

A-level  
**HISTORY**  
**7042/2N**

Component 2N Revolution and dictatorship: Russia, 1917–1953

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Mark scheme

June 2022

Version: 1.0 Final



Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

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## Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's answer read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the mark scheme.

### Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level, you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly Level 3 with a small amount of Level 4 material it would be placed in Level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the Level 4 content.

### Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help. There will be an answer in the standardising materials which will correspond with each level of the mark scheme. This answer will have been awarded a mark by the Lead Examiner. You can compare the student's answer with the example to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse than the example. You can then use this to allocate a mark for the answer based on the Lead Examiner's mark on the example.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

**Section A**

- 0 1** With reference to these sources and your understanding of the historical context, assess the value of these three sources to an historian studying the problems of having a Dual Authority in Russia in the months March to May 1917.

**[30 marks]***Target: AO2*

*Analyse and evaluate appropriate source material, primary and/or contemporary to the period, within the historical context.*

**Generic Mark Scheme**

- L5:** Shows a very good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with a strong awareness of the historical context to present a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. The answer will convey a substantiated judgement. The response demonstrates a very good understanding of context. **25–30**
- L4:** Shows a good understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance and combines this with an awareness of the historical context to provide a balanced argument on their value for the particular purpose given in the question. Judgements may, however, be partial or limited in substantiation. The response demonstrates a good understanding of context. **19–24**
- L3:** Shows some understanding of all three sources in relation to both content and provenance together with some awareness of the historical context. There may, however, be some imbalance in the degree of breadth and depth of comment offered on all three sources and the analysis may not be fully convincing. The answer will make some attempt to consider the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates an understanding of context. **13–18**
- L2:** The answer will be partial. It may, for example, provide some comment on the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question but only address one or two of the sources, or focus exclusively on content (or provenance), or it may consider all three sources but fail to address the value of the sources for the particular purpose given in the question. The response demonstrates some understanding of context. **7–12**
- L1:** The answer will offer some comment on the value of at least one source in relation to the purpose given in the question but the response will be limited and may be partially inaccurate. Comments are likely to be unsupported, vague or generalist. The response demonstrates limited understanding of context. **1–6**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

## Indicative content

**Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.**

**Students must deploy knowledge of the historical context to show an understanding of the relationship between the sources and the issues raised in the question, when assessing the significance of provenance, the arguments deployed in the sources and the tone and emphasis of the sources. Descriptive answers which fail to do this should be awarded no more than Level 2 at best. Answers should address both the value and the limitations of the sources for the particular question and purpose given.**

**Source A: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:**

### Provenance, tone and emphasis

- taken from a letter written by Lenin, this offers insight into the view of the Bolshevik leader who would eventually force the break-up of the Dual Authority; it expresses his personal and ideological view of unqualified opposition to the Dual Authority
- written in exile very shortly after the abdication of the Tsar, Lenin had no direct experience of the situation in Russia, but had kept himself well-informed
- the source's value is in the statement of views that would come to prevail after Lenin's return in April, although Bolsheviks remained a minority in the Soviet until the Autumn
- writing to Pravda shows Lenin was anxious to get his views across to workers and members of the Soviet, who, he believed, were taking a false step. Once Lenin was in Russia in person from April, these views became increasingly popular
- Lenin's tone is ideological. He pits the proletariat, and their 'self-sacrifice', against the bourgeoisie of the new government and accuses those who co-operate in the Dual Authority as 'traitors'. However, Lenin's view did not represent the majority opinion of the Soviet from March to May.

### Content and argument

- Lenin defines the Revolution as a fight for freedom, land and peace and suggests that the Provisional Government will deny these gains. This is supported by its commitment to continue the war, limited promises on freedom, and avoidance of the 'land' issue. Overall suggesting that the Dual Authority is incapable of resolving these issues.
- Lenin suggests a marked class distinction between the Provisional Government and Soviet making co-operation impossible. The Provisional Government was largely bourgeoisie/higher class, eg Lvov (nobility), Milyukov, Guchkov and middle-class Kadets and Octobrists, suggesting that they would not address the needs of the proletariat effectively, thereby reducing faith in the Dual Authority.
- However, to counter Lenin's argument, Soviet membership comprised largely educated, middle-class socialists with Kerensky (lawyer), a member of both. In March, co-operation in the Dual Authority was based on shared determination to avoid workers' revolt/anarchy
- Lenin refers to the Soviet as 'comparatively weak', yet the Soviet controlled railways, posts and telegraphs and the army (Order no 1); the Soviet had more real power than the Provisional Government in March. The real problem was of attitude: Soviet ready to submit to the more experienced men in the Provisional Government and Menshevik members believed a bourgeoisie revolution had to occur before a socialist one; Lenin's view of the weak Soviet is valuable, but he doesn't supply the real reasons

