

HISTORY (WORLD AFFAIRS 1917-1991)

Paper 2158/12

Paper 1

General Comments

Candidates generally balanced their work throughout the paper, though with a concentration more on the earlier than the later sections. There were very few attempts at **Questions 5, 10, 11, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 28, 31**.

In essence this examination is designed to provide an opportunity for candidates to display two features of their preparatory work: sound historical knowledge and an ability to display that knowledge in response to the chosen set questions. It was encouraging to find many candidates responding well to these basic demands. Most of the candidates approached the examination furnished with a sound range of knowledge, whose deployment in the context of the chosen questions evinced also a commendable degree of understanding. In some cases the knowledge was enhanced by its detail and deployment. Inevitably some candidates did not reach such levels of excellence and hence achieved modest or poor grades.

While the primacy of historical knowledge is crucial to success in this examination, its deployment needs also to be addressed. Crucially this involves a careful reading of the wording of the questions, initially in order to make a well judged choice and subsequently to ensure that the wording is followed in the development of the written answer. Most of the answers did show such an approach, but a number neglected to focus on the crucial words in the questions. Thus, in **Question 1** 'self-determination' was neglected, in **Question 6** the emphasis on 'economic and social work' was missed and in **Question 8** the essential focus on 'foreign policies' was changed to work on domestic policies. Some other examples of this trend are indicated in the detailed comments that follow.

It was also encouraging to find that the majority of candidates managed to complete their five answers in the two and a half hours available, without signs of undue haste or trouble. Nor was there evidence of excessive planning of answers, leading to a diminished amount of time in which to complete an adequate answer. This has been a problem for some candidates in previous examinations and has been alluded to in the report. For the longer parts of questions there is, nevertheless, advantage to be gained by the writing of a brief and purposeful plan.

The presentation of work is assisted by a clear indication - perhaps the missing of a couple of lines - to show where it is that the final part of each question, carrying six marks in all cases, begins; similarly, if letters are used in a question to indicate different parts of it these should be reproduced in the answer, to it. The majority of candidates observe these conventions.

Question 1

The first part of this question required specific knowledge of the terms of the Versailles treaty and many candidates showed good knowledge of the treatment of these five areas on the periphery of Germany. Where weakness existed in answers here, it was attributable either to faulty geography or to trespass on to the area of other post-war treaties. Here, as in some other parts of the paper (notably **Section A**) a competent grasp of geography is vital for the production of a good answer. The last part of the question was generally attempted with less success, some candidates alluding to treaties other than Versailles and failing to focus on 'self-determination'.

Question 2

This was a distinctly popular question and also one that was well rendered in both parts. Many candidates gave a balanced and informed view of the dangers presented by Germany in the period 1933-39; there was often a concentration towards the end of those years, while many did not neglect the earlier years either. Again, good geography was of assistance here. Almost all candidates displayed an understanding of appeasement in the last part and argued well its earlier popularity and later failure. There was however some weakness here on the part of a minority of candidates, who continued to narrate rather than analyse.

Question 3

It was in answers to this question that there was evidence of failure on the part of some candidates to read carefully the wording of the question. Reference was needed to the years 1944-45 and a number of candidates dealt with the war more broadly than that and hence allowed insufficient attention to the final two years of it. Of (a) and (b) the former was attempted with greater assurance than the latter, where the movement of Soviet forces needed fuller attention. The last part elicited some quite well focused and informed arguments on the relative strength of the two sides as the war drew to a close.

Question 4

There were some well informed and well focused answers to this broadly based question on Indochina, often presented with appropriate balance. (b) and (c) were often answered with more assurance than (a), which tended to attract rather too extensive a degree of background, sometimes going back in detail to the Second World War, instead of the required focus on the mid-fifties. Answers to the last part in almost all cases emphasised the USA's concern to contain communism and many traced appropriately the different ways in which this was exemplified in the 1950s and 1960s.

Question 6

This was a popular and in the main a well answered question. Most candidates were able to muster a knowledgeable list of the main agencies for UNO's economic and social work, displaying accuracy in references and in the scope of their work. There were shortcomings, however. A number of candidates presented material on UNO's basic structure rather than the required focus, while others were uncertain of the correct designation or the correct initial letters of the agencies. Some drew, with relevance and interest, on local knowledge. The last part presented no difficulties to most candidates who were able to allude with accuracy to the features that made for the greater success of UNO.

Question 7

There were a number of informed answers to the different parts of this question on Weimar Germany and in general competent knowledge was rendered and focused. There was, however, shortcoming in the answer to (a), where a number of candidates appeared not to recognise the reference to 'the constitution' and wrote instead on a general history of Germany in these years, with emphasis on post-war disorder. The Ruhr occupation and Stresemann's policies presented no problems for most candidates. In answers to the last part there was an over-emphasis in some scripts on earlier material to the neglect of the play of practical politics in the early 1930s, witnessing the decline of Weimar and the rise of Nazism.

