CHAPTER 25
The Crisis Deepens: World War II

CHAPTER OUTLINE
AND FOCUS QUESTIONS

Retreat from Democracy: Dictatorial Regimes
What are the characteristics of totalitarian states, and to what degree were these characteristics present in Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and Stalinist Russia? To what extent was Japan a totalitarian state?

The Path to War
What were the underlying causes of World War II, and what specific steps taken by Nazi Germany and Japan led to war?

World War II
What were the main events of World War II in Europe and Asia?

The New Order
What was the nature of the new orders that Germany and Japan attempted to establish in the territories they occupied?

The Home Front
What were conditions like on the home front for the major belligerents in World War II?

Aftermath of the War
What were the costs of World War II? How did World War II affect the European nations’ colonial empires? How did the Allies’ visions of the postwar world differ, and how did these differences contribute to the emergence of the Cold War?

CRITICAL THINKING

What was the relationship between World War I and World War II, and how did the ways in which the wars were fought differ?

ON FEBRUARY 3, 1933, only four days after he had been appointed chancellor of Germany, Adolf Hitler met secretly with Germany’s leading generals. He revealed to them his desire to remove the “cancer of democracy,” create a new authoritarian leadership, and forge a new domestic unity. All Germans would need to realize that “only a struggle can save us and that everything else must be subordinated to this idea.” Youth especially must be trained and their wills strengthened “to fight with all means.” Since Germany’s living space was too small for its people, Hitler said, Germany must rearm and prepare for “the conquest of new living space in the east and its ruthless Germanization.” Even before he had consolidated his power, Adolf Hitler had a clear vision of his goals, and their implementation meant another war.

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But World War II was more than just Hitler’s war. It was in fact two separate and parallel conflicts, one provoked by the ambitions of Germany in Europe and the other by the ambitions of Japan in Asia. Around the same time that Hitler was consolidating his power in the early 1930s, the United States and major European nations raised the tariffs they imposed on Japanese imports in a desperate effort to protect local businesses and jobs. In response, militant groups in
Tokyo began to argue that Japan must obtain by violent action what it could not secure by peaceful means. By 1941, when the United States became embroiled in both wars, the two had merged into a single global conflict.

Although World War I has been described as a total war, World War II was even more so and was fought on a scale unheard of in history. Almost everyone in the warring countries was involved in one way or another: as soldiers; as workers in wartime industries; as ordinary citizens subject to invading armies, military occupation, or bombing raids; as refugees; or as victims of mass extermination. The world had never witnessed such widespread human-induced death and destruction.

Retreat from Democracy: Dictatorial Regimes

FOCUS QUESTIONS: What are the characteristics of totalitarian states, and to what degree were these characteristics present in Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and Stalinist Russia? To what extent was Japan a totalitarian state?

The rise of dictatorial regimes in the 1930s had a great deal to do with the coming of World War II. The apparent triumph of liberal democracy in 1919 had proved extremely short-lived. By 1939, only two major states in Europe (Great Britain and France) and several minor ones (the Low Countries, the Scandinavian states, Switzerland, and Czechoslovakia) remained democratic. Italy and Germany had succumbed to the political movement called fascism, and Soviet Russia under Joseph Stalin moved toward repressive totalitarianism. A host of other European states and Latin American countries adopted authoritarian structures of different kinds, while a militarist regime in Japan moved that country down the path of war. What had happened to Woodrow Wilson’s claim that World War I had been fought to make the world safe for democracy? Actually, World War I turned out to have had the opposite effect.

Stepping Back from Democracy

The postwar expansion of the electorate made mass politics a reality and seemed to enhance the spread of democracy in Europe. But the war itself had created conditions that led the new mass electorate to distrust democracy and move toward a more radicalized politics.

Many postwar societies were badly divided, especially along class lines. During the war, to maintain war production, governments had been forced to make concessions to trade unions and socialist parties, which strengthened the working class after the war. At the same time, the position of many middle-class people had declined as consumer industries had been curtailed during the war and war bonds, which had been purchased by the middle classes as their patriotic contribution to the war effort, sank in value and even became worthless in some countries.

