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Middle School Social Studies: History

(* Items marked with an asterisk are scheduled for future translation.)

Chapter 5: Japan and the World in the Modern Era

SECTION 2 JAPAN THROUGH TWO WORLD WARS

World Developments on the Map: International relations during World War I*

1. World War I and the Postwar World

GUIDE TEXT: Why did such a violent war occur?

PHOTO: Fighting on land and in the air.

WORLD WAR I AND JAPAN'S ENTRY INTO THE WAR

GUIDE TEXT: How did World War I begin, and why did Japan enter the war?

World war for the first time ever

Among the countries that embraced imperialism, an emergent Germany joined Austria and Italy to form the **Triple Alliance** at the end of the nineteenth century. Britain, France, and Russia, meanwhile, aligned themselves against Germany and entered into an alliance called the **Triple Entente**.

Turkish domination of the Balkan Peninsula was waning at this time. Conflicts arose there among various ethnic groups seeking independence, and powerful countries nearby sought to expand their influence into the region. Serbia, which aspired to unify Slavic people, opposed Austria's annexation of Bosnia. Because Germany supported Austria, and Russia supported Serbia, this created further conflict among the major powers.

In 1914 Austria's crown prince and his wife were assassinated by a young Serb, and this incident ignited **World War I**. Russia, Britain, France, and the other countries allied with Serbia went to war against Germany, Turkey, and the other countries allied with Austria. Italy broke away from the

Triple Alliance in 1915 and joined the side of the Allied Powers. In 1917 China and the United States entered the war, also on the side of the Allied Powers.¹

MAP: Europe in World War I.

Japan's entry into the war and the Twenty-One Demands

In 1914 (Taishô 3) Japan declared war on Germany and entered the war, in accordance with the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Japan occupied the Shandong Peninsula, including Qingdao, and the German-controlled South Sea Islands. In 1915 Japan issued a list of **Twenty-One Demands** to the Chinese government.

The Chinese government strongly rejected these demands. However, Japan used the threat of its military power to force the Chinese government to agree to the majority of the demands, with the exception of those that called for China to appoint Japanese advisors. Chinese antipathy toward Japan grew and an anti-Japanese movement sprang up.

The Twenty-One Demands

- The Chinese Government will transfer to Japan all rights that Germany possesses in relation to Shandong Province.
- The term of Japan's leases on Port Arthur and Dalian and the term for the South Manchuria Railway will be extended by 99 years.
- The Chinese Government will grant to Japanese people mining rights in South Manchuria and eastern Inner Mongolia.
- The Chinese Government will not cede any of the coastal areas of China to any foreign power.
- The Chinese central government will appoint influential Japanese as political, financial, and military advisers.

(Partial summary)

Protracted hostilities and total war

Virtually all the imperialist countries and their colonies became involved in the war, which grew to encompass the entire world. The protracted conflict included the use of airplanes, tanks, submarines, and other new weapons, as

¹ At first the United States maintained a neutral stance, although it exported materials and provided financial backing to the Allied Powers. When German submarines began indiscriminately attacking ships from neutral countries, however, the United States joined the Allied Powers.

well as poison gas. Waging total war² required the economic capacity to sustain war as well as cooperation from ordinary people. To elicit the cooperation of their citizens, European countries granted more rights to their workers and worked to improve social welfare. In addition, they promised to grant independence to their colonies in Asia and elsewhere when the war ended.

GUIDE TEXT: Get a map and identify the countries on the present-day Balkan Peninsula.

FIGURE: War deaths and expenses for the major powers in World War I (based on data from the United States War Department and other sources).

THE END OF WORLD WAR I

GUIDE TEXT: How did World War I end? What changes had taken place in the world?

PHOTO: Lenin making a speech.

The Russian Revolution and the Siberian Intervention

The war and the czar's tyranny made daily life difficult in Russia. In 1917 a revolution occurred, with workers and soldiers establishing their own representative assemblies, called soviets, and the czar was forced to give up his throne. A soviet-based government was subsequently established under the leadership of Lenin. This socialist revolt is known as the **Russian Revolution**. The soviet government insisted on an immediate end to the war and national self-determination, and in 1918 Russia made peace with Germany. The soviet government also seized land from major landowners and turned it over to farmers, nationalized banks, and factories, and worked to construct a socialist state. In 1922 the **Union of Soviet Socialist Republics** was established.

The Allied Powers intervened militarily in an effort to suppress the revolution. Japan dispatched 70,000 troops to Siberia.³

² Total war refers to a war in which not only the military but the government, economy, and the cooperation of citizens all play an essential role.

³ Japan kept its troops there longer than the other Allied Powers. As casualties mounted and the cost of the war increased, however, Japan's government came under criticism at home and withdrew its troops in 1922.

BOX: The Weimar Constitution

Article 17. State parliament must be elected in a general, equal, immediate, and secret ballot, in which all Reich German men and women participate, according to the principles of representative election.

Article 159. The right to form unions and to improve conditions at work as well as in the economy is guaranteed to every individual and to all occupations.

FIGURE: Achievement of universal suffrage in major nations.

Treaty of Versailles

After the United States' entry into the war, the Central Powers began to surrender one by one. During this period, a revolution took place in Germany in 1918. After the abdication of the Kaiser, Germany became a republic and surrendered to the Allied Nations. This brought to a close a war that had lasted four years and had cost approximately 9 million lives, with a further 20 million people injured.

In 1919 a peace conference was held in Paris. President Wilson of the United States argued against annexation and reparations, and asserted the principle of national self-determination. However, the victorious nations put their own interests first, and the **Treaty of Versailles**⁴ concluded at this conference stipulated that Germany give up all its colonies and part of its home territory and that it pay an enormous sum in reparations. Japan was awarded Germany's concessions in Shandong Province in China and received from the League of Nations the mandate for Germany's former territories in the South Sea Islands.

Arms reduction and the new order in East Asia

In 1920, the **League of Nations** was founded. This was the first organization in the world to be established for the purpose of maintaining peace. The United States did not join, however, due to opposition from the Congress, and since neither Germany nor the Soviet Union were permitted to join either,⁵ the organization never grew powerful.

⁴ At this peace conference the independence of various Eastern European nations was recognized; however, that of Asian and African nations was not.

⁵ Germany joined the League of Nations in 1926 and the Soviet Union joined in 1934.

In the meantime, the public clamor for peace and arms reduction grew louder, and in 1921 the **Washington Conference** was held. Among the topics discussed at the conference was the limiting of naval power, and Japan became signatory to a treaty that abolished the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, expressed respect for Chinese sovereignty and territories, and placed limitations on naval power. As a result, Japan was obliged to return to China the rights to Shandong province.

Efforts toward peace and arms reduction continued, with an anti-war treaty concluded in Paris in 1928 and a naval arms limitation treaty concluded in London in 1930. In Japan, however, there was discontent—particularly within the navy—due to the restraints placed on Japan’s naval arsenal.

