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CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

HISTORY **9489/33**

Paper 3 Interpretations Question **May/June 2026**

1 hour 15 minutes

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 **8** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

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Section A: Topic 1

The origins of the First World War

1 Read the extract and then answer the question.

For all governments the war was a terrible leap into the dark, and the penalties for defeat were likely to be far greater than the traditional ones of financial punishments and territorial loss.

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Even in a less aggressive and self-confident society than Wilhelmine Germany, the opportunity might have seemed too good to miss.

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.

Hitler's declarations that the war against the Soviet Union would not be a conventional war but rather a conflict of ideologies and races, and that one of the war aims was the 'removal' of the 'Jewish-Bolshevik intelligentsia', evoked responses from both the SS and the Wehrmacht. Himmler and Heydrich created the Einsatzgruppen and gained military agreement for their operations up to the front lines. The German military itself stripped the civilian population of the protection of law by restricting the powers of the courts over the Army, and permitting collective reprisals. And it prepared to make its own contribution to the elimination of the 'Jewish-Bolsheviks' through its infamous 'commissar order' that permitted summary executions, and the equally infamous guidelines for troop behaviour that equated Jews with Bolshevik agitators, guerrillas and saboteurs. German preparations for the economic exploitation and demographic transformation of Soviet territory implied even greater destruction of life. The Economic Staff East made plans for feeding the entire German occupation army from local food supplies. The staff had no doubt that the inevitable result would be a great famine and that millions of people would die.

Yet none of the Barbarossa planning documents contain explicit plans concerning the fate of the Jews as a whole in Soviet territory, though along with the general encouragement to carry out the suppression of the population 'with ruthless severity', Heydrich's explicit orders to the Einsatzgruppen for those to be executed included Communist functionaries, anyone engaged in any form of resistance, and Jews in state and party positions. Rather, the last months before and the first weeks after the invasion of the Soviet Union can best be seen as an important transition period in the evolution of Nazi Jewish policy. Earlier resettlement plans had failed or were becoming irrelevant as the murderous preparations for Barbarossa made them obsolete. Clearly, the death of millions of people in the Soviet Union was implied in the plans for a war of destruction, and in such an environment of mass death, Soviet Jewry was in grave peril. Indeed, Nazi plans, when seen in the light of the past Nazi record in Poland, implied nothing less than the genocide of Soviet Jewry. In Poland, where large numbers of people had been shot, Jews had been shot in disproportionate numbers. When massive expulsions had taken place, it was never intended that any Jews would be left behind. And when food had been scarce, Jews had always been the first to starve. Now, mass executions, mass expulsions, and mass starvation were being planned for the Soviet Union on a scale that would vastly exceed what had happened in Poland. No one fully aware of the scope of these intended policies could doubt the eventual disappearance of all Jews in German-occupied Soviet territories. Within the framework of a war of destruction, through some unspecified combination of execution, starvation and expulsion to an inhospitable Siberia, Soviet Jewry, along with millions of other Slavs, would eventually be destroyed.

But this implied genocide was not yet the Final Solution for all Soviet Jewry, much less the other Jews of Europe. The old resettlement plans were dead, replaced by a vague, genocidal vision that was unspecific about timetable and means, and still interlinked the fates of both Jewish and non-Jewish victims. However, this vagueness and lack of precision would soon come to an end. In the fateful months following Barbarossa, a series of decisions would be made, out of which would emerge what the Nazis called the 'Final Solution of the Jewish problem'.

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]

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Section C: Topic 3

The origins and development of the Cold War

3 Read the extract and then answer the question.

There has been a reconsideration of Stalin's policy by a new generation of historians.

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But to deny that the alarm itself was sincere, or that Americans were not alone in perceiving it, is to distort what happened. Fear, after all, can be genuine without being rational.

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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