



History 7042
Specimen Question Paper 2R (A-level)
Question 01 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 2R (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 Marshall Plan.

[30 marks]

Student response

The Marshall Plan played a key role increasing tension between the USA and the USSR after 1945; it was one of several events that led to the political and economic division of Europe between 1945 and 1949. These three sources give different perspectives about the purpose of this plan and how it was perceived by the Soviets; they also indicate the reasons for why the plan increased tension. However, they are limited in value for revealing the actual aims of the Marshall Plan.

Source A is the speech by George Marshall which set out the rationale for the Marshall Plan. This followed on from Truman's announcement in 1947 of the US's commitment to a policy of containment; what became known as The Truman Doctrine. The Marshall Plan was seen as the 'other half of the walnut', providing economic aid to countries to help them contain Communism; in Europe there was dire poverty following World War Two which was creating the right conditions for the growth of Communism, particularly in Italy and France. However, it is noticeable that this speech by Marshall does not make any claims for the Marshall Plan to be fighting communism; rather Marshall focuses on the fact that this economic aid is about securing the 'economic health' of the world to ensure stability and peace and also about fighting 'hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos'. Indeed, he emphasizes that it is not 'directed against any country or doctrine'. However, as this is a public speech in which Marshall is setting out his plan for the first time, it is unlikely that he would draw attention to the fact that this is in fact an anti-Communist plan. The source has value for showing what the US government wanted the world to see as its aims regarding the Marshall Plan, but is unlikely to give the whole story as at this point they were unwilling to directly antagonize the Soviets.

When the US announced the Marshall Plan, it said that aid was available to any country that applied to get it including the Soviet Union and countries in the Soviet sphere of influence. However, as Source B indicates, the Soviet Union was hostile towards the plan from the very start. This is taken from diary notes, so presumably this account of the Soviet reaction was not intended to be made public and thus is valuable for giving us a personal perspective of someone who was at the centre of negotiations with the Soviets and able to see at first hand Soviet reactions. However, it is also quite opinionated and anti-Communist in tone which limits its value; the French President talks about the Soviet Union 'exploiting the economics of the small satellite countries' and that it wants to 'barricade itself in its corner' and that the Soviet reaction is a 'terrible blow struck against peace'. As personal opinions from a westerner who is clearly anti Communist, this may not be very valuable for showing the actual views and actions of the Soviets.

Nevertheless, Source C reinforces the perceptions of the French President. This is a speech by the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister to the United Nations General Assembly and it is damning in its analysis of the Marshall Plan claiming that it is a tool of 'dollar imperialism'; that the US wants to use it to place European countries under the direct control of US influence both economically and politically. This actually supports Source B regarding the Soviet opinion of the Marshall Plan. However, whereas the French President in Source B asserted that the Soviets rejected Marshall Aid because it would lessen their power over the satellite states, Vyshinsky rejects Marshall Aid because he claims that it is about promoting American power in Europe and specifically Germany and that it is 'incompatible with the principles of the United Nations'. The latter point is interesting because it is true that all aid should have gone via the UN. However, the purpose of this source is to attack the US as part of anti-US propaganda by the Soviets. The Soviets needed to justify why they had not participated in Marshall Aid and why they had prevented the satellite states from participating; Czechoslovakia for instance, which had wanted to apply for aid had been forced by Stalin to withdraw their request. The language is violently anti-US and the reference to 'two camps' is putting the blame on the US for causing the division in Europe; this is a mirror image of what Churchill had accused the Soviet Union of doing in his Fulton speech in 1946; pulling an Iron Curtain across Europe. Thus, given that the purpose of this speech is to put the US in a bad light and to put the blame on the west for causing the division in Europe, the value for giving the true purpose of the Marshall Plan has to be questioned.

Overall, these sources give widely different versions of the aims of the Marshall Plan, from the altruistic claims of Marshall in Source A to the accusations of 'dollar imperialism' in Source C as being the real purpose of the Marshall Plan. All sources are limited in their value for revealing the true purpose of the Marshall Plan; however, Sources A and C are valuable for showing what each side wanted the other to believe and all three sources are valuable for showing the role that the Marshall Plan played in the growing hostility between the West and East at this stage in the origins of the Cold War.

Commentary – Level 4

The answer demonstrates awareness of the content and views of the sources, makes some assessment of the significance of provenance and has occasional references to tone. Knowledge of the context is deployed when making an assessment of the value of the sources. There are, however, some weaknesses in the answer, principally that there is insufficient explicit links made between comments and assessment of value and lack of development in places (for example, why was it unlikely that Marshall would appear anti-communist?). Neither the introduction nor conclusion is required in answer to these questions. It is a mid Level 4 answer.