**Higher and standard level paper two - timezone 2**

**Component grade boundaries**

**Grade:** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**Mark range:** 0 – 4 5 – 9 10 - 12 13 - 16 17 - 21 22 - 25 26 - 40

**The areas of the programme and examination that appeared difficult for the candidates**

As usual, overall, there was a rather limited body of knowledge that was known and understood by the candidates; otherwise, no real difficulties were evident. Candidates seemed familiar with the structure and the requirements of the exam.

**The levels of knowledge, understanding and skill demonstrated**

* There were very few rubric offences except for choosing two leaders/states from the same region.
* In general, candidates seemed to have planned their time quite well. Most scripts answered two questions without seeming to be short of time.
* Answers were quite well structured. Almost all candidates referred to the question in their introductory paragraph and so indicated that they had read the question.
* Of the candidates whose scripts I marked, the vast majority answered Q.1 and Q.25. This is not surprising, given that these are mainstream topics.
* Knowledge, for the most part, was plentiful and accurate although analysis was rarely very focused or thoughtful. Even so, there was opportunity for the more able candidates to shine and for weaker candidates to demonstrate their grasp of these areas of the syllabus.

**The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions**

**Topic 1**

**Question 1**: This was extremely popular, as expected. The vast majority of candidates discussed only Versailles and seemed unaware that there were any other treaties. Most discussed all three factors, although some neglected to link their arguments to the outbreak of war. A few mentioned Italy and Japan, usually with a reference to Manchuria and Abyssinia and so the relevance, to this question, was not always explained. There were some excellent answers that demonstrated understanding as well as knowledge.

**Question 2**: Most candidates discussed the Chinese and Spanish civil wars, although some chose the Algerian War of Independence, Vietnam, Korea etc. Oddly, this was not particularly well answered, given that foreign involvement in civil wars has been a recurring theme on P2.

**Question 4**: Most candidates who chose this question demonstrated good knowledge. There is still a tendency for candidates to focus on the invasion of Kuwait rather than the escalation into the Gulf War, however.

**Question 5**: Most answers implied that women rarely left the house before the war, worked in factories during the war and then went back to the home - liberated but unhappy. This was quite disappointing.

**Topic 2**

**Question 7**: This was very  popular  as  candidates  “spotted”  this as the Weimar Republic question (although one candidate did attempt (not very successfully) to write about Republican Spain). There were some excellent answers that reflected knowledge and understanding of the topic. Weaker answers narrated the rise of Hitler.

**Topic 3**

**Question 13**: This question was very popular. Most candidates chose Hitler and Mao and addressed all parts i.e. 2 leaders, 2 states, ideology, social and economic distress. Most candidates structured their answers appropriately and focused well on the question.

**Question 14**: Most candidates focused on leaders such as Hitler or Mao. In some cases, states – the USSR or China – were chosen and so more than one leader was discussed. This was quite acceptable.

**Question 16**: This was very popular indeed. The structure in the question helped even weaker candidates to work their way through and to come up with a reasonable analysis. For the most part, there was quite good knowledge to support arguments, although narratives of the factions seemed to overwhelm  some.  Some  strayed  into  Stalin’s   time in power.

**Question 17**: Some reasonable answers on women and how they were affected by the policies of Hitler were given with fewer responses on Mao. Again, this question did tend to attract weaker candidates so there was not a great deal of knowledge but, quite often, a general understanding.

**Topic 5**

**Question 25**: There were some excellent answers that focused well on the question and supported arguments with accurate knowledge and understanding. This is a familiar topic and weaker candidates were also able to contribute reasonable knowledge and a general understanding. Probably, less than 50% went up to 1949.

**Question 26**: A few answers were seen to this question although, for the most part, candidates rarely went beyond 1953 (or, in one case, 1947/8). The expectation would have been that this would have attracted candidates who wanted to discuss the Cuban Missile Crisis but few were seen.

**Question 27**: This was attempted by a few who knew something about the topic but the scope tended to be quite narrow and limited to Khrushchev (whom they all thought succeeded Stalin in 1953) and Mao.

**Question 28**: Mostly, candidates chose either Kennedy or Reagan. With Kennedy, the focus tended to be the Cuban Missile Crisis (with due to “tension” in some cases) but with Reagan, unfortunately, the focus was more on his role in ending the Cold War.

**Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates**

* Candidates  still  like  to  litter  their  answers  with  “stand  alone”  quotes  from  historians  – AJP Taylor was especially popular this year although not all who referenced him understood his interpretation of appeasement.
* Simply stating that a historian said this or that does not amount to an argument. In some cases, it was very tiresome to have to plough through a memorised list of who said what, with no indication of an underlying argument. The other fall-back was to narrate what “intentionalists”   and   "structuralists"   or   “revisionists”   and   "post- revisionists" thought about Hitler or the Cold War – lists that added little to the answers and where candidates would have been better advised to acquire a good understanding of the topic.
* **The best answers, as always, focused on the question and answered it concisely and methodically with a selection of good knowledge to support sound analysis and may have included a quote or two to embellish an argument.**
* Further comments**:**  Questions that were structured (and specific) helped weaker candidates to focus on the demands.

Overall, candidates seem to have been well prepared for the exam. They knew what to expect and there were very few answers that showed no understanding of the task.