



History 7042
Additional Specimen Question Paper 2P (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 2P (A-level): Additional 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 reasons for the defeat of the Nationalists in the Chinese Civil War.

[30 marks]

Student response

In 1949, the Chinese Civil War came to end with the defeat of the Nationalists and the triumph of the Communists under Mao Zedong. Sources A, B and C give different reasons to explain this result; however, none of them are completely valuable to the historian.

Source A and B both point to the inadequacies of the GMD to explain why the nationalists lost the civil war. However, they are very different in tone and emphasis. Source A is a report by Dean Acheson on the reasons for the GMD failures. As Dean Acheson is Secretary of State, at the heart of foreign affairs, and as this is a government report, it has value for giving us the US perception of the situation in China at this time. However, it is also clear that Dean Acheson is having to defend the US's position in having abandoned aid to the GMD when it was on the point of defeat; given the US's concern about communism in 1949 following the events in Europe where Stalin had exerted control over eastern Europe, and given the US's policy of containment following the Truman Doctrine, this is a serious matter. Thus Acheson is very quick to stress that there was no 'inadequacy of American aid' and to stress the 'decay' of the GMD. The language is very strong in its condemnation of the 'inadequacy' of the GMD and Acheson uses such as expressions as 'fatally sapped the powers of resistance...its leaders proved incapable...'. Conversely he stresses that the Communists had 'ruthless discipline and fanatical zeal'. He does not show any admiration for the Communists as this would clearly be unacceptable given the anti Communist feelings within US; however he makes it clear that the Communists and not the GMD came across as 'the guardians and liberators of the people'. Acheson even brings in lessons of history to support his case that the collapse of the GMD was inevitable and that the US could have done nothing to stop it. However, while the defensive tone makes one question the value of this source, it is true that the GMD were indeed inadequate and that their leaders had been corrupt, and that the CCP under Mao had carried out a ruthless policy of indoctrinating peasants wherever they had control. In addition, the US aid had been substantial amounting to \$3 billion dollars; the US had also supplied weapons and helped transport Nationalist troops to the north of China at the end of the war. The value of this source is perhaps greatest in the fact that Acheson is still prepared in 1949 to say that the Communist victory was inevitable; once McCarthyism took hold in the US, this idea became unacceptable and indeed, Acheson would end up changing his assessment of the situation.

Source B also blames the inadequacies of the GMD. However, as this is a report by the CCP to the Fourth International, it is even more damning of the GMD and also of America as 'an imperialist power'. As its purpose is to glorify Communism and reinforce the success of the CCP, it stresses Mao's superior tactics and the imperialistic nature of American tactics. This means that its value is limited as an accurate picture of what happened; the language is full of

Communist terminology and exaggerated language: 'death blow', 'atmosphere of dejection and despair' for example. The facts given in the source also do not stand up to the evidence in places. For example, to say that 'Jiang's regime represented the bourgeoisie' is very generalized; in fact much of the GMD's middle class support had evaporated away by 1945 and the support of the GMD depended for its survival on wealthy businessmen and landlords and the secret police in removing political opposition. In other areas the assertions are very generalized and lack evidence. For example it is true that GMD used 'barbaric methods', for instance their reprisal tactics on peasants, who had accepted the CCP and land reform when they regained villages, but there is no detail to develop this. This source has value for showing the communist interpretation of what happened in China, but lacks value to the historian for showing the actual reasons for the defeat of the nationalists, despite the fact that the date of 1951 should have allowed a clearer evaluation of what had happened.

Source C contrasts greatly to Sources A and B. While both A and B focus on the failures of the political leadership of the GMD, Source C focuses on the failure of the leadership of the army. This can be explained by the fact that it is a speech by Jiang Jieshi himself in 1947. At this point the GMD was starting to suffer defeats with the CCP launching full-scale assaults on GMD positions, and Jiang is looking blame failures on the leadership of the army who he sees as 'careless' and uneducated. He points out all of the advantages of the GMD such as superiority of troops, food and weapons. As a motivating speech to his party, it was necessary to highlight the strengths of the GMD and the tone is confident and assertive in an attempt to raise morale, but in fact by this stage in the civil war, much of these boasts were unfounded; the government was in debt and GMD controlled areas suffered high inflation.

In conclusion, all three sources are problematic in terms of their value to a historian as all are motivated by a need to justify a particular position. Source A probably has most value as, despite the need to justify the reasons for the CCP victory, the explanation of the CCP victory is mainly accurate. Conversely Sources B and C are generalised, and in places inaccurate, in terms of explaining the reasons for the GMD defeat.

Commentary – Level 4

The answer provides an effective assessment of the value of Sources A and B, commenting appropriately and fully on provenance, tone and content in each case with effective deployment of knowledge of context. Occasionally, conclusions as to value, linked to the comments made, could be more explicit. The assessment of Source C is less developed and effective and does not fully seem to appreciate the significance and purpose of the criticisms made by Jiang. It needs to be noted, also, that as this is not a comparative exercise, the conclusion is unnecessary. It is a good Level 4 answer.