Gender divisions also weakened social cohesion. After the war, as soldiers returned home, women were forced out of jobs they had taken during the war, jobs that many newly independent women wanted to retain. The loss of so many men during the war had also left many younger women with no marital prospects and widows with no choice but to find jobs in the labor force. At the same time, fears about a declining population because of the war led many male political leaders to encourage women to return to their traditional roles of wives and mothers. Many European countries outlawed abortion and curtailed the sale of birth control devices while providing increased welfare benefits to entice women to remain at home and bear children.

The Great Depression served to deepen social conflict. Larger and larger numbers of people felt victimized, first by the war and now by socioeconomic conditions that seemed beyond their control. Postwar politics became more and more polarized as people reverted to the wartime practice of dividing into friends and enemies, downplaying compromise and emphasizing conflict. Moderate centrist parties that supported democracy soon found themselves with fewer and fewer allies as people became increasingly radicalized politically, supporting the extremes of left-wing communism or right-wing fascism.

The dictatorial regimes between the wars assumed both old and new forms. Dictatorship was not new, but the modern totalitarian state was. The totalitarian regimes, best exemplified by Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany, greatly extended the functions and power of the central state. The modern totalitarian state went beyond the ideal of passive obedience expected in a traditional dictatorship or authoritarian monarchy. The new “total states” expected the active loyalty and commitment of citizens to the regime’s goal, whether it be war, a socialist society, or a thousand-year Reich (RYKH) (empire). They used modern mass propaganda techniques and high-speed communications to conquer the minds and hearts of their subjects. The total state sought to control not only the economic, political, and social aspects of life but the intellectual and cultural aspects as well.

The modern totalitarian state was to be led by a single leader and a single party. It ruthlessly rejected the liberal ideal of limited government power and constitutional guarantees of individual freedoms. Indeed, individual freedom was to be subordinated to the collective will of the masses, organized and determined for them by the leader. Modern technology also gave total states unprecedented police controls to force their wishes on their subjects.

The Birth of Fascism

In the early 1920s, Benito Mussolini (buh-NEE-toh moossuh-LEE-nee) bestowed on Italy the first successful fascist movement in Europe. Mussolini (1883–1945) began his political career as a socialist, but in 1919, he established a new political group, the Fascio di Combattimento (FASH-ee-oh dee com-bat-ee-MEN-toh) (League of Combat), which won support from middle-class industrialists fearful of working-
class agitation and large landowners who objected to strikes by farmworkers. Mussolini also perceived that Italians were angry over Italy’s failure to receive more territory after World War I. In 1920 and 1921, bands of armed Fascists called *squadristi* (skwah-DREEZ-tee) were formed and turned loose to attack socialist offices and newspapers. The movement gained momentum as Mussolini’s nationalist rhetoric and the middle-class fear of socialism, Communist revolution, and disorder made the Fascists seem more and more attractive. On October 29, 1922, after Mussolini and the Fascists threatened to march on Rome if they were not given power, King Victor Emmanuel (1900–1946) capitulated and made Mussolini prime minister of Italy.

By 1926, Mussolini had established the institutional framework for a Fascist dictatorship. Press laws gave the government the right to suspend any publications that fostered disrespect for the Catholic Church, the monarchy, or the state. The prime minister was made “head of government” with the power to legislate by decree. A law empowered the police to arrest and confine anybody for both nonpolitical and political crimes without pressing charges. The government was given the power to dissolve political and cultural associations. In 1926, all anti-Fascist parties were outlawed, and a secret police force was established. By the end of the year, Mussolini ruled Italy as *Il Duce* (eel DOO-chay), the leader.

Mussolini conceived of the Fascist state as totalitarian: “Fascism is totalitarian, and the Fascist State, the synthesis and unity of all values, interprets, develops and gives strength to the whole life of the people.” Mussolini did try to create a police state, but it was not very effective. Police activities in Italy were never as repressive, efficient, or savage as those of Nazi Germany. Likewise, the Italian Fascists’ attempt to exercise control over all forms of mass media, including newspapers, radio, and cinema, so that they could use propaganda as an instrument to integrate the masses into the state, was rarely effective. Most commonly, Fascist propaganda was disseminated through simple slogans, such as “Mussolini is always right,” plastered on walls all over Italy.

