

HISTORY: WORLD AFFAIRS 1917-1991

Paper 2158/01

Paper 1

General comments

There was a wide variation in achievement in this examination, with some very high and some very low marks awarded. The strongest candidates provided material that was balanced, focused and informative, with answers often succinctly put, although covering a fair number of pages. The weakest candidates provided material that was poorly focused and poorly informed, in most cases covering fewer pages and often interspersed with gaps for omitted material. Many candidates inevitably fell between these two groups, with rather variable quality in different questions.

The key to success in this examination is to appreciate the demands of the questions and to provide responses that are relevant and well informed. For those who were disappointed by their results, the answer to improved performance in a re-sit may well lie in the acquisition of fuller and more sharply understood factual material relating to the subjects studied. Beyond that, practice in the correct deployment of that material for the demands of different questions is essential.

It is helpful if candidates make clear the various divisions of questions that are structured into lettered parts. It is also helpful if it is made clear, by means of a missed line or the appropriate words in the opening, where the final part of the question commences. Many candidates do this and it is helpful to them in focusing on the various parts and divisions of the questions.

Comments on specific questions

There were very few attempts at **Questions 3, 6, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 29 and 31.**

Question 1

Of parts **(a)** and **(b)** the former was the better attempted, most candidates being able to show a competent knowledge of the League's structure, while better candidates gained marks with detailed information and references. While **(b)** was well attempted, with good 1920s balance, there was confusion about places, dates and events on the part of too many candidates, with some anticipating events of the 1930s. Too often the final part was let down by a lack of focus on the specific material of the 1930s and a tendency to look at general weaknesses of the League only.

Question 2

The terms of the Treaty of Versailles are generally well known by candidates and most were able to make a viable attempt at this part of the question, although accuracy and detail were variable; it was 'Germany in Europe' that was needed here and material on colonial adjustments was not relevant. Locarno, unfortunately, continues to be less well known and few candidates presented convincing answers on it. The dates 1938–39 were too often neglected in the last part, with excessive background material on earlier events and a tendency by many to neglect the 'why' element of the question.

Question 4

Most candidates were able to present answers that indicated both the similarities and differences in parts **(a)** and **(b)**, though coverage could have been better. In **(a)** the crucial events of 1950–51 were often not rendered as fully or as exactly as they might have been, with curious neglect of the role of UNO in too many cases. Part **(b)** was more often presented with better use of material, although salient aspects of the 1960s in Vietnam could have received sharper attention. Methods of warfare inevitably attracted attention in the last part, although comparatively few developed the theme of the increasing strength of the Vietcong in the 1960s and '70s.

Question 5

Part **(b)** was, in general, the best attempted of the three lettered parts, with most candidates putting the Berlin Wall into a reasonable Cold War context. Parts **(a)** and **(c)** were less well attempted. In **(a)** many restricted their responses to the 1960 episode or the role of the U2 aircraft in Cuba in 1962; few actually commented purposefully on the role of U2 aircraft in general during this period of the Cold War. In **(c)** background to the actual blockading of Cuba in 1962 was often excessive, to the neglect of the focal feature of this part-question. While there was much scope for development in the last part, answers were often thin, dominated by material emerging from immediate aftermath of the 1962 episode, with few including SALT in the late 1960s.

Question 6

This is the type of question that should only be attempted by those furnished with precise information. It seems that many candidates took the hint and were advantaged by doing so. The few attempts at this question were extremely poor.

Question 7

While Italy in the inter-war years is a popular and quite well known subject, questions on it often reveal paucity of knowledge on some of its more salient aspects. Part **(a)**, for example, was poorly answered by many candidates and some omitted it entirely from their answers. A minority did give well rounded answers, with useful references to D'Annunzio. Parts **(b)** and **(c)** were rather better written, and although some could have been more precise, it was encouraging that a number concluded part **(c)** with helpful observations of the Matteotti affair as a springboard for dictatorship. Answers to the last part were often quite wide ranging over the 1920s, although some tended to miss the 'why' requirement of the question.

Question 8

While many did give informed answers to **(a)** which were focused on the years 1919–20, other less well informed or less perceptive candidates merely spoke of general dissatisfaction with the newly installed republic and left it at that. Most were able to explain the reasons for and the essential events of the Ruhr occupation in **(b)**, although their handling of the economic and diplomatic consequences was less secure. Material on Stresemann in **(c)** could have been more fully developed in most cases. The last part was usually quite well attempted, with most keeping to the years given. Some went beyond that into the years of Nazi dominance which was irrelevant to the question.

