

HISTORY

Paper 2158/01

World Affairs, 1917–1991

General comments

This was the first examination to be taken under the revised syllabus. Much of the work was well focused on question themes and well supported by accurate and pertinent historical references. While there was some weaker work – characterised by poorly rendered and loosely substantiated material – it was somewhat less in evidence in this examination.

A practical point on the presentation of answers might help some candidates. If a question has subdivisions, such as (a), (b), (c) etc. these ought to be employed in the answer at the appropriate point. It is also helpful if candidates can indicate – by perhaps the leaving of a blank line before and some indication in the initial working – where the last, analytical, part of the answer commences.

Comments on specific questions

There were very few attempts at **Questions 9, 14(b), 16, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 30, 31**. This list is somewhat shorter than in reports on some recent examinations in this syllabus, suggestive of a broader approach to the paper by the candidates overall.

Question 1

The features asked for in the earlier 'narrative' part were generally well known, though a number of candidates betrayed uncertainty in (c) (sometimes addressing European areas), while in (a) there was too often reference to boundary adjustments that related to treaties other than Versailles. While many provided rounded and argued answers to the last part, a number drifted into irrelevance by references to the Nazi era.

Question 2

While there were some answers of both scope and depth to the first part, on the 1920s, many candidates were uncertain of the 'main disputes' and provided either restricted surveys or references to social and humanitarian work. The second part was rather better attempted, though some developed narrative answers here rather than a sharply causal answer.

Question 3

This was not a particularly popular question and most of the answers to it were characterized by substantial irrelevance. Many candidates totally neglected the period 1944-45 and gave broad surveys covering the entire war. Angle of approach in the last part was sometimes faulty also. There were, however, some excellent answers to this question.

Question 4

This question attracted a number of well balanced and usefully informed answers, rather stronger on (b) than (a), where some uncertainty was apparent. The last part produced a useful mix of external and internal reasoning, though there could have been sharper references to the latter.

Question 5

This question is alluded to for somewhat the same reasons as **Question 3**. It attracted few candidates and of that few, the majority appeared to have minimal knowledge of the period and subject. Vague answers abounded, sometimes with period irrelevance also. Candidates should ensure that they have a good grasp of the subject matter before attempting questions.

Question 6

The same comment as that made above in **Question 5**, on subject matter, applies here. Most answers were disappointing, not only in loose content but also in wayward focus on what was required. However, creditable reference should also be made to the small number of candidates who did approach this with the precision and support that the question required.

Question 7

This was a popular and generally well attempted question. Some answers provided sound balance over the three year period, and sound balance also between external and internal affairs, both of which were relevant within the question's wording. Analysis of the last part was usually competent and often sharply focused and well sustained.

Question 8

A similarly popular and similarly well attempted question. While some candidates were uncertain on who purged whom in (a), and could have had sharper references in (b) and (c), generally these short questions got effective responses. The last part was often well argued, with useful and accurate historical references.

Question 10

Knowledge on the period 1931–36 was often impressive and balanced, leading effectively to July 1936. The last part also was usually well focused and supported. The question proved more popular and more successful than is usual for questions on Spain in the inter-war years.

Question 11

Answers in all areas in this modestly popular question needed to be firmer. The reference to 'background' was too often not well observed, particularly in (b) and (c). In (c), there was in a number of cases confusion with the Lateran pacts of 1929. While some argued the last part well, generally answers here were slight and disappointing.

Question 12

The political circumstances leading to the Republican ascendancy were usually quite well sketched. Domestic policies were understood, but there was a tendency in some answers to spill over into social surveys of the decade and 'domestic policies' in all cases needed a sharper degree of factual support. The last part was generally well argued and supported.

Question 13

While definitions of the New Deal could have been firmer (often relying too much on the circumstances from which it emerged), the survey of FDR's work in the 1930s was usually broadly based and basically well informed. There was sometimes confusion about the scope of the various acts and agencies. Most dwelt on themes of opposition to his policies in the last part, rather than personalities, but that was a competent approach, which some enhanced by exemplification of those who espoused objections.

Question 14(a)

Candidates appeared to welcome the opportunity to write generally about Cuba in these two decades, rather than fit material into a Missile Crises context. The answers often had scope and information, though a surprising tendency in many was to minimise the Missile Crisis, itself surely one of the most potent examples of 'relations with other powers'. Only the better candidates succeeded in a developed final answer.

Question 15

Factual material tended to decline in quantity and quality as candidates made their way through (a), (b) and (c). Knowledge of the scope of the Civil Rights Act was significantly weak and undeveloped, often being limited to the activities of civil rights campaigners. The last part was very variably answered, though many did produce balanced and informed analyses here.

Question 17

While most answers were encouraging and matched the question's demands well, there was confusion on the part of too many candidates between the timing and scope of the two revolutions in 1917, a point of obvious fundamental importance for any success in such a question.

Question 18

While many did produce informed accounts on both (a) and (b), too often there was vagueness in both areas and only loose focus and support on the two themes they were seeking to question. Stalin questions seem to evoke loose responses and it was thus in **Question 18**; as well as the foregoing shortcomings there was a tendency by some to consider industrial and agricultural history in the Stalin period, just not a part of this question. As with the similar final part of **Question 8**, there were a number of thoughtfully considered and broadly based responses to the last part.

Question 22

There were a number of quite well informed answers to this question, better versed in practical detail on (a) than on (b), where coverage was often rather sparse. The particular emphases that would be welcome in the last part were not much in evidence.

Question 23

The three wars were well known and, unlike in some part instances when a somewhat similar question has been set, there was little muddling of the different wars. Improved Israeli-Arab relations were also quite well considered in most answers.

Question 26

Most were able to get the correct angle of approach in (a), but it was surprising to find some candidates who equated the Nationalist party with opposition to apartheid. But a more significant failing lay in lack of detail of apartheid policies in practice. The last part needed rather fuller reference to events outside South Africa in bringing about the system's collapse.

Question 27

Many sustained competent answers to this question, whose angle of approach was not perhaps the most usual one. There was less knowledge on (a) than on (b) and (c), while the last part produced in most answers a sensible if not always well sustained balance between Nationalist defects and Communist advantages.

Question 28

Many who attempted this question needed to observe more closely that its focus was on 'agitation for independence' and the response to it and not a general survey of Anglo-Indian relations. Material throughout the first part could have been sharper in its references, while the last part failed often to engage with the specific circumstances of the Second World War in India.

Question 29

This modestly popular question tended to be answered with only modest scope and development. Most focused on the question's demands, but the support in both parts was lacking in precision, certainty and development.