DEMOCRATIC AND NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS

GUIDE TEXT: How did democratization in Europe and the independence movement in Asia progress?

The rise of democracy

The gradual elimination of autocratic states and the rise of democracy in postwar Europe were accompanied by greater participation in political affairs by workers and women. The democratic **Weimar Constitution** was enacted in Germany in 1919, extending the right to vote to all men and women 20 years of age or older and guaranteeing a citizen’s right to work. The United States achieved universal suffrage for men and women alike in 1920. Britain’s first Labour Party government was inaugurated in 1924, and universal suffrage for men and women was established in 1928.

The Korean and Chinese independence movements

After the annexation of Korea, Japan conducted a land survey in Korea. Many peasants lost their land due to claims that ownership was unclear. Japan also imposed restrictions on the activities of companies.

On 1 March 1919, Koreans seeking independence issued a declaration of independence in Seoul (Keijō)⁶ and staged a noisy demonstration march, chanting their slogan, “Long Live Independence!” The movement spread to the whole of Korea, with an estimated 2 million people joining the demonstrations. The Japanese government mobilized the police and the armed forces to suppress it. This movement is called the **Samil Independence**

⁶ In 1910 Japan changed the name of Hanseong to Keijō.

Movement, and was the spark that ignited subsequent Korean independence movements. Forced to modify its policies, the Japanese government was obliged to abolish the military police system⁷ and to allow the publication of Korean-language newspapers.

At the Paris Peace Conference China requested that the Twenty-One Demands made by Japan be annulled; however, this request was ignored. As a result, on 4 May 1919 students in Beijing staged a demonstration to protest against the peace treaty. The movement spread throughout China and in cities such as Shanghai workers and citizens went on strike, with the result that the Chinese government refused to sign the peace treaty. This is referred to as the **May Fourth Movement**.

This movement provided the impetus for Sun Yat-sen and his followers to found the Kuomintang, which sought national independence and a nationalist revolution. In 1921 the Chinese Communist Party was also founded.

FIGURE: Trends in landowners in Korea (North Cholla Province) and area of land owned. (*Chôsen Beikoku Keizairon* [Study of Korea's Rice Economy]) People who lost their land or their employment became tenant farmers or emigrated to Japan or Manchuria, and were forced to work for lower wages than Japanese.

PHOTO: May Fourth Movement.

The rise of independence movements in Asia and Africa

Believing Britain's promise that it would recognize India's right to self-rule after World War I, India sent approximately 1.1 million troops to the battlefields of Europe. However, when Britain failed to honor its promise, Gandhi and his followers waged a campaign of resistance through nonviolent civil disobedience.

Independence movements sprang up, such as those against Spain and France in Morocco, against Britain in Egypt, and against the United States in the Philippines. In the colonies of Asia and Africa, national independence movements flourished.

⁷ Originally made up of military personnel who policed the armed forces, the military police was the police organization responsible for general administration and the administration of justice.

PHOTO: Gandhi. In order to revive agricultural communities, Gandhi urged the people to spin yarn and weave cloth themselves.

Japan's rule over Korea through the eyes of Yanagi Muneyoshi and Yoshino Sakuzô
Yanagi Muneyoshi, who held Korean art in very high regard, was critical of Japan's policy toward Korea. In works such as "Chôsen no tomo ni okuru sho" (Writings for our friend Korea), Yanagi stated: "Korea is Japan's sibling and must not become Japan's slave. Not only would this be a disgrace for Korea, it would also shame Japan"; "We try to take away their freedom and independence and impose Japanese ideas, but we cannot rob them of their spirit"; and "Surely it is inevitable that the Korean people will aspire to independence." Yoshino Sakuzô, who had advocated democratization in Japan, also expressed understanding for the Samil Independence Movement, saying: "For any nation, seeking the restoration of the motherland represents the highest level of morality."

PHOTO: Yanagi Muneyoshi.

GUIDE TEXT: Try and find out about Gandhi and Sun Yat-sen, two important independence movement figures.

2. The Era of Taishô Democracy

PHOTO: Launching ceremony (Kanagawa Prefecture). The war resulted in a worldwide shortage of ships, which led to unprecedented prosperity for Japan's shipbuilding industry.

FIGURE: Trends in trade volume around the time of World War I.
(*Sûji de miru Nihon no hyaku-nen* [100 years of Japan in numbers])

GUIDE TEXT: Who profited from the increase in exports after World War I?

THE GREAT WAR BOOM AND THE RICE RIOTS

GUIDE TEXT: What effect did the war have on Japan's economy and the lifestyle of its people?

The great war and the economic boom

Prior to World War I Japan had lapsed into a precarious economic situation, with imports continually surpassing its exports. When World War I broke out, however, the Allied Powers' demand for military supplies and other goods led to a surge in exports from Japan. While the nations of Europe concentrated all their powers on the war, Japan was increasing its exports to China and the rest of Asia. As imports from Europe came to a halt, Japan's chemical industry and heavy industries grew, and its cotton-spinning industry expanded into China. In addition, Japanese industries switched from steam power to electricity.

Thanks to this economic boom Japan's shipbuilding, shipping, and iron and steel industries rapidly expanded, suddenly producing a wave of people whose enormous profits made them newly wealthy. Homegrown conglomerates such as Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, and Yasuda, which all earned huge profits, each owned numerous companies revolving around its respective bank and came to hold the status of a monopoly within the Japanese economy.

In addition, since the number of workers increased markedly⁸ and urban commerce expanded, Japan's urban population dramatically increased.⁹

CHART: Increase in the number of eligible voters (based on *Nihon tôkei nenkan* [Japan statistical yearbook] and other sources).

PHOTO: People gather to hear speakers demanding universal suffrage (Tokyo, 1920).

The rice riots

The economic boom fueled by World War I triggered a dramatic rise in prices. Rice in particular was subject to extraordinary price increases in 1918 (Taishô 7) when traders bought it up in great quantities in anticipation of troop deployment in Siberia. In July an incident occurred in which women from a fishing village in Toyama Prefecture forcibly blocked the shipment of rice outside the prefecture and demanded that the rice be sold at a discount. When newspapers nationwide reported on the event, calling it the Revolt of the Wives of Etchû, disturbances quickly spread around the country, particularly

⁸ The number of workers employed at factories having five or more workers soared from around 840,000 in 1909 to 1.82 million in 1919.

⁹ The number of people living in cities with 10,000 or more residents more than doubled, increasing from 9 million before the Russo-Japanese War to around 20 million in 1925.

in the big cities, with rioters vandalizing or burning down the establishments of rice merchants and moneylenders as well as large stores. Eventually the riots spread to mineworkers and others.¹⁰ The movement grew increasingly violent, as rioters clashed with the police and military trying to quell the disturbances and attacked police stations. These large-scale disturbances, spreading throughout the country over a period of approximately 50 days, are called the **rice riots**

The cabinet, which used the military to quell the riots, collapsed amid growing criticism after these disturbances.