Question 9

While there were few responses to this question, they were quite competent and in some cases distinctly good. It was encouraging that the period before the outbreak of the Civil War was well and informatively covered, while attempts at the last part often had good range and relevant detail.

Question 12

There was often good scope given to the first part of this question, though the degree of information varied markedly from the very sparse to the very well informed. Most dealt with both the economy and society, as required by the question, and it was encouraging that the years after the 1929 Crash often received due attention. The last part was less fully supported, though many did advance acceptable basic reasons. There was also (cf. last part of **Question 8**) a faulty tendency to look at what FDR did after his election rather than discuss the reasons for his election.

Question 13

Most candidates were able to give a reasonable account of what was involved in each of the four lettered parts. Supporting material was sometimes thin and occasionally, as in **(d)** and partly in **(a)**, confused and uncertain. Both the earlier material in the question and other legislation of the 1930s was used to good effect in the last part. Candidates might have considered some of the points made against FDR's approaches in order to address the 'how accurate' element of the question.

Question 17

A minority of the many candidates who attempted this question viewed **(a)** and **(b)** as a request to discuss the policies of those governments rather than, as reading the question should readily have indicated, to outline the events leading to their creation. A minority also tended to overwork pre-1917 material, again clearly not required by the question. Nevertheless, there were many well informed and well focused answers to **(a)** and **(b)**, suggesting clear understanding and knowledge of the Russian Revolution. Relevance was usually not a problem in the last part, although detail was sometimes rather thin, with minimal reference to the Civil War.

Question 18

Parts **(a)** and **(b)** often received well informed answers of good scope, using material on Stalin rather more effectively than has often been the case in comparable questions in recent examinations. In both parts the revolutionary nature of the changes needed rather sharper indication. Most candidates grasped the metaphorical imagery in the last part, although supporting information on, for example, the purges might have been more detailed.

Question 19

Of the three lettered parts in this question, responses to **(b)** tended to be thin, often only dealing with the initial establishment and later lifting of the Leningrad siege, and greater detail on this event would have benefited many responses. Parts **(a)** and **(c)** were better known and answers were generally informed and balanced. In the last part reasons were adequately, although not strongly advanced, few wanting to refer to events outside the Soviet Union that contributed to the victory.

Question 22

In **Section E**, never a popular section in this paper, there were extremely few attempts at questions other than **Question 22** and **Question 23**, and neither of these attracted many candidates. The various features of **Question 22** were recognised by most candidates and supporting material could have been stronger, although this was less so in **(c)**. In the last part there tended to be general, rather than sharply focused, reasons given.

Question 23

While not attracting a great many candidates, this question elicited quite well informed responses from those who did attempt it. Content was stronger on events in the Middle East than on those 'elsewhere' and the developments leading to the outbreak of the wars could have been strengthened by such references. Attempts at the last part were usually clearly focused and well informed.

Question 27

The answers to this quite popular question suggested that Chinese history in the years 1919–49 is itself reasonably well understood. However many candidates showed a weakness in linking that history to the life and work of Mao Zedong and some digressed into relations between the Communist party and other issues which had few links to Mao. The life and work of so over-arching a figure as Mao deserves to be better known. The last part was usually quite reasonably balanced between Communist advantages and their opponents' weaknesses.

Question 28

Each of parts **(a)**, **(b)** and **(c)** were recognised by the candidates who attempted this question, however the level of detail in each (less so in **(c)**) was lacking in a minority of the scripts. Others were very well informed, especially in **(b)** where a number of candidates presented impressive geographical knowledge of conquests. In the last part, most candidates dealt with issues other than the use of nuclear weapons, thus giving their answers a useful range.

Question 29

There were surprisingly few attempts at this question on India and those were of very mixed quality. Many candidates needed fuller information on **(b)** and **(c)** rather than on **(a)**. In most cases the last part needed more points for support.

Question 30

Attempts at the lettered parts were generally well informed although there was some confusion in **(b)** over the dates, many neglecting the years given in the question and writing on Nixon's earlier relations with China. While in the last part there was inevitable revisiting of the material from earlier sections of the question, there was also, in most cases, a useful focus on explaining Communism's survival as a consequence of such policies.