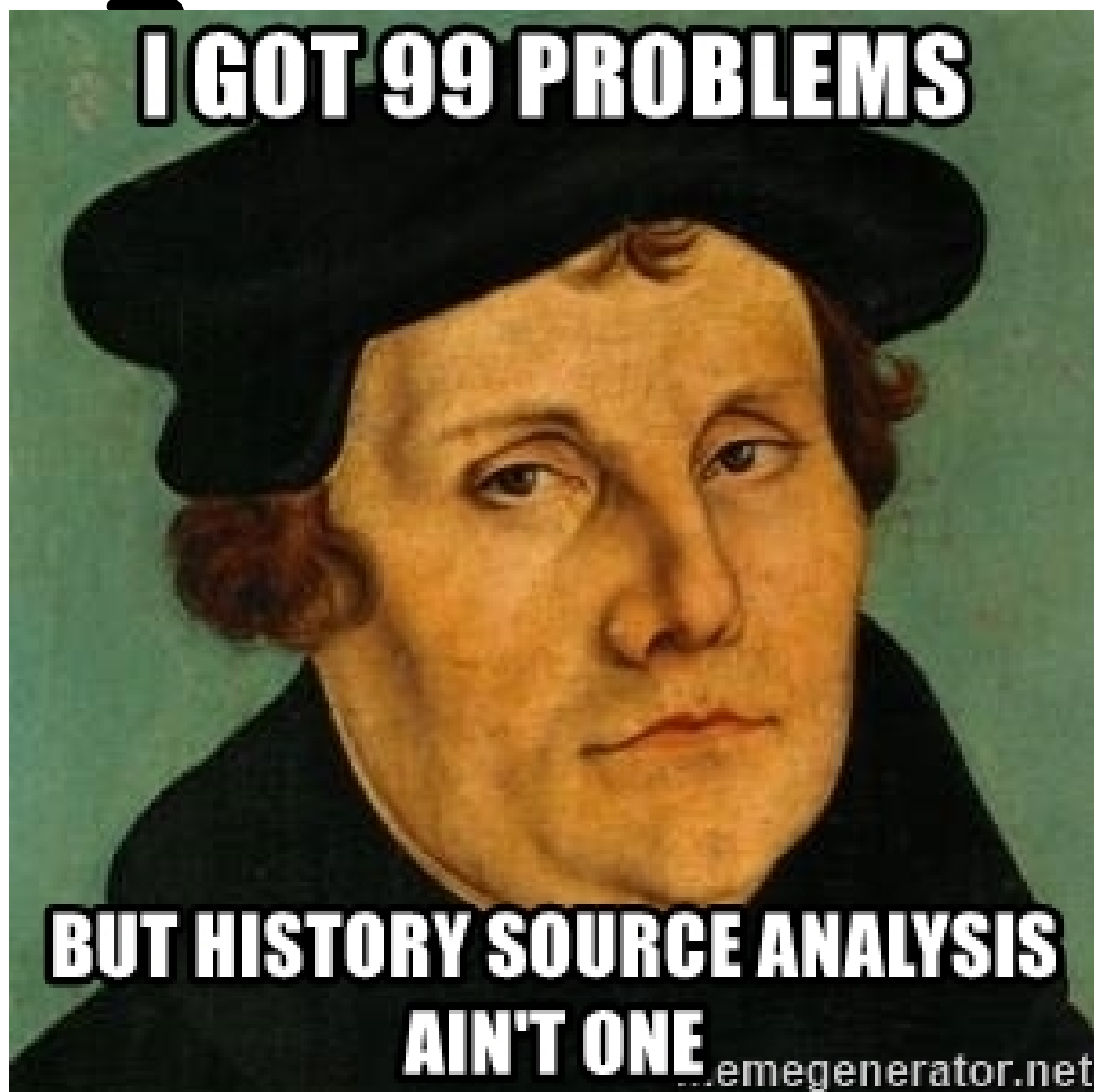


Practice Source questions



Q - With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these sources to an historian studying the response of Germany to the Treaty of Versailles

Source A

From 'Memoirs of a Social Democrat', 1929, by Philipp Scheidemann. Scheidemann was Chancellor in 1919 but resigned when the Versailles Treaty was accepted.

