



History 7042
Specimen Question Paper 20 (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 20 (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 collapse of Weimar democracy.

[30 marks]

Student response

The Weimar Republic was established following Germany's defeat in World War One. However, it collapsed in 1933, to be replaced by Hitler's dictatorship. Although all three of these sources have very different origins, they all have value for explaining the factors that led to the collapse of Weimar democracy.

Source A is written by a liberal and an intellectual and provides a valuable insight into the enthusiasm that liberals had in 1918 for their new democracy. Troeltsch points to the suppression of democracy in the previous decades and the more recent threats to democracy. His tone is one of excitement as he talks about the fact that their democracy has become 'the most radical in Europe'. It is also clear that he is well educated with a sound understanding of German history and of current political developments and this gives the source further value. Troeltsch refers to the threat from the 'terrorist minority on the left who believe in the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'', which was very pertinent as this article was written just before the Spartakist uprising which was led by Rosa Luxemburg and the SPD. This political group wanted republican government controlled by workers' and soldiers' councils. However, he also points out the threat from the right and from the military. He talks about the need to resist 'the demagogues from the right', and implies that there is a danger from the army which 'needs to be re-organised and acquire a social conscience'. In fact Ebert's government remained dependent on the army which stayed anti democratic in nature. It was used by the Weimar Republic to put down the Spartakist uprising, but it never really supported the Republic and believed that it could act independently when it chose. Troeltsch's prediction that 'Germany could become a volcano of misery and civil war' if the extremist groups and the military were not brought under control is an accurate prediction of what was to happen, thus again giving the source value as it shows us that educated liberal thinkers such as Troeltsch who supported the new Republic, also understood the dangers that it faced.

Sources B and C are both based on reminiscences from the late 20s and 30s when the hope for the Weimar Republic had already faded in the face of the economic depression and so they give a valuable insight to the forces that were to lead to the collapse of this government.

Source B has value in the fact that it comes from a working class person who had also fought in the war. This was the profile of many who joined the SS and so gives us a valuable insight into the view of a typical Nazi supporter. We can see the disillusionment that he feels with regard to the existing government and the lack of 'moral basis'; he is harking back to a more noble past which is of course something that Hitler also called for. His tone is damning of the Weimar Republic politicians and his vocabulary is exaggerated: 'fat and satisfied, vain and arrogant' and 'abyss of ruin'. In 1930, the time when Abel joined the Nazi party, it was on the rise with its membership having tripled from 100,000 in November 1928 to 300 000 in October 1930 which

helps to explain his confidence and his enthusiasm for the Nazis. It is also possible that the value of this source is limited due to the fact that it is based on interviews carried out in 1934 when the Nazis were already successfully in power; thus the enthusiasm for the Nazi Party and the thoughts that he attributes to 1930 (e.g. reference and enthusiasm for the Volksgemeinschaft) could in fact be influenced by the situation in 1934 when views of the Nazi Party were supreme.

Source C provides a different perspective to explaining the success of the Nazis; this time from the view point of an educated, middle class, non party member. This makes it valuable for showing the impact of the depression and the rise of extremist groups on the middle classes; the fear of the communists is clear. He refers to the 'Communist danger, the Communist terror' which he sees as being stopped only by the Nazis. The economic crisis which was part of the Great Depression caused by the Wall Street Crash had led to the rise of the KPD which gained two million votes in the Reichstag elections between 1928 and July 1932. The Red-Front Fighters League of the KPD often fought against the Nazi SA in the streets. This helped Hitler to persuade voters, such as this German headmaster, that only the Nazis could bring back order and put down the threat of communist revolution. The one common link to the previous Source is the reference to the weakness of the Weimar politicians in dealing with the crisis; as with source B there is contempt for the 'the complete failure of the 'bourgeois' parties'. The fact that these two sources which come from such different sources both focus on this increases their value for explaining the fall of the Weimar Republic. The source is also valuable for showing the impact of Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda, as the headmaster is very clear that Jewish power and influence is a bad thing which only the Nazis could deal with. His tone is very straightforward but firm and the headmaster shows no doubt in his views that 'whole branches of the economy and key positions were in the hands of the Jews'. Again however, the fact that these thoughts were recorded in 1967 could mean that he is imposing later thoughts and beliefs that were formed in the 1930s on his memories, and this is a limitation to its value.

Overall, these three sources are valuable for helping to explain the collapse of the Weimar Republic they show a range of perspectives from both the start and the end of the Weimar Republic and between then highlight the key factors that led to its collapse.

Commentary – Level 5

The answer demonstrates secure understanding of the views of the sources, comments appropriately on tone and deploys knowledge of context to corroborate and, in places, challenge the views expressed. Comments on provenance are generally effective and relevant. There is no need in these questions to engage in cross referencing as is the case in the assessment of Sources B and C in this answer, but its presence here does add to the quality of the response. Occasionally, the link between comment and conclusion on value could be more explicit and contextual knowledge could be developed, but this is a borderline Level 5 answer.