Paper 2 Question 3 Sample answer

There are a number of references to facts in Molotov’s speech which can be believed. For example, he mentions the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations which did indeed take place in the spring of 1939. He was also accurate in saying that western newspapers had been critical of the pact – as represented by the American and British cartoons in Sources C and D.

However, there are also some claims which should not be believed. The claims that the pact eliminated the danger of war between Germany and Russia and that the German government had ‘genuinely desired to change its foreign policy’ were clearly inaccurate – as became clear when the Germans broke the pact and invaded the Soviet Union in 1941. Also, the Soviet Union had certainly not signed the Pact ‘in the interests of all peoples and of world peace’ – as the secret agreement to attack Poland from the East was far from peaceful.

The inaccuracy of Molotov’s general claim that the Nazi-Soviet Pact was nothing but a good and justified development from the Soviet point of view can be explained by considering the context of Molotov’s words. Molotov had personally negotiated the Pact with Ribbentrop, the representative of Nazi Germany – the sworn enemy of the Soviet Union. In attempting to justify this shocking development to other Communists Molotov needed to stray from the truth with some exaggerations of what had been achieved and some blatant lies.