

Grade 9 Answer

How Far Do You Agree

16
Marks

Question:

'John's dispute with the Papacy was the main reason for his worsening relationship with the barons.' How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

You may use the following in your answer:

- Excommunication
- Loss of Normandy

You must also use information of your own.

(16 marks)

Answer:

I agree that John's dispute with the Papacy was a significant factor in his worsening relationship with the barons, but it was not the sole reason. John was excommunicated in 1209 for refusing to accept Stephen Langton, the Pope's appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. This act of defiance alienated many barons and bishops loyal to the Church, who viewed John's actions as a direct challenge to papal authority. The excommunication meant that John was considered a sinner and unfit to rule, eroding his legitimacy in the eyes of his subjects. As a result, some barons felt justified in defying him, believing they were no longer bound to obey a king who had fallen out of favor with the Pope. This created a rift between John and the barons, significantly contributing to the deterioration of their relationship.

However, John's loss of Normandy in 1214 was equally important in worsening his relationship with the barons. The territory had been a crucial source of income and military support, and its loss was seen as a national humiliation. John's failure in the war against France, particularly after the Battle of Bouvines, diminished his standing among the barons, who had financed the campaigns. Many were frustrated by the loss of their investments, as John had exhausted his war chest of £130,000 to reclaim Normandy. This military failure not only angered the barons but also led to the perception of John as 'Soft Sword,' highlighting his ineffectiveness as a military leader. The loss of Normandy, coupled with the financial strain it placed on the barons, directly contributed to their growing discontent with John's reign.

Additionally, John's arbitrary misuse of power alienated the barons further. His methods included closing law courts and appointing judges loyal to him, limiting the barons' ability to seek justice. The harsh treatment of barons like William de Braose, whom John exiled and mistreated, exemplified his abuse of authority. Such actions fostered resentment and fear among the barons, prompting them to seek alternatives to John's rule.

In conclusion, while John's dispute with the Papacy significantly contributed to his deteriorating relationship with the barons, it was not the sole cause. The loss of Normandy and John's oppressive exercise of power were equally critical factors leading to the barons' rebellion against him.

Feedback:

This answer would get 16/16 marks because the pupil has explained three reasons for the worsening relationship with the barons (dispute with Papacy, loss of Normandy and misuse of power). They have explained each point in depth using historical information, and directly linked to the question throughout. They have also made a judgement and justified it in their conclusion.