



History 7042
Specimen Question Paper 2P (A-level)
Question 02 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

02 'The successful consolidation of communist power in China in the years 1949 to 1953 was through the use of terror'

Assess the validity of this view

[25 marks]

Student response

Following the victory of the CCP in 1949, there was a need to establish control over the whole of China. This became particularly important with the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 which heightened the feeling that China's revolution was under threat. A range of methods were used to achieve this, some of which were peaceful and involved convincing the Chinese of the benefits of Communist rule. However, a key feature of these years was the use of terror against 'counter-revolutionary elements' and this allowed Mao to enhance his control and prevent anyone from challenging him.

The Chinese population faced several campaigns from 1950 onwards which involved the use of terror to root out 'counter-revolutionaries'. The 'suppression of Counter-Revolutionaries' campaign for example between 1950 – 51, attacked anyone who had been in contact with the GMD in the past and members of religious sects. This resulted in large numbers of Chinese being denounced, investigated and punished. In Shanghai, 28,332 people were executed in less than a year. Many of these were carried out in public in order to have maximum effect in consolidating Communist power. In the Three-antis and Five Antis Campaigns, executions were not such a major feature, but the public denunciations led many to commit suicide rather than face further humiliation.

Alongside the campaigns, and indeed as part of them, Mao set up a terror network which further helped establish control over the whole population. A nationwide network of work units, street and neighbourhood committees was established to help the CCP in its efforts to identify and punish counter-revolutionaries. Quotas were set for arrests and executions which further added to the sense of terror as pressure to meet the quotas meant that the selection of victims was often random. Suspicion and fear helped divide communities as many chose to save themselves by denouncing others before they themselves could become a target. Thus traditional relationships based on family and workplace were no longer important; the only way that one could be protected was by total loyalty to the CCP.

The establishment of many labour camps further increased terror. Not only were they a source of labour for the new government, but they also became a means to intimidate and terrorise the population who knew that ending up in such a camp could often lead to death.

Alongside the terror the CCP also used other tactics to consolidate its power. Propaganda was a key weapon and the newspapers, theatre, cinema, radio and posters were all used to spread the benefits of communism. However, propaganda also underpinned the terror. It helped to

create an atmosphere of fear and suspicion, encouraging people to join the campaigns. Where people were illiterate, newspaper reading groups were established in order to ensure that everyone got the key messages.

Land reform was another key way of establishing power. The process of Land Reform was carried out throughout China and involved the confiscation and distribution of land to poorer peasants and landless labourers. Peasants themselves denounced the landlords and this whole process, cemented the relationship between China's peasants and the Communist revolution. Peasants who had been involved in the killings and had also benefited from land redistribution were likely to support the revolution and they thus ensured that the Communists were able to consolidate their power.

Chinese people benefitted in other ways from the revolution and this was another way of ensuring support. The Marriage Law of 1950 for example improved rights for women within Chinese society while The 1953 Electoral Law gave them equal voting rights. This meant that women were also likely to support the revolution because of the gains that had been achieved. Improvements in education further enable the CCP to be seen as a force for good which led to greater support.

Perhaps one of the most important ways in which the CCP consolidated its support was through the use of the PLA. The PLA were a highly regarded military body; soldier heroes who had come to embody the revolutionary virtues that were prized by Mao and were held up as role models for the Chinese to copy. 'Learn from the PLA' was one of the main propaganda slogans of the CCP after 1949. The PLA increased Communist control through the reunification campaigns which involved taking over Tibet and Xinjiang, and also by increasing Mao's prestige through their actions in the Korean War. They also were an arm of the terror, helping to root out and kill opponents of the CCP. However, they also played a key role in spreading communist control throughout China by going out into the countryside to pass on communist ideology to the peasants. They were put to work on many public works projects to rebuild China's infrastructure - such as rebuilding bridges, roads and railways that had been damaged in the war. In the process, they again helped to establish the CCP's control.

In conclusion, the CCP used a range of methods of to consolidate its power throughout China. However, underlying many of these methods was the use of terror. The Korean war gave Mao the excuse that he needed in order to mobilized the mass of the population to participate in a wave or terror which created an atmosphere of uncertainty and intimidation in which no one was able to speak out against the new government.

Commentary – Level 4

This is an effective answer, consistently relevant and focused on the question, with an effective assessment of the use of terror. The answer has range, in that other factors are considered, but there is lack of development of most of these points; for example, the full impact of policies to women could have been explained further, rather than offer what is a somewhat assertive analysis. It is, then, a good Level 4 answer.