

History

Paper 2M (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 01 Student 1

Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.1 15/09/15

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 2M (AS): Specimen question paper

01 With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, which of these two sources is more valuable in explaining why the General Strike of 1926 failed?
(25 marks)

Student Response

The most valuable source in explaining why the General Strike of 1926 failed is Source B due, largely, to its surprising nature and tone. Firstly, Source B is more valuable as the tone of the newspaper article goes against what would be expected from the newspaper set up by the General Council of the TUC, whereas the tone and emphasis of Source A would be expected. Source B suggests that the TUC had given up on protecting and fighting for the mine workers as it says, "They are defending the mine owners against the mine workers." This is surprising as the TUC was called upon to organise the General Strike by the miner's federation after they had angrily rejected the Samuel Commissions report in March 1926 and therefore "defending the mine owners" suggests they are betraying the workers. Furthermore, 'there is no constitutional crisis' contrasts with Source A and suggests the government is exaggerating the situation and this therefore shows that the government's portrayal of the strike, evident in Source A, is a key reason for the failure of the strike.

In addition, the emphasis and argument of the Source suggests the TUC was weak and scared and shows they are backtracking, which can be seen when in the source it says 'the General Council does not challenge the Constitution.' This is further evidence of the failures of the TUC leadership, which is supported by the TUC only beginning serious preparations a week before the great stoppage and that no national system for coordinating strike action had been set up. In addition, Source B is adapted from the 'British Worker', which came out too late to have a positive impact. However, Source B is not fully valuable as it's not completely surprising. The unexpected tone of the Source can be seen to be evidence of the division in the TUC, as although some of the TUC's leaders were in favour of the strike, such as A.J. Cook, who wanted to use the strike to bring down the government, others like J.H. Thomas were against the General Strike from the beginning. Furthermore, the reluctance of the TUC to commit to the strike and going against the government, evident in the language of the source such as when it says 'the Council is engaged in an industrial dispute' is supported by the TUC having no wish for a revolution and they constantly stressed the need for striking workers to behave, which can be seen when it says 'they have ordered every member taking part to be exemplary in his conduct.'

However, Source A is not as valuable as Source B in explaining why the General Strike of 1926 failed as in contrast, its tone and emphasis are expected. As the source is adapted from the British Gazette, a newspaper set up by the government, the strong tone is evidence of the propaganda, related to the Red Scare, which was used by the government. This is evident when in the source it says a "direct challenge" is expressed by the strike in "no uncertain terms", suggesting that the strikers are trying to affect the government and are violent, directly contrasting with the tone and views in Source B. Further evidence of the source being an example of propaganda, and therefore less valuable, can be seen through the emphasis used in the source such as by the figures, "some 42 million British Citizens ... 4 million", as well as strong emotive language such as "Civil War", all of which make the source less

valuable as it is exaggerating the truth to turn British people against the strike.

On the other hand, Source A still is valuable as it is evidence of propaganda which would've turned people against the strike and would have been a contributing factor towards the failure of the strike. In addition, the source suggests the major problem of the inflexibility of the miners leaders and failures of the TUC, such as by saying, "the Prime Minister pointed out... do not think all the leaders... realised they were threatening the basis of ordered government" which suggests the leaders are unaware of the consequences of their actions and haven't organised the strike effectively. The failures of the TUC is supported by them hoping that just the threat of a General Strike would force the government to back down and, when this tactic failed, was left struggling to find a way out. Moreover, Source A suggests the strong government view on the situation, through the use of language such as 'ransom' and 'vital', which is one of the key reasons why the strike only lasted for nine days, as they held the upper hand from the beginning. The government played on the general desire in the country to avoid violence and disorder and under the Emergency Powers Act, Baldwin set up the organisation for the maintenance of supplies, which organised 100,000 volunteer workers to supplement the armed forces in moving essential supplies. Through speeches and newspaper articles, Baldwin argued that the General Strike was a threat to the British constitution, evident in Source A and contrasting to Source B, also he won public sympathy by turning the issue away from the miners' grievances to the question of who ruled Britain- the elected government or the TUC, and didn't attack the miners or TUC directly, but argued that they had been led astray and placed Churchill in control of the British Gazette, Source A, and let him fight a relentless campaign to undermine support for the strike.

In conclusion, Source B is more valuable in explaining why the General Strike of 1926 failed due to its provenance and that it shows the failures of the TUC leaders through the tone and by what it suggests their view of the situation is. In comparison to Source A, Source B is written by the newspaper set up by the General Council of the TUC and therefore when suggesting its own failures it can be trusted more than Source A, which is written by the British Gazette and therefore its views are expected and not as useful.

Commentary – Level 5

This is a strong answer at AS, especially its exemplary assessment of Source B, which comments on provenance, tone, content and argument in a persuasive manner with appropriate supporting detail. Whilst a similar approach is adopted to Source A, the assessment is not quite as effective, especially in relation to provenance and tone and in the supporting detail deployed. As is required, there is a clear and effective conclusion. This is a Level 5 response