledge and evidence. It would be refreshing to see students do more with the provocation than blind acceptance. Another difficulty with some answers, as in all sections of the paper, was a lack of question focus and particular attention to the given timeframe. Also, failure to mention more than one leader by name, or to identify a number of different parties or movements limited many answers. There are still many students providing weak narratives which may only give a poor performance on the first criterion in this section of the examination.

#### Criterion 2

Overall, the answers showed a lack of detailed specific evidence. There needs to be reference to quotations or factual details that support statements made in the response. Some good answers on the Acton extract supported their contention that the revolution was led by strong Bolshevik party leadership on the basis that Lenin galvanised the Party into action and had always adhered to the idea of an elite leadership of the masses. Some excellent answers quoted from 'What is to be Done'. The more successful answers made reference to statements in the Acton extract and related their argument and evidence to these.

Excellent answers on the poster 'New Spring in Yenan, 1936,' argued that it would be many years before the Communists had the support of the Chinese people and that their seizure of power was preceded by civil war. Such information is acceptable evidence. The more successful answers on Colonial America included detailed information about the different British Acts and how they were received in the Colonies.

Successful answers in relation to the Soboul extract referred to the Sans Culottes as a radicalising force and used information such as forcing the King to accept the power of the Third Estate with their attack on the Bastille. Also, because the Sans Culottes held such power in Paris the Jacobins made concessions to them including elements of the 1793 Constitution which largely favoured working class interests and the General Maximum on prices. Thus, information defined in this way constitutes reasonable evidence.

#### Criterion 3

Concepts related to leadership and its influence were not very well addressed. As long as students use the terminology from the area of study they should successfully meet this criterion; however, too many students still generalise with terms such as 'the people' or 'the government', when it would be a simple matter to be specific about social groups and use terms such as 'peasants', 'proletariat', 'intelligentsia', the CCP, 'Bolshevik government' or the 'British government'. Below is an example of a very successful answer, but one which does not quite attract the highest marks. Generally, it is not as long as many of the more successful answers. Nevertheless it still contains a strong argument.

i.

Acton views the Bolshevik Party as being the sole initiators and controllers of the revolution. In his description, Acton claims that 'The party took the leading role in organising the masses'. This was Lenin's plan all along and goes directly to the core of the version of Marxism that became known as 'Leninism'. (higher knowledge) Lenin saw that to rise up against their oppressors, the proletariat must be organised into revolution [by] a disciplined elite of middle class intelligentsia. It would be a small party with people trained mentally and practically in revolution and would be

prepared to act whenever the time came.(concepts) Lenin thought that the Party should be organised from the top down, a stance which brought about the split of the Social Democratic Labour Party into the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, as Julius Martov, the Menshevik's leader and old friend of Lenin's disagreed. Acton here describes the devices used by this party to organise the people into rising up as a revolutionary force. He describes the Party activists 'developing factory committees, organising the worker's militia, strengthening the committees of soldiers and sailors, and coordinating the nationwide network of soviets'. (evidence) Acton views the Bolshevik involvement in the events of 1917 as so important that he says that they were able to instil discipline into their followers and restrain them from rising up until they said to do so. Acton views the Bolshevik Party as being the lone cause of the events of 1917 and says that they 'shaped an unstoppable revolutionary movement'.

## ii.

In his assessment of the Bolshevik Party, Acton overstates the input of the Party and underestimates the people themselves. [good interpretation and question focus] Lenin, the Party's leader was not even in the country at the time of the February Revolution, but in Finland. [evidence] Hoping that a Revolution would weaken their war effort, the German government sent Lenin back to Russia in a sealed train, not stopping until it reached its destination. The people were living under a very oppressive regime, their living conditions were very poor and most barely had enough money to survive and food was scarce. During this time, Nicholas II refused to change the autocratic system or make political concessions such as the reforms suggested by Peter Stolypin, the Prime Minister until 1911 when he was assassinated. Nicholas' courts were also very suspicious of reformers and consequently Stolypin was replaced by a series of incompetents. It is true that the Bolshevik Party had a great deal to do with the events of 1917 as they ended up in government when they seized control in October in what was called by others a coup, but what the party itself called a popular uprising. [concepts] However, due to the conditions of the people living under Nicholas II who continued to undermine four Dumas before he abdicated, which were one of the concessions he made in fending off revolution in 1905 with the October Manifesto, by either dismissing them or tampering with the Fundamental Laws, (evidence) the people would have taken control eventually anyway if it had not been the Bolsheviks it would have been one of the other parties. The events of 1905 proved that a revolution could not succeed without the people becoming organised. A revolution did not succeed then as the demands were not unified and there was no clear leadership added to the fact that until the events of Bloody Sunday the following year, the Tsar had too many supporters still. Lenin saw that the people needed to be organised into revolution and the events of 1905 proved this, however, after the Bolsheviks had seized control an election took place where the Party lost greatly to the Social Revolutionaries proving that the Bolshevik Party were not the sole hope of the people of Russia.

