3.7 Revolutionary Socialism and Social Democracy: Tensions Within the Tradition: 30-minute Pack

EDEXCEL 9PL0 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Short answer questions may be brief and use bullet points where appropriate. For levels-marked questions write a structured response with developed analysis and evaluation as required. The final 30-mark essay requires a clear judgement.

1 Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the revolutionary socialist claim that parliamentary reform cannot end exploitation. Context: theory applied to practical political questions.

(Total for Question 1 is 9 marks)

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2 Evaluate the extent to which socialists disagree over how socialism should be achieved. Context: focus on the revolutionary versus evolutionary divide, including the Third Way, and the ground they nevertheless share. This is the end-of-pack essay.

(Total for Question 2 is 24 marks)

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Mark scheme · 3.7 Revolutionary Socialism and Social Democracy: Tensions Within the Tradition: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 0 No relevant content. **0**

Level 1 Basic explanation of the claim or a simple criticism, with limited development. **1-3**

Level 2 Clear explanation of both strengths and weaknesses, with some developed analysis and examples. **4-6**

Level 3 Detailed, balanced analysis evaluating the theoretical force of the claim and its practical implications, considering historical or contemporary examples. **7-9**

Indicative content:

- Strengths: revolutionary critique highlights structural features of capitalism such as ownership of production and surplus extraction that are not removed by redistribution, so reform can ameliorate but not abolish exploitation.
- Strengths: historical examples where reformist parties moderated demands when in office, suggesting co-option and limits to radical change via parliament.
- Weaknesses: parliamentary reforms have produced substantial improvements in living standards, labour rights and welfare that materially reduced exploitation and suffering, showing meaningful change via elections.
- Weaknesses: revolution can produce coercion, authoritarianism or economic collapse in practice, weakening the normative case for violent or extra-parliamentary methods.
- A strong answer weighs theoretical rigor against empirical evidence and reaches a judgement recognising that parliamentary reform can achieve significant progress but may not, on its own, abolish structural exploitation as defined by revolutionary theory.

Question 2

Level 0 No relevant content. **0**

Level 1 Basic, limited knowledge of revolutionary and evolutionary positions with little or no developed analysis or evaluation. Assertions are generic and unsupported. **1-6**

Level 2 Clear, mostly accurate knowledge of both strands with some analysis; evaluation is present but may be one-sided, or the argument may not fully relate to the precise question about the extent of disagreement. **7-12**

Level 3 Detailed, accurate knowledge and developed analysis demonstrating understanding of differences and some shared ground; evaluation weighs strengths and weaknesses with reasoned judgement, though development may be uneven across AO1, AO2 and AO3. **13-18**

Level 4 Sophisticated, wide-ranging and accurate knowledge applied to a sustained evaluation that directly addresses the extent of disagreement. Analysis integrates theory and relevant empirical examples, assesses the coherence and practicability of each route, recognises areas of agreement, and reaches a clear, balanced and well-substantiated judgement. **19-24**

Indicative content:

- Exposition of the revolutionary position: capitalism is structurally exploitative, only removable by overthrow, abolition of private ownership of the means of production and social transformation beyond mere reform.
- Exposition of the evolutionary/social-democratic position: capitalism is reformable via parliamentary democracy, progressive taxation, nationalisation of select industries, welfare expansion and regulation to reduce exploitation and achieve social justice.
- Discussion of the Third Way: late twentieth century social democracy that accepted markets while focusing on social investment, activation policies and partnerships with business, illustrating further variation within evolutionary socialism.
- Arguments for deep disagreement: methods are fundamentally different, with revolutionaries rejecting parliamentary institutions and evolutionary socialists seeing elections and legislation as central; the end goals may be framed differently in practice, with revolutionaries seeking abolition of capitalist ownership and many social democrats accepting a mixed economy.
- Arguments for limited disagreement: both strands share core commitments to reducing inequality, securing social rights, and improving workers conditions; both often endorse public provision and regulation in practice, showing convergence on some policies even if ultimate theory differs.
- Evaluation of practicability: consider empirical evidence where parliamentary routes achieved major reforms (welfare state, labour rights) versus historical revolutions that sometimes produced authoritarian outcomes or economic dislocation; weigh moral and strategic arguments about legitimacy, consent and likely human cost.
- Consideration of hybrid pathways: examples where radical rhetoric coexisted with reformist strategies, or where social-democratic parties adopted transformative policies when empowered, suggesting the binary is sometimes porous.
- Judgement: a balanced conclusion might argue that socialists disagree significantly on the appropriate route to socialism, and this disagreement has real policy and ethical implications, but there is nonetheless substantial overlap in many practical aims and some policies, so the extent of disagreement is large at the level of method and ultimate institutional arrangements, yet more limited at the level of concrete social goals and many interim policies.

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