Cambridge Assessment International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

HISTORY **9489/32**

Paper 3 Interpretations Question **May/June 2025**

1 hour 15 minutes

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You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **one** question from **one** section only.
  - Section A: The origins of the First World War
  - Section B: The Holocaust
  - Section C: The origins and development of the Cold War
- Follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is 40.
- The number of marks for each question or part question is shown in brackets [ ].

This document has **4** pages.

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Section A: Topic 1

The origins of the First World War

1 Read the extract and then answer the question.

Bethmann Hollweg's hope of localising the Austro-Serbian war was poorly founded from the outset. As early as 6 July, the day of the famous 'blank cheque' for Vienna, Bethmann realised that the danger of Russian intervention in an Austrian war in the Balkans was greater this time than in 1912 as in the meantime Russia had greatly improved its rearmament. An added element was that the German foreign ministry was in possession of secret intelligence that Britain was about to negotiate a naval convention with Russia, in the form of an agreement between the two admiralty staffs rather than the two governments – in other words, in the informal way that the Entente Cordiale with France had been negotiated by the army chiefs. As Bethmann told the German Ambassador in London as early as 16 June, this was bound to result in a dangerous increase in Russian and French confidence. If the Russians intervened, the French would inevitably follow. In other words, Bethmann Hollweg made out the 'blank cheque' in full awareness that he was thereby running the risk of not only a local but a continental war.

Of itself none of this is new. We know that Austria was reasonably certain that Russia would intervene. Bethmann would have had to be blind if he had trusted with absolute certainty that this time things would again proceed as they had in 1908 and 1912. What is new is the impression of gloomy acceptance that emerges from Bethmann's comments to Riezler, his private secretary. Germany seemed to him to be in extreme peril, even without war. As its enemies well knew, it was completely constrained by Entente encirclement, while Austria-Hungary was growing steadily weaker. Russia's military might was growing rapidly, haunting the Germans like a nightmare. Within a few years, Russia's growing claims and immense explosive force could no longer be contained. The conclusion was that a 'leap in the dark' must be risked, in other words, the possibility of a great war. That was Germany's 'gravest duty', for on no account could Germany accept the disintegration and loss of its last ally, together with Russian predominance on the continent. We see that in all this there is no suggestion of the pursuit of world power, only of Germany's unavoidable 'duty' to stop the decline in its status as a great power, endangered especially from the east. It wished to maintain that position, together with that of its Austrian ally, even at the risk of European war.

Overall, the Chancellor's decision to side with Austria-Hungary can be called an act of desperate resolve rather than of arrogant faith in victory. Beyond doubt it contained a strong element of reluctant surrender to what was seemingly inevitable. The nightmare confronting the Chancellor was, according to the military authorities, the disaster that threatened from the side of Russia, magnified by the tremendous dominance soon resulting from the Russo-French military alliance. Yet there seems to me a danger of over-estimating the practical importance of emotional outbursts to which Bethmann, always brooding and worrying, was given in intimate discussions with his loyal follower, Riezler. There are many other utterances during the July crisis that clearly show Bethmann's hope that it might in the end be possible to localise the war. Bethmann's hope was based in the main on the fact that Russia had not yet by far completed its arms programme. The Russian Tsar and his generals might well pull back from prematurely involving themselves in military action, the consequences of which were impossible to predict.

What can you learn from this extract about the interpretation and approach of the historian who wrote it? Use the extract and your knowledge of the origins of the First World War to explain your answer. [40]

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Section B: Topic 2

The Holocaust

2 Read the extract and then answer the question.

The inevitable result of the acquisition of territory, particularly in the east where Hitler's ambitions lay, was that it brought more 'racial inferiors' and Jews with it.

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The corporate sense of superiority these unlikely rulers shared in the administration of masses of supposedly hostile 'primitives', the oppressive strangeness of these lands, and their unusual executive freedom proved a murderous combination.

What can you learn from this extract about the interpretation and approach of the historian who wrote it? Use the extract and your knowledge of the Holocaust to explain your answer. [40]

Section C: Topic 3

The origins and development of the Cold War

3 Read the extract and then answer the question.

The bleak contrast between glowing public statements of allied solidarity and the growing mistrust of Washington and London towards Moscow was deeply disturbing.

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Instead of Britain's faltering world empire, he now faced the dismal prospect of a challenge to Soviet predominance in Europe from a mighty commercial empire backed by formidable military might and committed to framing the European peace in its own image – the United States.

What can you learn from this extract about the interpretation and approach of the historian who wrote it? Use the extract and your knowledge of the Cold War to explain your answer. [40]

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