## Section C

Fewer students had nothing to say, with most students able to deliver a reasonable argument in response to the question. There still needs to be better focus on the provocative terms in the question. For example, 'only' or 'exactly the same way' and terms such as 'weak' or 'abuse' require defining. Complexity of argument is still lacking and perceptions of aspects of continuity and change are treated very simplistically. Too many students could not see that there could be **both change and continuity**. In regards to Russia, some students are tackling this through comparison of events such as Bloody Sunday compared with Kronstadt which seems a great simplification of continuity. There still needs to be greater emphasis on social, economic and political changes within society. If students organised their revision along these themes they would be in a strong position to tackle the essay and evaluate change and continuity between regimes. The origins of revolution was handled better than challenges to the new regime but often too much space and time was devoted to the Old Regime. It is very important that essays maintain a balance. Most students who answered using the context of France or Russia, identified challenges as civil war in Russia or war 1792 in France but they tended to be discussed without any reflection on why or how they represented a crisis or challenge for the revolutionary government. Thus answers require stronger analysis of the ways in which events are a challenge or crisis.

Some answers still jumped from the Old Regime to the snapshot, bypassing the revolution. This is a poor response and students should be deterred from this approach. Another weakness of many answers was that they did not develop more than two to three examples upon which to base the essay whereas a rich reservoir of information organised thematically is the best.

Use of evidence was generally poor. The essay must be supported by reference to documents, policies, leaders' views or a witness to events. Historians' views are also an excellent source of evidence and are used well in the best answers. Less successful essays fall down on synthesis. Students need to be reminded to refer to the question frequently during the essay. The last criterion was very poorly handled and was generally absent altogether. There was very little indication that students knew what to do and most used what appeared to be

learned responses from their teacher which were attached in an artificial manner. **Students must only address one revolution in the essay.**

#### Question 4

This was the most popular question and was handled well. More successful answers identified that **crises in both the old and new regimes were different and required different responses**. Less successful answers just agreed that old and new regimes handled crises in exactly the same way.

This is an example of a very good essay, successfully meeting all the criteria at a high level.

The Bolshevik party began as a genuinely democratic movement who sought to overthrow the despotic and oppressive power of capitalism and the Tsarist regime. While their goals remained liberal and democratic, the crises faced by the revolutionary government forced it to expand with authoritarian measures, to enforce policies of great flexibility. This is evident in the simultaneous implementation of national socialism and the gradual reassertion of authoritarian central control of the Bolshevik Party between 1917 and the First Five Year Plan.

The Bolshevik Party took over control from the declining Provisional Government in October 1917. As the majority party of the Soviet, they claimed to represent the interests of the peasantry and working classes. Their initial reforms reflected the democratic socialist ideology of the Party: land control was given to peasants and factory control to the workers. Zemstva took over local government and the army underwent democratisation. Minorities were assured autonomy and elections to the Constituent Assembly were held. However the Bolshevik coup had sparked civil war in Russia. The motley anti- Bolshevik movement comprising socialists, tsarist bureaucrats and generals, separatist nations and foreign powers, resented the Bolsheviks use of armed force to assume power. This was compounded by the quick dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. While Soviet historians maintain that the coup was representative of popular interests, liberal historians show the dissolution as evidence that the Bolsheviks were aiming for despotic, one-Party rule. However, the outbreak of civil war placed pressure on the Bolshevik government to retain monopoly in order to assure the success of their socialist ideals.