PHOTO: Scene of the rice riots (*Rice Riot Picture Scroll*, Tokugawa Reimeikai Foundation, Aichi Prefecture).

MAP: Spread of the rice riots. The riots spread to 42 prefectures, including Hokkaidô and three urban prefectures.

FIGURE: Trends in rice prices (from *Honpô shuyô keizei tôkei* [Major domestic economic statistics]).

GUIDE TEXT: Investigate whether there were rice riots in your own area.

TAISHÔ DEMOCRACY AND THE BIRTH OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

How did movements to enhance the lives and rights of the masses develop, and how were their goals achieved?

The spread of social movements

After World War I, a drop in exports and a slump in the shipbuilding industry caused economic conditions to deteriorate in Japan. Unemployment and wage cuts dealt a severe blow to workers. Solidarity emerged among the workers who protested such treatment, drawing inspiration from the Russian Revolution and the labor movements in Europe and the United States. In 1920 (Taishô 9), Japan's first May Day was held in Tokyo, and the following year saw the establishment of a nationwide labor organization, the Japan

¹⁰ In addition to workers, a large number of *burakumin*, victims of longstanding class discrimination, participated in the riots as well.

Federation of Labor. The socialist movement regained its momentum,¹¹ and in rural communities **tenant farmer disputes** broke out as tenant farmers demanded reductions in rent and other changes. In 1922 the Japan Farmers' Union was formed as a nationwide farmers' umbrella organization.

The movement to improve the status of women in society also escalated. In 1920 Hiratsuka Raichō, Ichikawa Fusae, and others formed the New Woman's Association and campaigned for the right of women to participate in political affairs and for women's suffrage. The *burakumin*, victims of class discrimination, also united with the goal of achieving emancipation from discrimination, equal treatment as human beings, and better lives through their own efforts, forming the **Zenkoku Suiheisha** (National Society of Levelers) in Kyoto in 1922. Collaborating with the farm and labor movements, the campaign spread throughout Japan.

Suiheisha Declaration (1922; paraphrased extracts)

Burakumin throughout the country: Unite! It is only natural for us to launch a movement to emancipate ourselves by promoting respect for human dignity. We fervently seek the warmth and light of human life from deep within our hearts. Thus is the Suiheisha born.

Let there be warmth in human society, let there be light in all human beings.

PHOTO: Women's suffrage movement.

PHOTO: The young Yamada calling on people to fight against discrimination at a rally (Osaka, 1924).

GUIDE TEXT: What were people seeking? What did they assert?

FIGURE: Rise of tenant farmer disputes and labor disputes (from *Nihon keizai tôkeishû* [Japanese economic statistics]).

Party politics and the popular election system

¹¹ The Japan Communist Party (Nihon Kyôsentô), organized clandestinely in 1922, called not only for universal male and female suffrage, an eight-hour workday, and protection for farmers, but also for the abolition of private property and the monarchy.

From around 1912 on, popular opposition to governments run primarily by bureaucrats and military officers, a legacy of the Meiji era, gave rise to the **Movement to Protect Constitutional Government**, which called for political activity centering on the legislature. In the aftermath of the rice riots, Hara Takashi, leader of the Friends of Constitutional Government Party, which held a majority in the House of Representatives, formed a full-scale **party government**,¹² replacing a cabinet in which a military officer served as prime minister.

Yoshino Sakuzô and others seized on the political and social movements of the times to amplify the desire for government that would incorporate **universal suffrage** and otherwise reflect the will of the people. Meanwhile, Japan's government demonstrated its willingness to cooperate with the United States and Britain, promote disarmament, and improve its international relations. The trends and movements toward democracy that flourished in the Taishô era are known collectively as **Taishô Democracy**.

In the years following World War I, amid a resurgence of the Movement to Protect Constitutional Government, a new cabinet was formed under Katô Takaaki, head of the Constitutional Association. In 1925 Katô's administration instituted universal male suffrage, extending the right to vote to all males 25 years of age or older. In an effort to suppress a growing socialist movement, the same administration also enacted the **Peace Preservation Law of 1925**. For the next seven and a half years control of the government alternated between cabinets formed by the head of the Friends of Constitutional Government Party and those formed by the head of the Constitutional Association.¹³

GUIDE TEXT: Find out exactly what *minpon shugi*, as espoused by Yoshino Sakuzô, really meant.

PHOTO: Yoshino Sakuzô. Yoshino advocated *minpon shugi* (literally, "people-as-the-base-ism") and worked to establish party-based government based on universal suffrage.

¹² Japan's first party government, formed in 1898 under Ôkuma Shigenobu and Itagaki Taisuke, lasted a mere four months. Apart from the ministers of the army, navy, and foreign affairs, all the ministers in Hara's cabinet were members of the Friends of Constitutional Government Party, so his government can be described as a full-scale party government.

¹³ The Constitutional Association became the Constitutional Democratic Party in 1927.

CHANGES IN LIFESTYLE AND THE POPULARIZATION OF CULTURE

The Tokyo Earthquake of 1923

On September 1, 1923 (Taishô 12), a large earthquake of magnitude 7.9 struck the southern Kantô region. Across the seven prefectures that were affected, approximately 3.4 million people suffered injury or damage to their homes. The total of dead or missing was around 140,000. This is referred to as the Tokyo Earthquake. With the ensuing fires Tokyo burned continuously for three days. Since companies and banks in Tokyo and Yokohama could not do business, an especially severe blow was dealt to Japan's economy, which only served to intensify the nation's economic woes stemming from the aftermath of the Great War.

In the confusion, police and ordinary citizens spread rumors that Koreans were poisoning wells and that socialists were inciting riots. As a result, the populace was gripped by anxiety. Several thousand Koreans, as well as socialists and Chinese, were seized and killed by citizen vigilante groups, the police, or the military.

In the reconstruction of Tokyo and Yokohama that followed, roads, parks, and other facilities were restored in line with the principles of urban planning. The Marunouchi business district, urban hubs like Shinjuku, and residential suburbs like Yamanote were built, and coastal reclaimed land was developed as the Keihin industrial area.

Cities and the popularization of culture

In the Taishô era, the population of the major cities grew dramatically, and urbanization transformed people's lives, especially in the districts centered on such cities as Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka. Department stores were built, and electric lighting spread to every neighborhood. Telephones, running water, and gas also became widely available. Women in Western attire became an increasingly common sight on city streets, and more and more women entered the work force, filling the new jobs that emerged, such as those of typist and bus conductor.

Newspaper readers multiplied, and some dailies boasted circulations of more than 1 million. Women's magazines and children's magazines also proliferated, phonographs became more common, and in 1925 radio broadcasts were formally launched. In this way the cities became the center for the progressive popularization and commercialization of culture.

