

HISTORY: WORLD AFFAIRS 1917-1991

Paper 2158/01

Paper 1

General comments

It appears to be a continuing characteristic of examinations in this syllabus that noticeable diversity of achievement occurs in each examination session. Again this November a significant number of candidates secured very high marks as a consequence of displaying well understood knowledge, capably orientated towards the demands of the questions attempted; their scripts were also well composed and well balanced as they made their way through their chosen questions. At the other end of the scale, it was impossible to award any grade to candidates whose work was uncertain, insubstantial and not focused adequately on the terms of the questions attempted. Inevitably there were many candidates who fell between these two extremes, but the extremes are a distinctly noticeable and continuing feature of candidate performance in this paper.

For those candidates who were unclassified or who achieved low grades, some advice might be given to assist better performance. Fundamental is the need to have a good knowledge of the topics of history on which they concentrate. Names, dates, events and, more importantly, why and how events have developed in the past and the consequences they have had are the key areas on which to focus in preparing for the examination. Within the answers themselves there needs to be a direct focus on what is required by the question wording and a willingness and ability to develop this both sharply and precisely. Time should not be wasted on excessive background material which does not relate directly to the terms of the question, though some modest background can be helpful if kept under control.

It is helpful if candidates indicate clearly where different parts of questions start, by reproducing the letter for a sub-question; it is also helpful to put in the number of a question. At the end, a line gap or some indication in the wording used by the candidate should be employed to show where the last part is intended to start. In practice, most candidates know the sense of all this and follow it through in the answers they present.

Comments on specific questions

There were very few attempts at **Questions 6, 8, 10, 11, 14, 16, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25 27** and **31**. This range of questions suggests that in this particular examination session candidates made a choice from a range of questions marginally less broad than in recent examinations.

Question 1

This was very popular. The better candidates gave excellent detailed knowledge of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, considering European and colonial possessions, war guilt, disarmament and reparations; weaker candidates referred only loosely to the terms and failed to support their answers with specific references. There was a tendency in some scripts to continue the treaty narrative into the Ruhr occupation of 1923, not an episode that directly concerned the 1919 terms of peace. The last part was less successfully undertaken. While many identified the 'big three' and knew the stance of each, only the better candidates were able to link such knowledge to the practical achievement (or otherwise) of their aims in the treaty terms.

Question 2

Material in the first part here was less thorough than in many answers to **Question 1**. The definition was variably put, some candidates merely saying that it was an unwillingness to fight, while the better ones defined it more broadly, with an underlay of justification or criticism that helped the definition. Coverage of the years 1936-38 was sometimes disappointing, few getting to a broad and balanced coverage of the period and weaker ones concentrating just on Austria and the Sudetenland to the neglect of much else within those two years. The last part really needed a fuller view of 1939 (specifically excluded from the first part) than most candidates gave; the Nazi-Soviet pact, surprisingly, was often missed as an ingredient here.

Question 3

There were three requests in the first part of this question. 'Structure' was the best attempted of them, with almost all answers showing security of knowledge. 'Aims' were often reasonably attempted, often running together with 'structure'. But there was paucity of material on the required comparison with the League; many candidates omitted this part. In the last part, many were able to indicate agencies that catered for humanitarian work, but there was little assessment of its work by reference to the practical involvement of the agencies in humanitarian concerns.

Question 4

On the three options in the first part, the first was the least well attempted, often receiving rather blurred focus on Potsdam, mixed in with Yalta and other references to the opening division between east and west. While detail of the Truman Doctrine was often rather thin, the subject was held in better focus than was the case with Potsdam. The best attempted was the one on the Berlin Blockade, though there remains a distinct minority of candidates who still confuse the events of 1948-9 with those of the late 1950s and 1961 in particular. Answers to the last part were better focused on general than on particular reasons; the U2 episode and the Cuban Missile Crisis were presented, with irrelevance of date, by some candidates.

Question 5

This was one of the less popular questions in **Section A**. Nor were the answers very full in their coverage or sharply focused on the question's terms. The 'involvement' was particularly thin in the case of France; in the last part, few answers fully developed their scrutiny of what was actually happening in Vietnam, in order to provide a fully sustained answer.

