



History

Paper 1L (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 01 Student 1

Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.1 22/09/15

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 1L (AS): Specimen question paper

01 With reference to these extracts and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two extracts provides the more convincing interpretation of Bismarck's relationship with the National Liberals in the 1870s?

(25 marks)

Student Response

The two extracts suggest a different kind of relationship between Bismarck and the National Liberals, which can be explained through the different time focuses of the two extracts. For example, Extract A takes a more positive approach to the relationship, stating that Bismarck "encouraged" the ideas of the Liberals, suggesting a more equal partnership. This more meritocratic relationship was evident to an extent during the early 1870s, as both members had the same aim; to unify the nation by removing the "remaining divisive forces in the country" (Reichsfiende). As an opportunist, Bismarck was aware that the Liberals would support policies such as the Kulturkampf, though he knew he would have to make concessions, such as Free Trade.

However, despite Extract A stating that the "legislative ideas" of the party were "encouraged" it can be argued that Bismarck's support for these policies was limited. For example, the popular movement of Protectionism was rejected by the Liberals, who wished to push on with Free Trade. Regardless, the new tariff policy was introduced in 1878, suggesting that whilst Bismarck may have supported the policies headed by the Liberals, he did not approve, or encourage them. An opportunist at heart, Bismarck only used the National Liberals to gain the majority in the Reichstag. This suggests that he aimed for autocratic power, instead of working with the Liberals as a "governmental party" (Extract A). As a result, Extract A's positive approach may overlook the true autocratic aspirations that Bismarck had, instead creating the impression that the relationship between Bismarck and the Liberals was more equal.

In contrast to Extract A, Extract B takes a more balanced approach, focusing on the whole of the decade rather than the positive start-up of the relationship (as in Extract A). It can be argued that Extract B is more convincing, stating that the alliance was "curious" due to the vast differences in political beliefs; Bismarck a conservative, whilst the Liberals pushed for democracy. However, whilst their alliance appeared functional in the Kulturkampf (as stated in Extract B) there was evidence of disagreement in policy, which Extract A does not include. Extract B takes a more conclusive tone, stating that "their influence was waning" as relations began to crumble over demands for more power by the Liberals and even the majority in the Reichstag started to shift. The Liberals were no longer required to gain the majority and the growing Centre Party became a more attractive alliance to attack the Socialists. Unlike Extract A, Extract B has a wider time range and there can be argued to show the more convincing view.

However, whilst Extract B argues that the role of the army budget was a source of a "bitter" disagreement in the alliance, it can be argued that the argument was not that drastic. Although a

disagreement was clear, a compromise was struck up rather than the picture presented in the extract, stating that the Liberals “had no choice”. The compromise showed that both members of the alliance did not fully achieve their goals, suggesting that the Liberals held more power and influence in the relationship than the extract suggests. Whilst Bismarck did use “bullying tactics” to an extent, he did compromise with the party and, even in the later part of the decade, Bismarck did try and carry on with the Liberals despite their ideological differences. Overall, whilst the budget was a source of disagreement, the result was not as one sided as the extract suggests, instead being a compromise between the alliance.

In conclusion, Extract A does to some extent, present a convincing and true picture of the relationship between Bismarck and the Liberals at the beginning of the period as unification was pushed further. However, the narrow focus means that the latter part of the decade is largely ignored, as it fails to mention the change in relationship and the downsides to the alliance. Therefore, the extract is largely too positive and neglects to mention the crumbling relationship that was evident by 1878. Extract B, however, presents a more convincing interpretation of the relationship, giving a wider focus and a more balanced approach. However, the degree to which the “army budget” was a problem is debateable as it ended in compromise rather than Bismarck having more influence, as the extract suggests. Ultimately, the relationship became strained as the Liberals pushed for more power, increasing tension in the alliance as Extract B suggests.

Commentary – Level 5

This is an excellent response at AS. The arguments in each extract are clearly identified with effective use of knowledge of context to challenge and corroborate them. The temptation to summarise the extracts or over quote from them is firmly resisted. The conclusion is persuasive and supported.