PHOTO: Department store poster (collection of Mitsukoshi, Ltd., Tokyo). For people of that time, department stores were alluring places that offered not just shopping but also Western-style dining in large restaurants and amusement facilities on the roof.

PHOTO: Typists. Japanese typewriters came on the market in 1916 and soon became common in the workplace.

PHOTO: Life in the age of radio. Radio was on the air from 9:00 in the morning to 9:30 at night, with a break in between.

PHOTO: Magazines published in the Taishō era (Museum of Modern Japanese Literature, Tokyo).

In literature, the mainstream was dominated by the Shirakaba (White Birch) school, represented by such champions of liberalism and humanitarianism as Mushanokōji Saneatsu and Shiga Naoya. Another new current was the Tanbiha (aesthetic school) led by Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, which sought to depict human nature. Eventually two other major trends emerged: the unflinching realism of the Shinshichō (New Currents of Thought) school, represented by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, and the proletarian literature of writers like Kobayashi Takiji, who appealed to society with their portrayals of the life of workers and farmers. This period also saw the rise of popular literature, including the works of such writers as Yoshikawa Eiji and Edogawa Ranpo.

GUIDE TEXT: Investigate the impact of the Tokyo Earthquake of 1923 and compare it with that of recent earthquakes.

Delving into History: The Quest for a Society Based on Equality

1 Women's Quest for Independence and Gender Equality

Women in the Edo Period: Women and *Ie*

"In your father's household, obey your father; in your husband's household, obey your husband; when your husband dies, obey your son." "It is only natural that your husband will divorce you if as a wife you display any of the

seven evils, such as disobeying your husband's parents, failing to bear children, and being overly jealous."

These were among the axioms presented in such books as *Onna daigaku* (Great Learning for Women), which embody the Edo-period ideal of a woman's education, based largely on Confucian concepts.

The wife of a samurai could never be the head of the household. In a farmer's household, a woman could own furnishings or valuables but had few rights when it came to ownership of land. In the case of townspeople, a woman might occasionally inherit a merchant's wealth, but only in order to pass it on to the next legitimate (male) heir.

The Three-and-a-Half-Line Letter of Divorce

Be that as it may, gender relations often came closer to equality among married townspeople or tenant farmers, as both spouses contributed to the family by working. For example, where divorce was concerned, it was possible for a samurai, but not his wife, to obtain a divorce by submitting a three-and-a-half-line (*mikudari han*) letter. In the case of townspeople, however, these documents were often written at the request of the woman.

There were also temples where a woman could find sanctuary from her husband, and if she stayed in such a temple for three years, her divorce would be automatically recognized even if she could not obtain her husband's consent. Women were also free to remarry.

During the second half of the Edo period, there were more and more situations in which a woman's labor sustained a household economically. As women began to earn their own income from weaving, domestic service, or peddling, their status in the household and in society gradually rose.

PHOTO: Women engaged in weaving and spinning (from *Shokkôzu byôbu* [Scenes of Tilling and Weaving], folding screen, Fujita Museum of Art, Osaka).

PHOTO: Women at work in a merchant's household (from *Rakuchû rakugai zukan* [Handscroll of Sights in and Around Kyoto], Tokyo National Museum).

Women in the Modern Age: Women and the Old Civil Code

The Civil Code adopted in 1898 (Meiji 31) attempted to make everyone in the country adhere to the traditional *ie* system. Under this law, the head of the

household had “the right to govern the family,” and the wife was required to take the husband’s surname. In addition, the man alone had control over the wealth of the *ie*, and after her husband died, the widow depended on the eldest son, who succeeded his father as head of the *ie*.

It was generally believed that the greatest happiness for a woman was to marry and be a “good wife and wise mother,” and women were educated with this in mind.

Demands for Independence and Women’s Suffrage

In a poem titled *Sozorigoto* published in the magazine *Seitô* (Bluestocking), launched in 1911, Yosano Akiko called on every woman to cultivate the self-awareness to live as a human being in her own right.

In this way women were beginning to question whether it was sufficient for them to live to be good wives and wise mothers focused on the *ie*, and to seek a new lifestyle. This change in women’s consciousness provided the context in which people like Ichikawa Fusae established the New Woman’s Association and campaigned for women’s suffrage. However, it was not until 1945 (Shôwa 20), after the end of World War II, that women were given the right to vote and gender equality was recognized under the law.

2 The Quest for Emancipation from *Burakumin* Discrimination

Burakumin Discrimination after the Emancipation Edict of 1871

Following the Emancipation Edict of 1871, the socially outcast *burakumin* found their livelihood threatened by the development of capitalism, as big business moved into leather tanning and other professions traditionally reserved for this group. This, compounded with egregious job discrimination, forced them to rely on unstable day labor and temporary jobs with harsh working conditions, making their lives extremely difficult. These impoverished conditions only exacerbated discriminatory attitudes toward the *burakumin*.

Formation of the Suiheisha

Out of this situation, however, the awareness and solidarity of the *burakumin* themselves gave rise to a movement to eradicate discrimination. On March 3,

1922, some 3,000 *burakumin* from around the country gathered in Kyoto and formed the Zenkoku Suiheisha (“Society of Levelers”). They issued a declaration that began, “*Burakumin* throughout the country: Unite!” and concluded, “Let there be warmth in human society, let there be light in all human beings.”

PHOTO: General Principles of the Zenkoku Suiheisha. The document, drafted by Saikō Mankichi, asserts that people living in the *hisabetsu buraku* (settlements subject to discrimination) should be proud of who they are and devote themselves to the emancipation movement. It has been called Japan’s first “declaration of human rights.”

PHOTO: Saikō Mankichi.

3. The Global Depression and Japan

GUIDE TEXT: What was happening in the United States at this time?

PHOTO: Unemployed people wait in line to receive bread (United States, 1930).

SPREADING WORLDWIDE CRISES AND UNEASE OVER WAR

GUIDE TEXT: What impact did the global depression have on the international cooperation that followed World War I?

FIGURE: Changing unemployment rates in major countries. (*Sekai rekishi tōkei* [International Historical Statistics])

Global depression

On October 24, 1929, enormous numbers of shares were sold on New York’s stock exchanges. Virtually limitless mass production had continued in the United States after World War I, but unsold goods had accumulated and many businesses started to fail. This is said to have prompted the mass selling of stock.

Industrial output and exports declined to half their wartime level; one-quarter of the nation’s work force was left unemployed. Agricultural goods went unsold, dealing a harsh blow to US farmers as well. The depression that

rapidly engulfed the United States quickly spread to Europe, Latin America, and Asia,¹⁴ developing into what became known as the **global depression**.

PHOTO: Children in Japan's Tôhoku region gnaw on daikon (Japanese radishes) (1929).