The Treaty handed to our delegates was the most wicked piece of work ever produced by blind hatred and senseless fury. The German government took fully the points formulated by Wilson and solemn assurances that the Entente was not waging war against the German people, but against the Kaiser and his regime. Despite the fact that the Kaiser had fled and although a Parliament had been elected by the people and a government with a Social Democrat President and Chancellor represented Germany, here was this mad, dictated Treaty, by which a nation of seventy millions was to be enslaved and stripped of its honour and defences for many years. What regime would not wither when shackled in these chains?

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Source B

From an article by the German journalist, Victor Schiff, for the SDP newspaper Vorwärts (Forwards), 1929. Schiff had been present at the signing of the Versailles Treaty in 1919.

And yet! In comparison with what we expected after Versailles, Germany has raised herself up to shoulder the terrific burden of this peace in a way we should never have thought possible. So that today, after ten years, we may say with certainty, as we reflect on the opinions and prophecies at the time, that it might have been worse. Those who claimed that to reject the Treaty would be the lesser of two evils must admit that despite every setback, the spirit of Versailles has been conquered. The stages of recovery from Versailles were the French leaving the Ruhr, Locarno and Geneva. There is still a very long road indeed to go, but we have travelled it surprisingly quickly.

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Source A

From a proclamation to the German people printed in the 'Berliner Volksblatt' (Berlin People's Gazette), on 9 November 1918. The 'Berliner Volksblatt' was the main publication of the SPD (Social Democratic Party).

Workers, Soldiers, Fellow Citizens – the Free People's State is here! The Kaiser and Crown Prince have abdicated! Fritz Ebert, the President of the Social Democratic Party, has been appointed Chancellor, and he forms a new government composed of men who enjoy the trust of the working people in the cities and in the countryside, and of soldiers. So public administration has been handed over to the people. A National Assembly will meet soon to discuss the new constitution.

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Workers, Soldiers, Citizens! The victory of the people has been achieved. Follow all instructions of the new people's government and of their officials. It acts in closest cooperation with the workers and soldiers.

The German Republic will thrive!

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Source B

From a speech by Rosa Luxemburg to the Founding Congress of the Communist Party of Germany (formerly the Spartacus League), 31 December 1918.

Comrades! The events of the last few days have brought a bitter awakening from our dreams. The motto of the Revolution of 9 November was the idea of the unity of the various socialist movements. But the bourgeoisie believed that, by the means of the so-called socialist government, they would be able to control the proletarian masses and strangle the socialist revolution.

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These illusions have now been banished into nothingness. The masses have come to realise that what has been pasted together and called a socialist government is nothing but a government representing the bourgeois counter-revolution, and that whoever continues to tolerate such a state of affairs is working against the proletariat and against socialism!

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Q - With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these sources to an historian studying the extent of support for the new republic

Source A

Adapted from an account given by Kurt von Schroeder at the Nuremberg War Trials in 1946. In 1933, Schroeder was a Cologne banker, a financial contributor to the NSDAP and an influential 'insider' in political and business circles.

On 4 January 1933 Hitler, von Papen, Hess and Himmler arrived at my house in Cologne. Papen had requested a meeting on about 10 December 1932. Negotiations took place exclusively between Hitler and Papen. Papen proposed a new government led by Hitler and himself together. However, Hitler made it clear that he would accept only if he was Chancellor and if Papen's followers supported his policy of removing all Social Democrats, Communists and Jews from leading positions in Germany and of restoring order in public life. Papen and Hitler reached agreement in principle. Before arranging this meeting I talked to a number of businessmen who told me of their desire to see a strong man come to power in Germany.

Source B

Adapted from a letter sent by industrialists to President Hindenburg in November 1932, signed by Bosch, Schacht, Thyssen, Krupp and twenty others.

Your Excellency! We believe it is necessary to create a government independent of the parliamentary parties. The outcome of the Reichstag elections of 6 November has demonstrated that the present cabinet has failed to find sufficient support among the German people. We declare ourselves to be free from any specific party-political interests. But we recognise in the nationalist movement, which is sweeping through our people, the beginning of an era of rebirth for the German economy, which can only be achieved by overcoming class conflict. The transfer of responsibility for leading a Presidential cabinet to the leader of the largest nationalist group would sweep millions of people, who at present still stand on the sidelines, into active participation.