**Source B: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:****Provenance, tone and emphasis**

- the value of the source lies in this first-hand picture of the confused governmental situation in May 1917 from the point of view of the Petrograd Soviet, one of the two participants in the Dual Authority
- it was written in the wake of the April Crisis which forced the resignations of Milyukov and Guchkov from the Provisional Government, following the former's 'note' showing that he was committed to the Tsar's expansionist war aims. It depicts a 'dangerous' juncture: the Dual Authority is not working and the Provisional Government needs to be shored up to prevent the country falling apart
- it is addressed to those represented by the Soviet to explain and win their support for their representatives joining the Provisional Government; this is entirely contrary to the line being advanced by the (minority) Bolsheviks under Lenin and the need for explanation suggests the Soviet no longer has the full support of the working class; crucial to understanding the failure of the Dual Authority
- imagery – 'broken down', 'breaking up' is used to paint a bleak picture of the times and emphasise the need for a 'strong revolutionary government', but the source is not overly forceful and the limp ending 'this is why we have submitted the terms' is suggestive of the Soviet's uncertainty; it is reluctance to assume power for itself – explaining why the Dual Authority is set to continue.

**Content and argument**

- the source shows the failure of the Dual Authority by focusing on the breakdown of control as a result of war: the economic impact of war had hit soldiers, peasants and workers who were acting illegally by deserting, striking and seizing land in the face of government inaction; the Provisional Government's refusal to reform before an elected assembly was in place was a key factor in making the Dual Authority unworkable – it effectively paralysed government
- the key statements that 'no one pays any attention' to government agents and that the government feels 'powerless' reflect the Provisional Government's loss of control; at this time independent soviets of soldiers and workers were being established, reflecting the breakdown of the Dual Authority
- the source speaks of the need for a strong revolutionary government, yet it is not a rallying call to seize power and actually reflects the moderation of the Soviet; it is significant that the Soviet accepts the need to keep the army 'on a war footing' – suggesting the Soviet is not responding to those it represented – preferring to accept the Provisional Government's leadership and its part in the Dual Authority
- overall, in arguing that members of the Soviet should join the Provisional Government, the article is sounding a death knell for the Dual Authority. The Soviet is set to bolster the Provisional Government and in future will be held liable for the mistakes of that body; it is losing its separate identity and submitting to the 'greater' authority of its own accord; valuable evidence that a Dual Authority has not worked.

**Source C: in assessing the value of this source, students may refer to the following:**

**Provenance, tone and emphasis**

- Price was writing in Russia, where he had lived since 1917 and through the months he discusses. As a journalist he is likely to have been a keen observer of events, and as a Russian speaker he would have been able to read reports at first hand; but he is a British outsider and his view is likely to be clouded by his (idealistic) socialist sympathies
- writing in 1918, Price's interpretation will have been affected by later developments – not least the breakdown of the Dual Authority, the Bolshevik revolution and the establishment of Bolshevik government; he writes from the victor's standpoint, seeing what he wants to see in the problems of March-May 1917
- his audience within the Marxist British Socialist Party was likely to be sympathetic to his views and he writes to explain developments, as he sees them, more than to persuade readers of his opinions; this makes his writing overly one-sided and uncritical
- Price reveals his sympathies in his choice of language, referring to the 'timid' Provisional Government, the 'ever-increasing exploitation' of the workers and the 'imperative need for action', which workers 'instinctively' felt. He writes with a journalist's flair for rhetoric – 'Something had to be done...' is twice repeated, and he displays an educated man's understanding of Marxist ideology.