GUIDE TEXT: Why are those children gnawing on daikon?

PHOTO: Collecting money for victims of a major crop failure in the Tôhoku region.

New Deal policies and bloc economies

In 1933 newly inaugurated US president Roosevelt attempted to revive the economy with a policy called the New Deal, which provided assistance for struggling banks and businesses and guaranteed the livelihoods and rights of workers and farmers, while carrying out large-scale public works, such as the TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority) development program.

Britain and France adopted a **bloc economy** policy that raised tariffs and closed their far-flung colonies to imports from other countries, putting their own profits ahead of international cooperation.

MAP: Formation of blocs in the world economy.

The Soviet Union and the rise of the fascist nations

In Italy, Mussolini, leader of the National Fascist Party, formed a new government in 1922 with the king's support and established a dictatorship. Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935 and annexed it the following year.

In Germany, which had lost all its colonies and suffered under the burden of heavy war reparations, Hitler, the leader of the Nazi Party, won the people's support by calling for abrogation of the Treaty of Versailles. After coming to power in 1933, he promoted rearmament, which the treaty had restricted, built a national highway system, and worked to revive the German economy. At the same time, he imposed a dictatorship, restricting the people's liberties and democratic rights, and instituted increasingly

¹⁴ Because American financial assistance had propelled the postwar recovery in Europe, and countries in Latin America and Asia were economically dependent on exports to the United States, those nations lapsed into a major economic depression as well.

discriminatory policies against the Jewish people.¹⁵ The kind of anti-democratic, anti-liberal, authoritarian dictatorship that emerged in Germany and Italy with the support of the masses is called **fascism**.

In the Soviet Union, Stalin came to power and began building his own style of socialist state, centered on the development of heavy industry and the organization of agriculture into collectives. Because of these policies, the Soviet Union did not feel the effects of the global depression, but a great many people suffered under his harsh policies.

PHOTO: Mussolini (left) and Hitler.

PHOTO: Picasso's *Guernica* (detail). In 1937, the German air force bombed the Spanish town of Guernica in support of Spain's fascist forces. The Spanish-born Picasso appealed for worldwide opposition to fascism with this depiction of the common people's rage and anguish.

GUIDE TEXT: Investigate in detail the character of Hitler and Mussolini.

JAPAN'S ECONOMIC DEPRESSION AND DEVELOPMENTS IN EAST ASIA

GUIDE TEXT: What impact did the global depression have on Japan? What kinds of things did people in Japan and the rest of East Asia have a desire for?

FIGURE: Trends in prices for agricultural crops. (*Chôki keizai tôkei* [Long-term economic statistics])

Japan's economic depression

In Japan efforts were underway to rebuild the economy in the wake of the Great Kantô Earthquake. In 1930, however, amid the impact of the global depression, exports of raw silk and other goods to the United States declined, and the economic climate became even worse. In the cities businesses failed in rapid succession, causing a steep increase in the ranks of the unemployed. In farming communities agricultural goods went unsold, and the decline in prices made life difficult for farmers. In addition, cool weather caused crop

¹⁵ Discrimination by Christians against Jews had existed in Europe since the Middle Ages, but Hitler adopted an official policy of discrimination, partly out of a belief that betrayal by the Jews had led to Germany's defeat in World War I, and partly with the aim of preserving and enhancing the superiority of the German race.

failures in the Tōhoku region and Hokkaidō, a situation that gave rise to troubling social phenomena: daughters were sold to enable their families to repay debts, and undernourished schoolchildren were sent to school with nothing to eat for their midday meal.

Amid these circumstances, political parties that took the side of workers and tenant farmers succeeded in getting their members elected to the National Diet, and labor and tenant-farming disputes proliferated. The government intensified its suppression of socialist movements, revising the Peace Preservation Law of 1925 to make the death penalty the ultimate sanction and stationing “special higher police” throughout the country.

Japan began an effort to recover from the depression by exporting mass quantities of inexpensive cotton fabric and sundries, but this generated trade friction with the United States and European countries, which relied on their own respective economic blocs. Meanwhile, the zaibatsu were controlling industry in Japan and expanding their influence over the government in order to promote their own interests.

Korea, Taiwan, and China’s quest for unification

Social unrest was also increasing in the Japanese colonies of Korea and Taiwan. In 1929 in Korea the insulting speech and behavior of Japanese students sparked protest in the form of the Kwangju Student Incident.¹⁶ The following year in Taiwan, the citizens of the Musha region attacked Japanese police and schools in protest against labor conditions. The Japanese government mobilized the army to quell this unrest.

After the death of Sun Yat-sen, **Chiang Kai-shek** assumed the leadership of the Kuomintang in China, and in 1927 he established the Nationalist government in Nanjing. In a bid to unify the entire country, he subdued the regional warlords and advanced his army to Beijing. In an effort to check this advance, the Japanese government twice dispatched troops to Shandong Province and blew up a leading warlord’s train.

Changes in Japan’s policy toward China

Japanese government thinking in 1924:

There have been frequent incidents in China in which foreigners have been harmed. However, as this is a domestic Chinese issue, we do not intend to take any action that fails to take account of China’s standpoint.

¹⁶ From 1929 into the following year, groups of students at Korean schools refused to attend class and carried out anti-Japanese demonstrations.

(Foreign policy speech in the Imperial Diet)

Japanese government thinking in 1927:

As there is a danger that the interests of Japan and the lives and property of Japanese residents in China are being infringed upon unjustly, should the need arise we will have no option but to resort to resolute self-defense measures.

(China policy manifesto issued at the Far Eastern Conference)

4. All-Out War with China

THE ROAD TO WAR

The Manchurian Incident and international isolation

The influence of the Nationalist government of China, which was looking to achieve national unity, extended as far as Manchuria, which was where Japanese interests were concentrated. Individuals emerged from within the Japanese military and the ranks of the nationalists¹⁷ who looked upon Manchuria as Japan's lifeline and who sought to cut Manchuria off from China and occupy it. In September 1931 (Shōwa 6), the Japanese army stationed in Manchuria blew up a railway line in the vicinity of Mukden (now called Shenyang). Blaming the action on the Chinese, the Japanese army dispatched troops and soon occupied all of Manchuria. This is referred to as the **Manchurian Incident**.

In Japan the newspapers and radio intensified the fervor for war. While some people expected that an economic recovery would result, there were also a few who opposed the occupation and demanded that the troops be withdrawn. Then, in March 1932 the Japanese army established the state of Manchukuo, installing the last Qing emperor as its sovereign. In reality, however, the Japanese assumed control of Manchukuo, bringing in many Japanese companies and initiating a wave of mass immigration by farmers and other workers who came from Japan to settle and work on land purchased cheaply from the Chinese.