Question 8

As alluded to earlier in this report, it was disappointing that a number of candidates neglected to note that this question was entirely focused on Italian foreign policy during the fascist years; hence much irrelevance was produced. Many did, however, deal competently with this central theme with balanced and informed material across the nearly two decades covered. The last part was also well argued by most candidates (including some who had gone astray on domestic issues earlier), most indicating that success was garnered by bold overseas ventures, but the increasing commitment to Germany detracted from the regime's standing in Italy.

Question 9

Questions on Spain in the inter-war years have become more popular among candidates in recent examinations. This one focused on the very 'packed' year of 1936 and a number of candidates engaged well with its demands, focusing usefully on the election in February and the outbreak of war in July. Earlier material was over extensively developed in some cases. Many made an informed attempt at the last part, arguing in the broad context of the war the significance of the early failure to capture Madrid.

Question 12

It appeared that many candidates welcomed the chance to write about Al Capone and a number of these answers set him effectively in the context of 1920s USA, representative of a certain type of gangster. Candidates generally were less secure about others.

Henry Ford received some competent answers, but Mellon was unknown and knowledge of the two US presidents of the 1920s was largely an uncertain area, though there were some excellent contributions here. The last part was perhaps more familiar territory and received well ordered analysis in most of the responses.

Question 13

Candidates generally appeared to be more confident in this question on the USA in the 1930s than they were in the previous one on the 1920s. Knowledge of the New Deal was in most cases sound and most candidates did seek to angle their knowledge on the 'improvements in the lives of many Americans' as specified in the question. Some answers succeeded less well due to failure to specify what were the policies enshrined in the New Deal and to allude loosely to FDR as providing a panacea for all ills. In the last part, a minority misread the question as requiring attention to the period after 1941, but there were a number of focused answers on the correct period and theme.

Question 14

A common error in previous examinations in questions of this type has been to focus on US foreign policy and its thrust against communism elsewhere than within the USA. In (a) of this question that tendency was in comparatively slight evidence. Most candidates did see the direction of the question in both parts, though there were some loosely sustained and at time rather muddled references to events and legislation in both (a) and (b). The last part was a probing question that received some thoughtful answers, usefully set in the context of their place and time.

Question 17

As ever, Russian Revolution questions figure strongly in the popularity scales in this paper and most who attempted this tripartite question on salient 1917 episodes showed knowledge of what was involved in each. It cannot be said that the degree of supportive detail was strong in most cases, some uncertainty and incompleteness being apparent in (a) and (b) more than in (c). Some candidates diminished the value of their responses by betraying uncertainty as to who was unseated in the spring and who in the autumn. The analysis in the last part received variable responses, the best balancing the practical demands for peace with the heavy price paid for it.

Question 18

The five-year plans presented no difficulty to most candidates and many answers were replete with references to their products and the means by which they were created. There were many informed answers on Stalin's cult of personality, but there were here too many instances of uncertainty about what the term meant. Like the plans, the purges and show trials were usually rendered competently. The last part also received competent answers, though the manner in which Stalin prepared the USSR by his foreign policies was often sketchy; the popular front movement, for example, was ignored.

Question 22

Of (a), (b) and (c) in this question, material on restrictions on immigration was uncertain, often presented with reference to the post-war period rather than the inter-war period. The two other options got more assured responses, though the nature of a mandate could have got more attention in (a) and military detail in (c). Most candidates adduced sensibly focused material in the last part, though there was a tendency among some to wander into the Suez crisis, not part of the question.

Question 23

Of the two questions on the Middle East this was the better attempted. Information was often secure and in some scripts quite substantial on the events leading to the outbreak of these two wars and the main features of the fighting in them. Candidates often looked broadly at the circumstances that led to the outbreak, not limiting their material to the Middle East alone. This broad range was specifically needed in the last part which often received well balanced responses on great power reaction.

Question 27

The first three options were the ones candidates favoured. There was a fair amount of uncertainty in (a), a number of candidates failing to comment on the dissatisfaction of many Chinese with treatment after the war. (b) and (c) received more positive responses, with useful linkage in (b) to the idealism of Sun Yat-sen and in (c) to the distinctive warfare style adopted by the Red Army in its campaigns (though some neglected the terminal date of 1935). The last part often produced a usefully supported balance in the roles of the Japanese and the communists in the campaigns of Chiang Kai-shek.

Question 29

The first part of this question elicited many informed and balanced narratives of the 1947-91 period, with focus on such episodes as Kashmir and Bangladesh as well as ongoing differences of approach between India and Pakistan. Some answers to the last part suggested uncertainty of the concept 'non-aligned' in its international context; while a number did understand the meaning of the term and illustrated it usefully, others equated it exclusively to relations between India and Pakistan.

Question 30

Most candidates who attempted this question kept to the 1976-89 time frame, though a number mistook this and wrote about Mao Zedong. Often there was a well balanced survey offered, covering the period with accurate focus though not always with much development. In arguing a case in the last part many drew on earlier material, often well focused on the question.

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There were too few candidates for us to be able to produce a meaningful report.

