Question 6 – model answer

Study all the sources. How far do these sources provide convincing evidence that Russia got more than Germany from the Nazi-Soviet Pact? Use the sources to explain your answer.

Source A suggests Russia gained more from the Pact, claiming the Russians 'knew perfectly well' that Hitler was trying to trick them and that the pact would allow Russia to 'stay neutral and save our strength'. However, this evidence is not convincing as it was perhaps inevitable that Khrushchev, a leading Russian communist would write in defence of the much-criticised Pact.

Source B similarly suggests that the Pact benefited Russia, saying 'The Soviet Union undoubtedly gained temporary safety and additional time to prepare for the inevitable onslaught.'

Source C, however, does not support the hypothesis. It was published before the full results of the Pact had become known, but portrays Germany as the dominant partner in aggression against Poland, with no evidence that the Soviet Union were going to gain more than Germany, if at all.

Source D perhaps shows Germany and the Soviet Union as more equal partners, but there is no indication in the cartoon that the Soviet Union would gain more from the Pact than Germany would.

Source E does have evidence to suggest that Russia gained most from the Pact, with Molotov claiming it was 'of tremendous positive value.' However, this evidence is far from convincing, as it is taken from Molotov's speech to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and he couldn't have been expected to do anything other than attempt to justify the very controversial pact for which he was largely responsible.

Source F suggests Russia have gained most, as Stalin claims he has tricked Hitler. On the other hand G suggests quite the opposite with the Pact securing the 'fate of Russia', to Hitler's own benefit. Of course neither of these self-justifying views can be entirely accepted.

Source H does suggest that Russia might gain more than Germany as it shows Stalin in the throne and Ribbentrop kneeling before him and kissing his hand, though this was also produced before the full outcome of the Pact was known and certainly is not convincing evidence that Russia gained more from the Pact.

In conclusion, there is evidence in the sources both for and against the claim that Russia gained more from the Pact than Germany, but it is difficult to consider any of this evidence as convincing.