Q - With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these sources to an historian studying why Hitler was appointed chancellor in 1933.

Source A

From the recollections of Erna von Pustau, the daughter of a Hamburg fish merchant. She is describing her experiences of hyperinflation to an American writer in 1947.

We used to say, 'All of Germany is suffering from inflation.' I can say it was not true. There is no game in which everyone loses. Someone has to win. The winners in our inflation were big businessmen in the cities and the peasants and landowners in the country. The great losers were the working class and above all the middle class, who had most to lose. How did big business win? Well, from the very beginning they sold their goods at gold value prices and paid their workers in inflated marks. How did prices rise? Nobody really knew. Perhaps we thought somehow it had to do with the stock exchange, and somehow, maybe to do with the Jews.

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Source B

From Otto Strasser's book, 'Hitler and I', written in 1940. Strasser was a leading member of the radical wing of the NSDAP in the 1920s and was particularly anti-big business.

Inflation set in. Every week, every day, and every hour, the value of the mark declined; the consequence of a catastrophic defeat, which had ruined the country's economic life. A thing you wanted in the morning you bought at once, because by the afternoon the price might have doubled or trebled. Foreigners arrived in numbers, and with dollars, pounds, or francs bought objects of art or food and goods that ordinary Germans could not afford. In the face of this immoral spectacle hatred of foreigners grew. Anger mounted against ineffective government and business profiteers. The streets echoed with noisy demonstrations. Desperation was reflected on every face, desperation of the kind that can lead to outbursts of political violence. The future seemed hopeless.

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Q - With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these sources to an historian studying the impact of hyperinflation

Source A

From 'I Knew Hitler', by Kurt Lüdecke, 1938, describing the events of March 1933. Lüdecke was a member of Hitler's inner circle.

We were witnessing a dramatic occasion. Wels, the last SPD leader, was in an impossible position, facing a hostile Reichstag and surrounded by armed Nazi troopers. Under these circumstances, his Party's vote against the Enabling Act showed courage.

Speaking monotonously that his Party had never lacked patriotism, he cut a desperate and deflated figure; his voice seemed the last squeak of a beaten and miserable group. Now Hitler rose briskly to reply. If ever a Party was annihilated by a speech, it happened then and the hall swelled with cheers, roars of laughter and mockery. When he ended with 'I do not want your votes! Germany will be free but not through you!' the storm of applause was a hurricane.

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Source B

From a diary entry by Karl Bachem, a former Centre Party Reichstag Deputy and distinguished historian, March 1933.

Was our vote right? Can it be morally justifiable to grant this Government, whose instincts are so completely different from our own, such far-reaching authority? The Enabling Act would have been passed even if the Centre Party had voted against it or abstained and, given the current Nazi mood, there would have been fury in the Reichstag, and we would probably have been beaten up and thrown out. The parliamentary group would have made a heroic exit, but with no benefit to our cause. All collaboration with the Nazis would have been out of the question. Will it be possible to influence them now? It is enough if co-operation with them can protect us against Communists.

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Q - With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these sources to an historian studying the passing of the March 1933 Enabling Act

Source A

From a speech by Robert Ley, leader of the German Labour Front, to the annual meeting of the 'Strength Through Joy' organisation, on the anniversary of its establishment, November 1934.

It was the Führer who, as usual, set the tone. He said, "I want every worker to be guaranteed sufficient vacation time and I want all his free time to be genuinely relaxing". This will of the Führer was like a sacred command. This is why we have undertaken a systematic organisation of workers into the Labour Front. The essence of life cannot be reduced to a simple matter of bread and butter or to one of wage issues. We have learned, rather, that life is a sum of many things – participation in culture, taking in the sights of splendour that our Fatherland has to offer, the design of the workplace, keeping the body physically fit, awakening folkloric customs, traditions, and sensibilities. Never before in history has an upheaval of this overwhelming magnitude been achieved and yet this is the miracle of what we have done. And so it is, that after not even two years in existence, Strength Through Joy is a resounding success.

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Source B

From a report by Sopade (Social Democratic Party of Germany in Exile) to its exiled Party leadership, entitled 'On Recruiting Workers Through Compulsory Membership and Social Bribery', November 1935.

