



History 7042
Specimen Question Paper 2P (A-level)
Question 01 Student 2
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): 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

Source A is from a paper produced by Acheson, the US secretary of State, explaining the US failure to prevent the spread of communism in Eastern Asia and thus a failure of their policy of containment. This failure was despite the fact that the US had funded the GMD in their fight against communism. The fact that Acheson was asked to explain the failure at this high level suggests it was for the eyes of, amongst others, the President, Truman and this is valuable as it gives us a US perspective. The tone is defensive as Acheson would want to shift blame away from his leadership and show that the USA did all that they could and shows that the problem was internal to China and the GMD which was 'decaying'. The report places the defeat of the nationalists as being primarily around the problem with Jiang Jieshi and his leaders. It is true that once WW2 ended the GMD 'rushed' north to Manchuria leaving their supply lines weak and meaning that basic supplies could not get through. Had they secured the central and then northern areas this problem would not have arisen. It is also true that the leaders were appointed on the basis of their loyalty to Jiang Jieshi and corruption was rife and they were not prepared to challenge decisions despite the best efforts of the USA advisors. The source also suggests that the GMD had lost popular support which has considerable truth as they had a problem recruiting soldiers and resorted to forced conscription and treated their soldiers very badly (poor leadership) and the peasants, making up 80% of the population, were more drawn to the communists promise of land ownership rather than the vague promises given to them by the GMD. Acheson says that the GMD didn't lose in 1948 battles through lack of arms supplied by the US and it was true that the CCP changed their tactics in that year, grew in confidence that they might win the war and combined guerrilla warfare with set piece battles (that they had avoided up to this point). Overall this Source is useful to a historian as it shows the success of the GMD was important to the USA but that they were unable to support it by arms alone and suggests that their advice on tactics was not followed and the war was lost by a mixture of poor leadership and lack of public support. It does not refer to the size of China, the economic problems and the disillusionment of some of Jiang's key supporters with the GMD.

Source B is a report on the CCP's perspectives to the Communist world Congress in 1951 on why the CCP won and the GMD lost. The CCP would be wanting to show that they had the ideological 'high ground' and that the people wanted their success. The Source is not really based on facts and contains a lot of communist 'jargon' such as 'American imperialists' and 'exploitation of the masses' designed to show the power of the communist ideology in winning the war and triumphing over the 'doomed' GMD who were unable to connect with the people (as the communists were). The report suggests the GMD were hostile to 'the people' but one cannot see Jieshi's rule as being against 'the people' and pro 'the elite' as he tried to fight on a

range of ideals for the future of China but, of course, the communists would want their victory to be seen in terms of class war and the triumph of the people over all. The report suggests that the dependence on US aid and its withdrawal following Truman's re-election in 1948 was a key reason for the GMD's loss. This must have had an impact on morale but the CCP were having increasing success over the GMD from 1948 and Mao for the first time saw that he could actually win the whole of China. The source also suggests that the GMD represented the bourgeoisie which was not necessarily true as they had peasant support in some of the south and also had the support of landowners and others outside of this class. Overall Source B helps in studying the reasons for the defeat of the GMD as it shows a single ideological focus that united all who were fighting on the side of the CCP – something that the GMD did not have. It also shows a powerful propaganda focus on 'the people' and the ability to give the majority a reason to support the CCP.

Source C is a speech to the GMD party given by Jieshi, the leader of the nationalists, in 1947. At this time the GMD had had success against the CCP but by June (the date of the speech) the PLA had launched a full scale assault on the GMD which was gradually becoming increasingly successful. So at this time Jieshi would want to fire up the GMD to resist the attack but would not necessarily feel he was looking at defeat. The source is full of emotive speech designed to fire up the party to really work to challenge the new attacks from the PLA. The source is trying to highlight the strength of the GMD and raise morale whilst also challenging the leaders to 'use their brains' and really think through the problems and situations and inspire the soldiers to wake up. The GMD did have strengths at the beginning of the civil war in terms of equipment and men but they were not superior in every area – particularly support of the peasant body in the north. Jieshi also refers to lack of talent -but as he had been responsible for organising the training and appointment of the military leaders for many years, this was really a criticism of himself! He suggests that the GMD were superior in technique, equipment and experience which is not really true as the soldiers were badly trained and treated and their technique was proven to be poor and lacking in foresight by rushing north and not considering supply lines (whereas the PLA had strong leaders working together). Overall the source is useful as it shows the poor leadership of Jieshi as a good leader would not criticise leadership in this way at this stage of the war and what he tries to do on the one hand – show morale and strength – is taken away by his criticism of leadership and soldiers apathy. It helps in studying the reasons why the GMD lost as it shows lack of a united leadership with clear goals to avoid the 'apathy' as the PLA had both unity and a strong ideology. The source is limited in any factual detail and clearly is trying to shift the blame away from Jieshi, the leader, to others and is very useful in evidencing the reasons for their defeat.

Commentary – Level 4

This is an effective, but not wholly successful answer. The evaluation of Sources A and B is thorough and generally convincing, although there should have been more assessment of the provenance of Source B in particular. The deployment of knowledge of context is appropriate and thorough, especially in relation to Source A. The evaluation of Source C is less effective and does not fully appreciate the purpose of it, as indicated by the second part of the speech (the elements of self-justification and the shifting of responsibility). It is a solid Level 4 response.