

**35 Minutes.****Japan during the two world wars**

Study Sources A and B.

**SOURCE A**

The following extract is adapted from a book about Japan's modern culture and thought.

During the First World War, the Japanese zaibatsu achieved significant development while the working class remained in worsening poverty with most citizens suffering from soaring prices and finding it difficult to make ends meet. In the summer of 1918, the Rice Riots began in Uozu, Toyama Prefecture and quickly escalated to a full-scale nationwide riot. Under these circumstances, democracy developed rapidly in some more specific directions, including labour movement, peasant movement and feminist movement.

One of the characteristics of Taisho thought was individualism with emphasis on individual freedom and self-creation. The person that best demonstrated his preference between the 'state' and the 'individual' was social activist Sakae Oosugi, who was once sentenced to as many as two and a half years in prison for waving red flags carrying Anarchist Communist slogans and singing revolutionary songs. After his release from prison, he founded the magazine *Modern Thought* and broke the silence among socialists by emphasizing individualism, being a literary and ideological pioneer in the early Taisho period. This publication precisely showed the general tendency of Japan's society after the Russo-Japanese War – people's pursuit of values of the 'state' was running thin, and recognizing values of the 'individual' was becoming the common task of the era.

**SOURCE B**

The following extract is adapted from a book on Japan's modern history.

After the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, Japan was at the height of Fascism. Its government was hijacked by radical elements of the Army, followed by the suppression of anti-Kokutai thought, the anti-war class struggle and internationalism. Under the guidance of the government, all social classes engaged in the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement. Different trade unions also underwent various internal changes and lost the socialist mentality they used to have.

In 1940, the government announced its plan to dissolve trade unions. The All-Japan General Alliance of Laborers was disbanded that July, naturally followed by other trade unions that subsequently flocked to join the so-called Great Japan Industrial Patriotic Association formed by the military, the right wing, the government and military supply giants with devotion to military production for invasion purposes. The establishment of this association was no different from a declaration of the death of the labour movement in pre-war Japan.

During the fifteen-year period from 1931 to 1945, a unique Fascist system was established in Japan with monarchy as its key part. This was especially true after the February 26<sup>th</sup> Incident of 1936 when militarism promoted by the state experienced a great leap forward, and the deification of the Emperor was reinforced together with the oppression of socialism and liberalism. Political parties and trade unions were all disbanded, with freedom of speech, press and association completely inhibited. Under this fever of militarism and Fascism, the socialist movement was virtually impossible to survive, and freedom of speech and press was stifled.

- (a) With reference to Source A, identify **two** problems the Japanese faced at that time. (2 marks)
- (b) Does the author of Source B have an approving view on the Japanese government? Explain your answer with reference to Source B. (5 marks)
- (c) 'Japan's society demonstrated drastic changes in the 1930s.' Do you agree? Explain your answer with reference to Sources A and B, and using your own knowledge of the development of Japan up to the end of the Second World War. (8 marks)