All Nazi mass organisations have the same mission, whether it is the Labour Front, Strength Through Joy or the Hitler Youth; that is, to 'care for' national comrades, not to let them fend for themselves and certainly not to give them any time to think. Robert Ley recently admitted as much publicly: "The 'national comrade' shall have no private life." This is designed to keep your average man on the street completely lacking in independence, to extinguish in him any form of initiative toward building even the most primitive alliances, to isolate him and make him dependent on State organisations. Now and then, one of the workers in the Strength Through Joy programme expresses a word of praise by saying something like, "No one has bothered to worry about us before". In the past, workers took pride in being able to arrange these connections on their own. Compulsory membership in organisations on the one hand and the isolation of individuals on the other, are the essence of fascism.

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Source C

From a speech by Deputy Führer, Rudolf Hess, to the Reich Chamber of Labour in 1938.

Some workers still hold against us that, whereas we are always talking about the increase in production, wages have not correspondingly increased so that, in reality, the employees are not sharing the fruits of this success. I can only reply to them that swimming pools, canteens, improvements in working conditions, all the advances in the social field; all these things are the result of the increase in production, from which the individual benefits as part of the community. It is, therefore, of great importance that one must assess the social position of the German worker, not on the basis of an increase in wages or no increase in wages, but from a consideration of what position the workers now hold within the national community. And in this case, one need only go through Germany with one's eyes open to discover that the ordinary citizen can do things which in other countries are open only to a privileged class, but never to the workers.

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With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying Nazi policies towards the workers in the years 1933 to 1939.

Source A

From a report by the SOPADE (the Social Democratic Party in exile), June 1934. SOPADE got its information from contacts who were working secretly in Germany.

The Nazi regime still controls important instruments of power; the comprehensive propaganda apparatus and hundreds of thousands of supporters whose posts and prosperity depend on the continuation of the regime. At the top of the regime are men who have no scruples in the exercise of power and who, in the hour of danger, will not shrink from the greatest crimes.

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No system of rule collapses by itself. The weakness of the opposition is the strength of the regime. Its opponents are ideologically and organisationally weak. They are ideologically weak because the great masses are only discontented; they are merely grumblers whose discontent springs simply from economic motives. Fear of Bolshevism and the chaos which would follow Hitler's fall are still reasons why the regime is supported by the masses.

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The regime's opponents are organisationally weak because it is the essence of a fascist system that it does not allow its opponents to organise collectively.

Source B

From an article in a British newspaper, 17 November 1936. It was written by the British politician David Lloyd George following a visit to Germany. Lloyd George had been Britain's Prime Minister during the First World War.

I have just returned from a visit to Germany. There is, for the first time since the War, a general sense of security. The people are more cheerful. There is a greater sense of general gaiety of spirit throughout the land.

As to Hitler's popularity, especially among the youth of Germany, there can be no manner of doubt. The old trust him; the young idolise him. It is not the admiration accorded to a popular leader. It is the worship of a national hero who has saved his country from utter despondency and degradation.

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It is true that public criticism of the government is forbidden in every form. That does not mean that criticism is absent. I have heard the speeches of prominent Nazi orators freely condemned. But not a word of criticism or of disapproval have I heard about Hitler. This great people will work better, sacrifice more, and, if necessary fight with greater resolution because Hitler asks them to do so.

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Source C

From a confidential report of 1937 by a Gestapo agent from Düsseldorf.

Whereas until 1936 the main propaganda emphasis was on distributing lots of pamphlets, at the beginning of 1936, the Communists switched to propaganda by word of mouth, setting up bases in factories. The shifting about of workers within the various factories, necessitated by the scarcity of raw materials, makes surveillance more difficult and makes it easier for workers to be indoctrinated by Communist activists.

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The SPD [Social Democratic Party] works by means of the dissemination of news and the setting up of cells in factories, sports clubs and other organisations. Since the former SPD members carry on the propaganda only by word of mouth, it is very difficult to get hold of proof of their illegal activities which would be usable in court.

In 1938 we will have to devote particular attention to illegal activities in the factories. Trusted agents have infiltrated several big factories in my district and have already provided proof that the KPD [German Communist Party] and the SPD are carrying out conspiratorial work jointly.