At the time the League of Nations conducted an investigation into the Manchurian Incident, in response to a complaint from China. This resulted in

¹⁷ Members and organizations of the military that held political power, independent of the party cabinet and the Diet, were called the *gunbu* (military authorities). The nationalists were those who believed that the power and will of the nation was absolute and took precedence over individuals.

the drafting of a resolution proposing that Manchukuo should not be recognized as a state and that Japan should withdraw its army from the occupied territory.

The league's General Assembly passed this resolution by a vote of 42 to 1, and in March 1933 the Japanese government withdrew from the League of Nations. The following year Japan's international isolation intensified when it announced its abrogation of the arms reduction treaty that had been concluded at the Washington Conference.

Why Japan should not occupy Manchuria

In an economic review published in 1931, Ishibashi Tanzan (who was to become prime minister after World War II) wrote the following: "Some believe that Japan needs Manchuria and Inner Mongolia for their raw materials and for purposes of national defense. However, Japan cannot expect to possess this region at no cost. Does turning all the people of China and the nations of the world against Japan represent a profitable transaction? It would appear that this is not the case at all."

The growing power of the military

After successfully establishing the state of Manchukuo, Japan's military and nationalists mounted a vigorous campaign of opposition to the system of political party rule and its leaders, who wished to preserve international harmony. On 15 May 1932, Prime Minister Inukai was assassinated at his official residence by a group that included naval officers. The **May 15 Incident**, as this was called, brought to an end the era of party rule.

On 26 February 1936, troops led by a group of young army officers assassinated several cabinet ministers and occupied central Tokyo, including the police headquarters. The **February 26 Incident** was soon quelled, and the plot to turn Japan into a military dictatorship ended in failure. However, the military made use of this incident to gain more political clout and, as it increased its readiness for war, it developed closer relations with fascist countries like Germany.

PHOTO: Inukai Tsuyoshi. Inukai sought to resolve the Manchurian Incident through diplomatic negotiation with China and was critical of the recognition of Manchukuo.

THE SPREAD OF THE SINO-JAPANESE WAR AND THE WARTIME REGIME

All-out war with China

In China, the Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek sought to suppress the Communist Party and unify China. As it fought the Nationalist government, the Communist Party transferred its base of operations to Yanan in northern China. **Mao Zedong** took over as party leader and urged the people to resist against Japan. For its part, Japan planned to cut off northern China from the rest of the country. The reinforcement of the Japanese army garrison in Beijing¹⁸ intensified the antipathy between Japan and China.

In July 1937 (Shōwa 12), the Japanese and Chinese armies clashed at the Marco Polo Bridge on the outskirts of Beijing. Although a cease-fire deal was agreed on the ground, the Japanese government's policy was unclear. The hostilities spread to Shanghai and the **Sino-Japanese War** broke out in earnest although no declaration of war had been issued. The Nationalist government suspended hostilities with the Communist Party to form a "united national front" and agreed to wage war jointly against the Japanese army.

Despite encountering fierce resistance everywhere, the Japanese army broadened the front. The army occupied the capital, Nanjing, in December, and killed many of the city's residents, including women and children (the Nanjing Incident).¹⁹ Meanwhile the Nationalist government moved its capital, first to Hankou and then to Chongqing in the hinterland, and continued to wage a war of resistance, supported by foreign powers such as Britain, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union.

Contrasting Chinese and Japanese views of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident

China: Chiang Kai-shek

From the way in which this incident unfolded, it can be seen that it was the fruit of a long-planned Japanese scheme. It will now be hard to achieve peace.
July 17, 1937 (extract)

¹⁸ Under an agreement between the Qing government and a group of foreign nations made at the time of the Boxer Rebellion, Japan was one of several countries permitted to station troops in Beijing.

¹⁹ The facts regarding the Nanjing Incident were not made public in Japan. It was not until after the war, at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, that the scale of the incident and the facts about the victims came to light. Although a number of investigations and studies have been carried out, the total number of victims has never firmly been established.

Japan: chief secretary of the cabinet

The Japanese army took the absolute minimum necessary steps to secure lines of communication and transportation and to protect Japanese residents. There was never any intention whatsoever to capture territory.

July 27, 1937 (extract)

The wartime regime grows stronger

As the war dragged on, a crackdown was imposed in Japan on the speech and ideas of opponents of the war. In 1938 the **National Mobilization Law** was approved in order to allow all resources and manpower to be mobilized for war. Rationing and coupon systems were applied to rice, clothing, and other basic necessities of life. Small neighborhood associations were formed in towns and villages everywhere to organize mutual-help efforts and to coordinate support for the war.

In 1940, virtually all political parties and organizations were disbanded. An organization known as the **Imperial Rule Assistance Association** was established and organizations like labor unions were pressed into serving the state. In the realm of education, in 1941 elementary schools were converted into national people's schools and textbooks included a high degree of militarist content. In junior high schools a strong emphasis was placed on military training.

In Korea a policy of forced assimilation aimed at making the Koreans subjects of the emperor was pursued. Shrines were constructed at which Koreans were made to worship, and Koreans were forced to adopt Japanese names.

5. World War II and Japan

MAP: Battle lines in Europe.

PHOTO: Germany invades Poland.

GUIDE TEXT: What effect did Germany's actions have?

ANOTHER WORLD WAR

GUIDE TEXT: Why did another world war begin in Europe?

PHOTO: German forces attack London from the air.

The start of World War II

In Europe, Hitler sought to expand Germany's territory. Germany annexed Austria and part of Czechoslovakia, concluded a nonaggression treaty with the Soviet Union in 1939, and invaded Poland in September of the same year. As Poland's allies, Britain and France promptly declared war on Germany.

World War II had begun.

In 1940 German forces attacked Denmark and Norway and then conquered the Netherlands and Belgium en route to invading France. In June Italy entered the war on the side of Germany, and France succumbed. Germany launched air attacks on London, Britain's capital, almost daily, and expanded its sphere of influence to include not only the Balkan Peninsula but also Northern Africa.

Thus, in little over two years' time Germany had conquered nearly all of Europe. The Germans also operated concentration camps where they confined Jews, seeking to exterminate them. Over the course of the war they reportedly murdered some six million Jews.

Around this time the Soviet Union responded to Germany's advance by occupying eastern Poland. The Soviets also invaded Finland and annexed three countries on the coast of the Baltic Sea.

BOX: Sugihara Chiune: A Japanese man who saved 6,000 Jews with "visas for life"

In July 1940 Jews who had fled ahead of advancing German forces to Lithuania, located on the coast of the Baltic Sea, gathered at the Japanese consulate there. They sought to cross Siberia, travel to Japan, and from there make their way to safety in the United States. Humanitarian concerns and a spirit of altruism led the diplomat Sugihara Chiune, who was attached to the consulate, to issue visas permitting them to enter Japan, contrary to the wishes of the Japanese government, which was allied with Germany. By doing so he saved approximately 6,000 lives. In recognition of Chiune's courage, the government of Israel honored him in 1985 as a man who was "righteous among nations."