**Content and argument**

- Price identifies a mass demand for social change in March 1917, with workers desperate to reduce the costs of living exerting pressure through the Soviet; in reality, the Soviet was more concerned with negotiating political freedoms (eg amnesties) and control of the army; the Soviet supported the Provisional Government's war efforts to the detriment of social reform; the constant need to compromise was a key problem in making the Dual Authority
- Price suggests the factory-owners and middlemen 'needed to be put under control' – this did not happen; the Dual Authority failed to stop the decline in living standards; Soviet demands for worker control and an 8-hour day were ignored; government policy focused on supporting factory owners in restoring discipline; expectations of the two bodies were too often mutually contradictory, so weakening the Dual Authority
- Price's understanding of the Soviet and its part in the Dual Authority is idealised; his view of the Provisional Government as 'timid' and the Petrograd Soviet leading the action and imposing their will is false; the argument in the source is flawed because of the writer's perspective
- Price suggests 'it was not a Dual Authority' but an agreement in which the Soviet was 'set to triumph'; this flies in the face of developments in March-May during which the Soviet followed the Provisional Government's lead; Price fails to see that it was the Petrograd Soviet that was timid and that the masses were only able to impose their will after May as Bolshevik influence grew. The source identifies the difficulties of working together in a Dual Authority, but it is less valuable in its explanations of the balance of power within this.

**Section B**

- 0 2** To what extent was Stalin's success in the power struggle after Lenin's death due to Trotsky's errors of judgement?

**[25 marks]***Target: AO1*

*Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.*

**Generic Mark Scheme**

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**



**Indicative content**

**Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.**

**Arguments supporting the view that Stalin's success in the power struggle after Lenin's death was due to Trotsky's errors of judgement might include:**

- Trotsky assumed his position was secure, even when, as early as 1922, a triumvirate of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin formed to counter his view that there should be debate over issues (party democracy) within the inner circle of the party elite. (The triumvirate took anti- 'factionalism' stance); he rested on his reputation as a brilliant theorist and made no attempt to act against opponents
- he did not press for the publication of Lenin's Testament which would have shown up the faults of his opponents, probably because it marked him out as 'over-confident' and a man who had not always been a Bolshevik; nor did he attempt to dispel rumours that he was relying on the Red Army to mount a coup
- Trotsky made an error of judgement in not ensuring he was in attendance at Lenin's funeral – giving Stalin the opportunity to pose as Lenin's successor; he failed to appreciate what was happening as Stalin accumulated power using his position as Party secretary
- he hesitated to act against Stalin at the 1924 Party Congress, fearing a split in the Party; Trotsky could not be bothered with party administration and did not attempt build a power base; Trotsky was taken aback by the support Stalin received for his view – 'socialism in one country' - leaving him looking anti-patriotic in speaking for maintaining 'permanent revolution'. Furthermore, he attacked party bureaucracy when he needed its support
- Trotsky was outspoken and appeared intolerant in economic debates, (arguing anti-NEP), failing to understand that Stalin held the balance of power in the 'Golden Middle'; Zinoviev and Kamenev belatedly joined him in mid-1926 (the United opposition) but this suggested the three were inconsistent opportunists; Trotsky badly under-rated Stalin, relied too heavily on theoretical discussion (war of words) and by October 1927 he was expelled from the Central Committee and in November from the Party – leaving the way clear for Stalin.

**Arguments challenging the view that Stalin's success in the power struggle after Lenin's death was due to Trotsky's errors of judgement might include:**

- the power struggle only came about because of Lenin's failure to provide for the succession and his 'blackening' of all potential contenders in his Testament; as Trotsky had done so much to win the Civil War and had worked closely with Lenin, it was no error of judgement for him to assume he would continue to be at the centre of government
- the power struggle was largely the result of Stalin's own ambition and manoeuvrings, using his position as General Secretary, to win and retain Party supporters; he craftily concealed his intentions and was able to play on the fears which Trotsky, engendered through his control of the Army (Napoleon figure)
- Stalin's success was due to his views on 'Socialism in One Country' and his ultimate decision in 1928 to support collectivisation and rapid economic growth; his centralisation policies were more in tune with the country's needs; it was an ideological victory
- Stalin's success depended on far more than Trotsky's misjudgements; Zinoviev and Kamenev also misjudged and underestimated Stalin and by supporting him in the Triumvirate, helped him to start building his power base; Bukharin and Rykov made tactical mistakes – supporting Stalin against Trotsky and then finding themselves isolated and seen as feeble moderates when Stalin turned towards rapid industrialisation and 'war' in the countryside.