The pressures of civil war led to the implementation of War Communism. This regime quickly began to overturn many of the liberal and democratic reforms made early in the regime's reign, as strict military discipline was reintroduced to all aspects of life. Discipline and hierarchy was brought to the army, while command economy removed the structures of worker and peasant control of their industries. Prodravzverstva brutally requisitioned grain from the peasantry. All the new structures developed were moulded by the need to win the war and by socialist ideals. Some historians have shown War Communism as an attempt to quickly introduce full blown socialism. Others have shown it as brutal and authoritarian exploitation of the people. Yet, the underlying principle remains: while the Bolsheviks used authoritarian and repressive measures to implement their policies as under the tsarist regime, their policies were ultimately flexible. While the tsar resisted reform, the Bolsheviks responded to the crisis of war by coercively enforcing reform.

The same paradoxical combination of authoritarianism and inherent flexibility is shown by the nature of the New Economic Policy. While the Communists had successfully won the war, their War Communist regime had resulted in total economic collapse and political crisis. The command economy and difficulties with transport had caused a breakdown of town/country trade and massive shortages in the cities which were exacerbated by rapid inflation. The population was growing discontented with the excessive harshness and authoritarianism of War Communism and many wished for a return to the liberal and democratic ideals of 1917. These were clearly expressed by the mutiny of the Kronstadt sailors, who demanded a return to democracy and liberty. The violent suppression of the mutiny has been held up by liberal historians as evidence of the Bolshevik's ruthlessness and willingness to crush all opposition in order to maintain their dictatorship. While the official Soviet explanation that the Kronstadt rebels were bourgeois counter revolutionaries is dubious, the motive of the Communists can be seen by the resultant New Economic Policy. The Kronstadt mutineers represented a threat to the Communist Government's implementation of rapid socialism.

The NEP has been seen by many as evidence of the failure of quick socialism, and as a huge back step for socialist Russia. Yet, it also demonstrates the great flexibility of the regime, a quality that was lacking in its Tsarist forebears. The NEP re-established a partial free market by de-nationalising small enterprises and allowing sales of grain for profit. It created a class of small capitalist Kulaks and NEPmen whose economic success provided the investment capital for industrialisation of state industries. Lenin called the NEP a 'breathing space' in which the economy could stabilise itself and provide the material abundance necessary for socialism. Once again the NEP was a political strategy of great flexibility implemented by authoritarian means. It

succeeded in the short term by quelling popular dissent and stabilising the dysfunctional economy.

The success of the NEP allowed for the implementation of the first Five Year Plan – a direct return to socialism with its collectivisation strategy and brutal de-kulakisation. The first Five Year Plan extended socialism throughout Russia. The economy, while still under state control, operated on a socialist basis. The abolition of private property had created a society which, although not entirely free of classes, (groupings of peasant, proletarian and intelligentsia remained), was free of class antagonism and exploitation. The Government operated under socialist strictures, but yet was rigidly authoritarian.

This shows the distinction between the Tsarist and Communist regime. The Tsars resisted rapid change and reform and conceded only when faced with united opposition. The Tsars responded to crises in an authoritarian manner, with repression and resisting change. The Communists employed the Tsars repressive autocratic measures when faced with crises yet they did so in order to protect a revolution and a regime characterised by great flexibility and willingness to change. The Communist government became authoritarian by necessity in order to overcome the challenges it faced and to implement its truly flexible reforms.

### **Question 5**

Many arguments were oversimplified with students equating strong leadership with force and argued that the revolution survived because of strong leadership. In the context of China therefore, many students argued that Mao was a strong leader during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. In the context of France, Robespierre was a strong leader in the Terror and in Russia, Stalin was a strong leader in the period of the Five Year Plans. Very few students challenged the idea that the development of a dictatorship may have reflected the end of revolutionary change and signalled a reversion to repression, if indeed there had been liberation.

### **Question 6**

More successful responses agreed with the statement and identified that a key reason for this was the failure to enact the promises made by the revolutionary leaders. Less successful responses did not grasp that 'impeded' meant the revolutionary ideals were compromised and that the New Regime was repressive because it did not break with the abuses of the Old Regime. Some students espoused the virtues of Stalin because he did not allow his regime to crumble.