PHOTO: Sugihara Chiune (second from right), depicted on an Israeli postage stamp.

PHOTO: Persecution of Jews by German forces (1943).

PHOTO: Anne Frank. A Jew, Anne was sent to a concentration camp where she died at the age of 15. Her diary, an account of days spent hiding from the Nazis, is well known.

Resistance to Germany and Italy

In June 1941 Germany violated its nonaggression treaty and invaded the Soviet Union, quickly advancing on Moscow. At that time the United States, which had remained neutral, and Britain issued the Atlantic Charter, a proclamation designed to oppose fascism and protect democracy, and began providing cooperation and assistance to the Soviet Union, a socialist state.

Resistance movements, transcending ethnic and religious differences, steadily expanded in the areas of Europe occupied by Germany and created difficulties for German forces.

GUIDE TEXT: Read *The Diary of a Young Girl*, written by Anne Frank.

PHOTO: People fleeing a massive air raid on Tokyo.

MAP: Cities targeted by air attacks and numbers of people killed.

WAR IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Japan's southward advance and the economic blockade

In order to break the deadlock in the Sino-Japanese War, the Japanese army entered Southeast Asia in order to procure resources and at the same time to cut off the supply lines to China from the United States and Britain.

In 1940 (Shōwa 15) Japan advanced its army into northern Indochina, a colony of France, which had surrendered to Germany. Japan also concluded the **Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy**. The following year, Japan invaded southern Indochina, at the same time concluding a nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union in a bid to secure the north.

The United States, Britain, and the Netherlands, which all had colonies in Southeast Asia, became more watchful of Japan's actions and proceeded to impose an economic blockade on Japan.

Notably, the United States continued to negotiate with Japan but halted oil and steel exports to the nation and demanded that Japanese troops be withdrawn from Indochina and China. As a result, Japan decided to go to war.

How did the statements of the Tripartite Pact and the Allies differ?

Tripartite Pact (1940)

Article One: Japan recognizes and respects the leadership of Germany and Italy in establishment of a new order in Europe.

Article Two: Germany and Italy recognize and respect the leadership of Japan in the establishment of a new order in Greater East Asia.

Article Three: Germany, Italy, and Japan . . . undertake to assist one another.

The Atlantic Charter (1941)

First, [the United States and Britain] seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other.

Third, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live . . .

Sixth . . . they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want.

(Extracts)

The start of the Pacific War

The Japanese army had been secretly preparing for the outbreak of war. On 8 December 1941 Japanese armed forces landed on the Malay Peninsula, a British possession, and launched a surprise attack on the United States' naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. This marked the start of the **Pacific War**.²⁰

Thus, World War II spread from Europe to the Pacific and Asia, and became a war between the Axis Powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan) and 26 allied countries, including the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, and China. The entire world thus became a battlefield.

The Japanese army used propaganda to appeal to various countries in Southeast Asia, saying that it would liberate them from Western colonial rule

²⁰ At the time, the Japanese government called this war, including the Sino-Japanese War, the "Greater East Asia War." Currently the war is sometimes referred to as the "Asia-Pacific War," reflecting the areas of combat.

and that it would establish the Greater East Asia Coprosperity Sphere for the sole benefit of the peoples of Asia. Within six months it had occupied almost all of these countries. In reality, however, the army simply took away their food and resources, such as oil and steel, without recognizing their independence, and forced the local inhabitants to cooperate in the war effort.²¹ As a result, for people under Japanese rule, expectations of the Japanese army gradually faded and armed anti-Japanese resistance campaigns sprang up everywhere.

GUIDE TEXT: Try and find out about the kind of opposition movements that sprang up in the territories occupied by Japan.

LIFE IN WARTIME

Effects on people's lives

At first, Japan enjoyed a string of victories. However, Allied counterattacks gradually grew stronger and the war dragged on. In June 1942 (Shôwa 17), Japan was defeated in a naval encounter, the Battle of Midway, and in February of the following year, the Japanese army retreated from the island of Guadalcanal. These events marked a turning point, and the Allied counteroffensive began in earnest. As Japan lost control of the seas and the air, it became difficult to transport goods and materials from Southeast Asia. In Japan the production of basic daily necessities came to a standstill and food production declined as farms ran short of manpower and fertilizer. The government reduced food distribution, asked people to come up with ways to economize and make do with other resources at hand, and attempted to ensure that scrap iron and other resources were carefully collected and reused.

University students were conscripted in order to maintain troop levels. Conscription was also introduced in Korea and Taiwan, and the recruits were sent to the battlefield to fight for Japan. To make up for the shortage of labor, men of up to 50 who had not been called up for military service were drafted to work in plants such as munitions factories, while young women and junior high school students were mobilized for work in factories and on farms. In addition, hundreds of thousands of people from the occupied territories of Korea and China were forcibly mobilized and put to work in Japan, mining and constructing facilities like air-raid shelters.

²¹ In Singapore and the Malay Peninsula, locals resisting occupation were suppressed. In Vietnam, many people died from starvation as they were also struck by a poor harvest.

Air raids on the main islands of Japan

In July 1944 Japan's military force on the island of Saipan was completely destroyed, and the island was taken over by Allied forces. Thereafter the Allies began large-scale air attacks on Japan's main islands using large bombers. For this reason, elementary school students in Japan's major cities were evacuated in groups to areas considered to be safe.

In March 1945 Tokyo became the target of indiscriminate firebombing attacks.²² Over the course of a single night approximately 100,000 people, mainly ordinary citizens, were killed. The following May virtually all of Japan's major cities, including Osaka and Nagoya, were reduced to ruins by air attacks, which were expanded to include outlying cities as well.

PHOTO: Young soldiers taken prisoner on Okinawa.

The battlefield of Okinawa

In March 1945 Allied forces began landing on Okinawa. The Japanese military, which regarded Okinawa as its bulwark against an invasion of the main islands, mobilized even junior high school students, including girls, as soldiers and army nurses, and ordinary citizens became involved in the fighting. Southern Okinawa was burned. By June organized resistance by Japanese troops ended. The outcome came at a horrific cost: one-quarter of the residents of Okinawa Prefecture were dead,²³ including some who were forced to participate in group suicides.

The people of Japan did not receive truthful reports about these aspects of the war. Instead, the government urged a fight to the finish for the main islands, calling for "100 million to die for honor," and carried on with the war.

GUIDE TEXT: Find out about air raids that occurred in an area near you.

STEPS TOWARD PEACE AND THE SCARS OF WAR

²² Firebombs consisted of bundled tubes filled with gasoline and other types of fuel. When they were dropped the fuel was widely scattered and burned with intense heat; in Japan, with its clustered wooden buildings, this caused tremendous damage.