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With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the extent of opposition to the Nazi regime in the years 1934 to 1937.

Source A

From a newspaper article by Ernst Röhm, published in June 1933.

The SA and the SS are the foundation pillars of the coming National Socialist state. The SA and the SS are the militant-spiritual bearers of the Will of the German Revolution. Anyone who only wanted to be a fellow-traveller during shining torchlight processions and impressive parades with rumbling drums, with blaring trumpets and under waving flags and believes he has 'taken part' in the German Revolution – he can go home! The fighters in the simple brown service shirts of the SA and the SS will not miss him on their path forwards to the German Revolution; just as they did not miss him when, in long years marked by sacrifices and blood, they fought their passionate fight for a new Germany. We, the SA, will not tolerate the German Revolution going to sleep or being betrayed at the half-way stage by non-combatants. For the Brown Army is the last fighting force of the nation, the last bastion against Communism. If the German Revolution is wrecked by reactionary opposition, by incompetence or idleness, the German people will fall into despair. If bourgeois simpletons think it is enough that the state apparatus has received a new sign, if they think the 'national' revolution has already gone on too long, then for once we agree with them. It is in fact high time that the national revolution stopped and became the National Socialist one.

With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the events leading up to the Night of Long Knives.

Source B

From a speech by Franz von Papen, the German Vice Chancellor, at Marburg 17 June 1934.

No nation can afford an eternal revolt from below if that nation wishes to continue to exist. At some time the movement must come to an end; at some time a firm social structure must emerge and it must be supported by an incorruptible judiciary and an uncontested state authority. Permanent dynamism cannot shape anything lasting. We must not let Germany become a train tearing along the way to nowhere. The German government is well informed concerning the selfishness, beastliness and arrogance that are now spreading under the disguise of the German Revolution.

Source C

From 'Knaves, Fools and Heroes', the memoirs of Sir John Wheeler-Bennett, published in 1974. In 1934 Wheeler-Bennett was a young Englishman living in Berlin who had good contacts with the British Embassy and with leading officers in the German Army.

The impact of Papen's Marburg speech upon the Nazi hierarchy was one of near-panic, as rumours reached them that Papen's warning, with its barely concealed attack on Goebbels, had the backing of Field Marshal Hindenburg and the Army. I am not likely to forget those last two weeks of June 1934 in Berlin. The atmosphere, both meteorologically and politically, was stormy. Oppressive thunderstorms worked their way up and down the River Spree, without actually breaking. In the same way, apprehensive rumours flew around the capital, as was only possible in Berlin. I was deeply depressed and not a little fearful. Everyone seemed to feel that a storm was about to burst. The days went on, the days of awful waiting. Would there be an anti-climax? Or would Hitler strike? And against whom?

Source A

From a speech by Robert Ley, leader of the German Labour Front, to the annual meeting of the 'Strength Through Joy' organisation, on the anniversary of its establishment, November 1934.

It was the Führer who, as usual, set the tone. He said, "I want every worker to be guaranteed sufficient vacation time and I want all his free time to be genuinely relaxing". This will of the Führer was like a sacred command. This is why we have undertaken a systematic organisation of workers into the Labour Front. The essence of life cannot be reduced to a simple matter of bread and butter or to one of wage issues. We have learned, rather, that life is a sum of many things – participation in culture, taking in the sights of splendour that our Fatherland has to offer, the design of the workplace, keeping the body physically fit, awakening folkloric customs, traditions, and sensibilities. Never before in history has an upheaval of this overwhelming magnitude been achieved and yet this is the miracle of what we have done. And so it is, that after not even two years in existence, Strength Through Joy is a resounding success.

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Source B

From a report by Sopade (Social Democratic Party of Germany in Exile) to its exiled Party leadership, entitled 'On Recruiting Workers Through Compulsory Membership and Social Bribery', November 1935.