Question 7

This was a popular question, though not particularly well attempted by many candidates. There was a marked tendency to blur the boundaries between the two parts so that it was sometimes difficult to know where the first ended and the second began. As indicated at the end of the 'General comments' above, it is important that candidates do thus distinguish the parts in their answers. Coverage of the half dozen years covered in the first part was often imbalanced, with many starting in 1922 rather than 1919; yet these are years full of importance for Mussolini's increasing power. In spite of the criticism made earlier, the last part did receive some quite usefully judged assessments.

Question 9

There were significant blemishes in all three of the options in the first part. While policies towards young people in general were usually indicated in **(a)**, few answers really pursued these policies in convincing detail. In **(b)** there was a strong tendency to anticipate the genocide of the 1940s with the policies specific to the 1930s. In **(c)** the topic appeared to be little known; the concordat with the Catholic Church was often the main feature here. The Reich Church and approaches to the Protestant Churches were usually missed. As with the last part of **Question 7**, the last part here often received some well-judged responses, angling the answer from different perspectives.

Question 12

Part (a) received weak answers, in many cases quite avoiding the crucial issue of 'restrictions' and instead developing on general themes of immigration; the legislation appeared not to be known in most cases. **Part (b)** was usually, but surprisingly not always, recognised, though few developed detailed surveys of the integration of the Ku Klux Klan into white society in the 1920s. **Part (c)** was often also under-developed, rather few extending it to the related world of gangsterism. Analysis of the last part was often lacking in strength, while some wrote about the outcome, rather than the causes of the Crash.

Question 13

It was to be expected that answers on **(a)** would be less extensive than those on **(b)** and such was the case; the mark scheme took account of this expected imbalance. But Hoover's work does deserve to be better known than it was. Many wrote with confidence on Roosevelt, though at times the description of the role of the alphabet agencies could have been more sharply developed. The last part was designed to get at the fundamental trends of the policies pursued by the two presidents, rather than again to cover the policies in particular. Answers generally to the last part were disappointing.

Question 15

There were surprisingly few answers to this question and those offered lacked strength in detailed and balanced knowledge of **(a)** and **(b)**. The last part was also not very securely supported.

Question 17

The first part gave a clear run through an action-packed year in Russian history, but it was disappointing that not more candidates followed the year through from stage to stage. Some ended their survey with the February Revolution and inevitably there were a number of candidates who confused February and October. The middle months of the year were very thinly treated. In the last part there were a number of well balanced answers, appropriately assessing the work of Lenin with that of others.

Question 18

It appeared in many answers to **(a)** that some candidates did not understand the term 'cult of personality' as the answers were a general description of Stalin and not given the specific focus required. **Parts (b) and (c)** were both attempted with sharper relevance and in some cases were well-sustained in factual support. The last part often received some well-judged assessments, largely on the theme of economic progress amidst repression and austerity.

Question 19

This question on Khrushchev was less popular than such questions often are. Those who attempted it were generally secure of their ground throughout, though material in **(c)** could have been more extended than it usually was. There were some well-rounded and balanced assessments in the last part, treating with both internal and external issues.

Question 22

Section E remains the least popular of the sections in the paper and this question received rather few responses. Most of the candidates who attempted the question understood its direction and purpose, but in most cases material could have been stronger and more certain than it was. The last part was often more securely attempted than the first.

Question 26

While **(a)** and **(b)** secured reasonably well supported responses in this question, again a minority choice, **(c)** was less securely attempted and it was clear that a number of candidates did not know the issues involved in Israeli-Lebanon relations in these years. The last part, which to an extent drew on some of the earlier features in the question, was not very ably assessed by candidates.

Question 28

Many candidates in answer to this quite popular question gave well-informed and well-balanced accounts covering the years 1927-49, many usefully bringing in the role of Japan in relations between the Guomindang and the Communists; the civil war period of 1946-9 could have been covered more fully in some cases. The last part was also quite well attempted, with suitable USA and USSR allusions.

Question 29

This was another popular and well-attempted question. Answers often brought together the two elements of the economy and politics into effective harmony, helpfully supported by practical historical references. The last part was also well-developed.

Question 30

It was apparent from many scripts that the 'Speak Bitterness' campaign was just not known; it was sometimes loosely rendered as the 'Hundred Flowers'. The latter generally was well-known, though, like the Great Leap Forward, supportive material might have been more extensive; the Great Leap Forward really does involve more than back-yard furnaces, as the better candidates made clear. It was the better candidates also who gave helpful supportive material for the ideologically-focused last part of the question.