A high level answer to this question might spend time debating as to whether Trotsky actually made any 'errors of judgement' and consider whether he was simply the victim of Stalin's inexorable rise to power. Nevertheless, students are likely to suggest that there were several points, particularly in 1924/5 when a different judgement could have made a difference to Trotsky's position and some may choose to agree that his judgement, not least of Stalin's character, was poor and that he bore the responsibility for allowing Stalin to forge ahead and take control. Reward any line of argument that offers a well-supported and convincing analysis.

**0 3** 'The quality of life for both workers and peasants suffered as a result of Stalin's economic policies in the 1930s.'

Assess the validity of this view.

**[25 marks]**

*Target: AO1*

*Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.*

### Generic Mark Scheme

- L5:** Answers will display a very good understanding of the full demands of the question. They will be well-organised and effectively delivered. The supporting information will be well-selected, specific and precise. It will show a very good understanding of key features, issues and concepts. The answer will be fully analytical with a balanced argument and well-substantiated judgement. **21–25**
- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
- L3:** Answers will show an understanding of the question and will supply a range of largely accurate information, which will show an awareness of some of the key issues and features, but may, however, be unspecific or lack precision of detail. The answer will be effectively organised and show adequate communication skills. There will be a good deal of comment in relation to the question and the answer will display some balance, but a number of statements may be inadequately supported and generalist. **11–15**
- L2:** The answer is descriptive or partial, showing some awareness of the question but a failure to grasp its full demands. There will be some attempt to convey material in an organised way, although communication skills may be limited. There will be some appropriate information showing understanding of some key features and/or issues, but the answer may be very limited in scope and/or contain inaccuracy and irrelevance. There will be some, but limited, comment in relation to the question and statements will, for the most part, be unsupported and generalist. **6–10**
- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

**Indicative content**

**Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.**

**Arguments supporting the view that the quality of life for both workers and peasants suffered as a result of Stalin's economic policies in the 1930s might include:**

- workers suffered harsh working conditions: seven day working week, long hours; labour discipline was harsh – arriving late or missing work could mean dismissal, eviction and loss of benefits; damaging machinery or leaving a job without permission was a criminal offence; strikes illegal; internal passports and, from 1938, labour books recorded employment, skills and disciplinary issues; a worker's political/class background could affect chances
- shortage of housing: kommunalka restricted privacy; concierges spied on apartment blocks; some living in barracks or factories; sewage, street lighting and public transport variable as increase in urban population strained services; water rationed; urban violence – petty crime and hard drinking
- rationing until 1935 with shortages of food and reliance on the black market; consumer goods in short supply
- better-off peasants (Kulaks) deliberately persecuted and wiped out; dislocation of move to collectives brought famine 1932/33 – particularly harsh in Ukraine – maybe deliberate government policy; central control brought policing of countryside, questioning of religion and tradition, loss of old openness and cooperation in atmosphere of fear.

**Arguments challenging the view that the quality of life for both workers and peasants suffered as a result of Stalin's economic policies in the 1930s might include:**

- industrialisation raised real wages for factory workers; skilled workers did best because of the skills shortage; technical education and training opportunities offered opportunities for advancement; purges created vacancies 'at the top'; wage differentials (1931) – enabled the hard-working to do well; some felt a greater sense of purpose: shock workers at Magnitorsk, builders of Moscow metro; Stakhanovites; commitment brought benefits too
- hours and wages were regulated; some had benefit of factory canteens and sometimes factory shops for employees; rationing ended 1935 and good years 1935–1937
- urban workers were given education, health, housing, benefits; state-run clubs, societies and Komsomol for youth; women had more opportunities (42% industrial workers by 1935); most towns offered escapist cinema
- peasants received a regular wage and could better themselves; no profits were made at other's expense; had private plots for own families and from 1935 could sell in market place; access to machinery, eg tractors reduced physical labour; chance to move to city (urban workers better off)
- compulsory schooling for first time in countryside brought a rise in literacy; also, more medical provision and rural clinics.

There is no doubt that, by western standards, life was hard for most workers and peasants in the 1930s. However, a well-balanced answer will consider some of the ways in which these social groups benefited and offer a judgement on the degree to which they 'suffered'. It might be argued that conditions were actually better than those endured before Stalin's economic changes, or a line could be taken that peasants suffered more than urban workers, or that life for the unskilled suffered was worse than that for the skilled factory hand. Although students should consider both peasants and workers there is, of course, no requirement for comparison.