²³ When people who died of disease or starvation are included, the total number of troops, civilian personnel (including junior high school students and schoolgirls who served in the Himeyuri [Star Lily] Corps and Kenji-tai [normal students' corps]), and ordinary residents who died is estimated to be over 120,000. This greatly exceeded the number of soldiers from the main islands who died.

Surrender by Italy and Germany

In Europe the Allied armies began their counteroffensive in 1942. In 1943 the Allied armies landed in Italy and overthrew Mussolini. Italy surrendered in September of the same year. France was liberated in 1944, and in April of the following year Hitler committed suicide as the Soviet army advanced on Berlin. Germany surrendered in May 1945, bringing to an end the war in Europe.

The United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union held a three-nation conference in Yalta, USSR, in February 1945, in order to decide how Germany should be managed after the war, and to recognize the Soviet Union's territorial rights to the Kuril Islands and southern Sakhalin in return for its secret agreement to enter the war against Japan. In July, the three powers held a further conference in Potsdam, Germany, at which they framed the **Potsdam Declaration**, which called for Japan's unconditional surrender and postwar democratization. With China's approval, the declaration was issued in the names of the United States, Britain, and China.

The Potsdam Declaration

6 There must be eliminated for all time the authority and influence of those who have deceived and misled the people of Japan into embarking on world conquest.

7 Until a new order of peace, security and justice is established, Japanese territory shall be occupied by the Allies.

8 Japanese sovereignty shall be limited to the islands of Honshû, Hokkaidô, Kyûshû, Shikoku and such minor islands as we determine.

10 Stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals. The Japanese Government shall establish freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for the fundamental human rights.

(July 26, 1945, extract)

Hiroshima and Nagasaki

The Japanese government could not accept unconditional surrender and ignored the Potsdam Declaration. As a result, on August 6, 1945 (Shôwa 20), the United States dropped the world's first atomic bomb on **Hiroshima**, motivated in part by a desire to establish postwar preeminence over the Soviet Union, and followed this by dropping a second atomic bomb on **Nagasaki** on August 9. Subjected to violent blasts and intense heat of several thousand degrees, both cities suffered instant destruction and were exposed

to high levels of radiation. Within a few weeks the death toll topped 140,000 in Hiroshima and 70,000 in Nagasaki—many of the victims ordinary citizens, including women and children. Even today, the surviving radiation victims of these inhuman weapons suffer from disorders due to the lingering effects of the radiation, and the death toll continues to rise.

Japan's surrender

On 8 August the Soviet Union broke the nonaggression pact between Japan and the Soviet Union, and commenced an invasion of Manchuria, the southern part of Sakhalin, and the Kuril Islands in accordance with the Yalta Agreement. As the Japanese army retreated on all fronts, Japanese people living in these areas were attacked by Soviet soldiers or the Chinese; some women and children had no option but to remain behind in China for long afterwards. Approximately 600,000 Japanese troops²⁴ were captured as prisoners of war, sent to Siberia, and subjected to years of forced labor. Many died in the process.

Meanwhile, up until the very last moment the Japanese government was working feverishly to ensure that the system of rule by the emperor would continue. On August 14, however, the government finally decided to accept the Potsdam Declaration, and the following day, August 15, Emperor Shōwa informed the Japanese people of Japan's surrender in a radio broadcast. Thus ended World War II, which had claimed the lives of approximately 60 million people around the world, including 20 million in Asia—many of them civilians. The world was left with deep scars.

Getting Closer to History: Listening to Tales of Wartime, with Osaka as an Example

More than 60 years have passed since the end of the war. The people who experienced the war directly are aging, and with each passing year it becomes more difficult to hear such people recount their experiences. With this in mind, we decided to carry out an activity that involved listening to people in the local community recount their wartime experiences and summarizing and preserving those narratives.

²⁴ At the time, approximately 3.55 million Japanese soldiers were stationed overseas. Some 670,000 of them were stationed in Manchuria and roughly 1.12 million soldiers in mainland China—both of which were the main areas of combat.

TABLE: Toll from air raids on the city of Osaka (1945).

PHOTO: Preparing for the interview.

PHOTO: The interview in progress.

FIGURE: Interview card (1)

(1) Name

(2) Age

(3) Place of residence during war

(4) Injury or hardship suffered during the war, wartime experiences, etc.

Drawing Up a Plan, Doing Preparatory Research

To begin with, we drew up an interview plan. We talked about whom we wanted interview and what we wanted to ask. Then we tried to determine how many members of the war generation there were among students' families and people in the community and decided whom we would interview.

Before the interviews, we went to the library and the nearby Osaka International Peace Center (Peace Osaka) to learn how people lived in Osaka during the war and the damage and destruction caused by air raids to get a general picture of the war that broadly involved Asia and the Pacific. After this preparation, we considered the questions we would ask during the interview.

Conducting the Interviews

For the interviews, we divided into groups and asked people who had lived through the war questions focusing on the conditions at that time and the impact the war had on their daily lives. Taking notes, we recorded the interviews using tape recorders and camcorders.

Sample interview questions

- Did you fight in the war, or did you know anyone near to you who fought in the war?
- What event during the war left the greatest impression on you?

- What sort of hardships did you experience during the war?
- Is there anything you would like to hand down to us about the war?

My Wartime Experience

No. 12

(1) Ms. Kawai Yuki

(2) Age 68

(3) Osaka

(4) Injury or hardship suffered during the war, wartime experiences, etc.

The scariest thing during the war were the air raids that occurred repeatedly during 1945. People ran about frantically as the town turned into a sea of flames. In Osaka, the air raids continued right up until August 14, the day before the war ended. I remember feeling relieved when the war ended because there would be no more bombings.

PHOTO: A house burns in the wake of an air raid (Osaka, 1945).

My Wartime Experience

No. 13

(1) Mr. Yamada Kiyoshi

(2) Age 85

(3) Osaka

(4) Injury or hardship suffered during the war, wartime experiences, etc.

I was called to duty in Osaka. First I went to China, then in April 1945 I was transferred to the war zone in Borneo. About 5,000 people died there, but only about 500 died in battle; most died of things like malnutrition and malaria. When the war ended, we surrendered to the enemy forces and were moved to detention camps. I returned to Osaka in 1947.

When I think about my comrades who died as soldiers in Borneo and what the local inhabitants went through, I would hate to see another war ever again.

Summing up the Interviews

When the interviews were completed, each group compiled a summary of the results and presented them to the class as a whole.

Group A Summary

The war zones where people from Osaka fought are indicated on the map. One can see that the soldiers (A-G) moved about as they fought in places far from Japan.

BOX: Something to try

Investigate relics of the war in your community, such as underground shelters and military factories. On the basis of interviews, record the circumstances of the people in various war zones.

GUIDE TEXT: Be sure to preserve the voices and images you've recorded with tape recorders or camcorders during the interviews!

Learning Challenge: Helping the victims of war*