All Nazi mass organisations have the same mission, whether it is the Labour Front, Strength Through Joy or the Hitler Youth; that is, to 'care for' national comrades, not to let them fend for themselves and certainly not to give them any time to think. Robert Ley recently admitted as much publicly: "The 'national comrade' shall have no private life." This is designed to keep your average man on the street completely lacking in independence, to extinguish in him any form of initiative toward building even the most primitive alliances, to isolate him and make him dependent on State organisations. Now and then, one of the workers in the Strength Through Joy programme expresses a word of praise by saying something like, "No one has bothered to worry about us before". In the past, workers took pride in being able to arrange these connections on their own. Compulsory membership in organisations on the one hand and the isolation of individuals on the other, are the essence of fascism.

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Source C

From a speech by Deputy Führer, Rudolf Hess, to the Reich Chamber of Labour in 1938.

Some workers still hold against us that, whereas we are always talking about the increase in production, wages have not correspondingly increased so that, in reality, the employees are not sharing the fruits of this success. I can only reply to them that swimming pools, canteens, improvements in working conditions, all the advances in the social field; all these things are the result of the increase in production, from which the individual benefits as part of the community. It is, therefore, of great importance that one must assess the social position of the German worker, not on the basis of an increase in wages or no increase in wages, but from a consideration of what position the workers now hold within the national community. And in this case, one need only go through Germany with one's eyes open to discover that the ordinary citizen can do things which in other countries are open only to a privileged class, but never to the workers.

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With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying Nazi policies towards the workers in the years 1933 to 1939.

Source A

From a pamphlet by Harro Schulze-Boysen, a low-ranking officer in the German Air Ministry, who helped lead the resistance activities of the communist 'Red Orchestra', February 1942.

What should happen? The German people need a Socialist government of workers, soldiers and intelligentsia. What can the individual do? Everybody must make sure that he does the opposite of the present regime's demands. We demand a people's court to try those who have driven us into the Russian campaign and so into a two-front war with completely inadequate preparations. The regime is guilty of the senseless deaths of hundreds of thousands in ice and snow. It is not enough to grumble or to make stupid jokes; remember that the Nazis are doing everything to paint a distorted picture. Oppose the general fear! Protest more and more loudly if you have to keep standing in queues everywhere! Stop putting up with everything! Don't let yourselves be intimidated any more. Let the regime feel that the people despise murderers from the depths of their hearts. Pass this on to friends and workmates! You're not alone! Fight the government at first yourself and then in groups. Tomorrow Germany belongs to us!

Source B

From the final leaflet of the White Rose movement, written after the surrender of the German Sixth Army at Stalingrad, 31 January 1943.

Fellow Students!

Our people are deeply shaken by the fall of our men at Stalingrad. Three hundred and thirty thousand German men were senselessly and irresponsibly driven to their deaths by the brilliant strategy of our First World War corporal. Führer, we thank you! The German people are in ferment. The day of reckoning for German youth has come with the most abominable tyrant our people have ever been forced to endure. In the name of German youth, we demand Hitler's state restore our personal freedom, the most precious treasure that we have, out of which he has swindled us in the most wretched way. The Hitler Youth and SS have tried to drug us and regiment us in the most promising years of our lives to become godless, arrogant and conscienceless exploiters and executioners. The name of Germany will remain forever stained with shame if German youth do not finally arise, fight back and smash our tormentors. The German people look to us; the dead of Stalingrad beseech us!

Source C

From a broadcast speech by Robert Ley, leader of the German Labour Front, to workers in a Berlin factory on 22 July 1944, two days after an attempt to assassinate Hitler.

My German compatriots! Workers! Women! You have lived through this nightmare, sharing the same feelings as the rest of us. I realised immediately what would have become of Germany if this murderous attempt on the Führer had succeeded. It is too terrible to comprehend. At one stroke, all our efforts destroyed! At one stroke, all prospects of victory shattered! Above all, however, millions of Germans cast into indescribable misery, slavery, destruction, poverty and starvation. Our nation would have been helpless. 'The Führer lives!' We took in that sentence, we drank it in. The Führer unharmed; as if by a miracle, despite being the nearest to the bomb. A worker said to me yesterday, 'Thank God the assassin wasn't a worker'. Yes, all Germans in every walk of life are ashamed to be connected with such murderers. These creatures must be destroyed. I believe I am speaking for you all in saying that we are possessed by a sacred anger, which rises from the depths of the nation.

With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying resistance to the Nazis in the years 1941 to 1944.