**0 4** 'When Stalin died in 1953, the Soviet Union was in a very strong international position.'

Assess the validity of this view.

**[25 marks]**

*Target: AO1*

*Demonstrate, organise and communicate knowledge and understanding to analyse and evaluate the key features related to the periods studied, making substantiated judgements and exploring concepts, as relevant, of cause, consequence, change, continuity, similarity, difference and significance.*

### Generic Mark Scheme

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- L4:** Answers will display a good understanding of the demands of the question. It will be well-organised and effectively communicated. There will be a range of clear and specific supporting information showing a good understanding of key features and issues, together with some conceptual awareness. The answer will be analytical in style with a range of direct comment relating to the question. The answer will be well-balanced with some judgement, which may, however, be only partially substantiated. **16–20**
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- L1:** The question has not been properly understood and the response shows limited organisational and communication skills. The information conveyed is irrelevant or extremely limited. There may be some unsupported, vague or generalist comment. **1–5**
- Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

**Indicative content**

**Note: This content is not prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels scheme.**

**Arguments supporting the view that when Stalin died in 1953, the Soviet Union was in a very strong international position might include:**

- USSR had made a remarkable recovery from the war; the 4th five-year plan helped repair war damage; war reparations and a targeted focus on heavy industry had brought impressive industrial recovery and high military spending (25% of total in 1952) provided for large well-equipped army (vaunted in military processions); this gave message of strength – in contrast to a weakened post-war Western Europe
- USSR had developed the atomic bomb, 1949, and had an arsenal of 120 nuclear weapons by 1953; the first tests were conducted on a hydrogen bomb (achieved 1955); weapon-building programme clothed in secrecy giving impression of even greater strength than was known in the West
- the USSR had exerted its strength at Potsdam in 1945 and had been made one of the five permanent members on the security council of United Nations (with power of veto) ensuring a dominant voice in all international affairs; 1950 Treaty of Friendship with Communist China
- the land-mass of USSR had been increased by war, absorbing large areas of former Poland and the Baltic States. It was the largest country in the world – 2.5 times the size of USA with immense resources of materials and manpower
- the USSR had acquired a bloc of satellite states in Eastern Europe, extending its influence as far as East Germany; the states formed buffer states and provided USSR with still more resources; USSR even controlled half Berlin and had showed it would stand up to the West 1948/49.

**Arguments challenging the view that when Stalin died in 1953, the Soviet Union was in a very strong international position might include:**

- the USSR's power was well-matched, if not exceeded, by a powerful USA which had shown it would stand up for capitalism and Western Europe by offering Marshall Aid money (1947) and taking action in conflict over Berlin 1948/49; USA was behind NATO, 1949, which created a strong alliance of countries hostile to the USSR (and provided for sharing of information and weaponry), whereas USSR had no comparable alliance in 1953
- the USA was ahead in the nuclear arms race; the USSR could not match its 1 000 nuclear weapons and in 1952 the USA outpaced USSR by detonating the world's first hydrogen bomb; the USA, which had air force bases in Britain from 1952 was capable of launching a strike against USSR; Britain also had its own atomic bomb from 1952 and USA had increased military spending in wake of the Korean War; the capitalist West was an ever-present threat to USSR's position
- the USSR faced pressure for reform in its satellite states; Yugoslavia broke away, 1948, and workers' risings – which had to be crushed by force, eg in East Berlin – occurred on Stalin's death in 1953, harming the USSR's international reputation; the bloc placed heavy demands on Soviet resources
- Cold War tensions were high in 1953; there was stalemate in Germany (with US rebuilding economy of West Germany), division in Korea; divisions were emerging with Communist China (despite the treaty) over the interpretation of Communism; there was mutual suspicion and a divided Europe provided potential for conflict, whilst USSR had internal economic problems.

It is easy to argue that the USSR was in a very strong international position with reference to the resources available within the huge country coupled with its satellites, and the state of the army, weaponry and military technology. Even its position on the UN Security Council ensured that in any international disputes, the USSR would be in a position of strength. However, there are clearly other factors to be taken into consideration, not least the strength of other countries that saw themselves as opponents of the Soviet system. Whilst students are unlikely to agree unreservedly with the quotation,

any argument can be rewarded. Look for well-supported judgements which show a careful consideration and balancing of relevant material.