Mussolini and the Fascists also attempted to mold Italians into a single-minded community by developing Fascist organizations. Because the secondary schools maintained considerable freedom from Fascist control, the regime relied more and more on the activities of youth organizations, known as the Young Fascists, to indoctrinate the young people of the nation in Fascist ideals, especially the need for discipline and preparation for war.

The Fascists portrayed the family as the pillar of the state and women as the basic foundation of the family. “Woman into the home” became the Fascist slogan. Women were to be homemakers and baby producers, “their natural and fundamental mission in life,” according to Mussolini, for population growth was viewed as an indicator of national strength. Employment outside the home was an impediment distracting women from conception: “It forms an independence and consequent physical and moral habits contrary to child bearing.”

Despite the instruments of repression, the use of propaganda, and the creation of numerous Fascist organizations, Mussolini never achieved the degree of totalitarian control attained in Hitler’s Germany or Stalin’s Soviet Union. Mussolini and the Fascist Party did not completely destroy the old power structure. Some institutions, including the Catholic Church, the armed forces, and the monarchy, were never absorbed into the Fascist state and managed to maintain their independence. In all areas of Italian life under Mussolini and the Fascists, there was a noticeable dichotomy between Fascist ideals and practice. The Italian Fascists promised much but actually delivered considerably less, and they were soon overshadowed by a much more powerful fascist movement to the north.

Mussolini, the Iron Duce. One of Mussolini’s favorite images of himself was that of the Iron Duce—the strong leader who is always right. Consequently, he was often seen in military-style uniforms and military poses. This photograph shows Mussolini in one of his numerous uniforms with his Blackshirt bodyguards giving the Fascist salute.
Hitler and Nazi Germany

In 1923, a small south German rightist party known as the Nazis, led by an obscure Austrian rabble-rouser named Adolf Hitler (1889–1945), created a stir when it tried to seize power in southern Germany in conscious imitation of Mussolini’s march on Rome in 1922. Although the attempt failed, Hitler and the Nazis achieved sudden national prominence. Within ten years, they had taken over complete power.

HITLER AND THE EARLY NAZI PARTY At the end of World War I, after four years of service on the Western Front, Adolf Hitler went to Munich and decided to enter politics. In 1919, he joined the obscure German Workers’ Party, one of a number of right-wing extreme nationalist parties in Munich. By the summer of 1921, he had assumed control of the party, which he renamed the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP), or Nazi for short (from the pronunciation of the first two syllables of the name in German). Hitler worked assiduously to develop the party into a mass political movement with flags, badges, uniforms, its own newspaper, and its own police force or party militia known as the SA, the Sturmabteilung (SHToORM–ap-ty-loork) (Storm Troops). The SA was used to defend the party in meeting halls and break up the meetings of other parties. Hitler’s own oratorical skills were largely responsible for attracting an increasing number of followers. By 1923, the party’s membership had grown from its early hundreds to 55,000, of whom 15,000 served in the SA.

Overconfident, Hitler staged an armed uprising against the government in Munich in November 1923. The so-called Beer Hall Putsch was quickly crushed, and Hitler was sent to prison. During his brief stay in jail, he wrote Mein Kampf (myn KAHMPF) (My Struggle), an autobiographical account of his movement and its underlying ideology. Extreme German nationalism, virulent anti-Semitism, and anticommunism are linked together by a social Darwinian theory of struggle that stresses the right of superior nations to Lebensraum (LAY-berenz-rown) (living space) through expansion and the right of superior individuals to secure authoritarian leadership over the masses.

During his imprisonment, Hitler also came to the realization that the Nazis would have to come to power by constitutional means, not by overthrowing the Weimar (VY-mar) Republic. This implied the formation of a mass political party that would actively compete for votes with the other political parties. After his release from prison, Hitler reorganized the Nazi Party on a regional basis and expanded it to all parts of Germany. By 1929, the Nazis had a national party organization.

THE RISE TO POWER Three years later, the Nazi Party had 800,000 members and had become the largest party in the Reichstag (RYYKHSS–tahk). Germany’s economic difficulties were a crucial factor in the Nazis’ rise to power. Unemployment rose dramatically, from just over 4 million in 1931 to 6 million by the winter of 1932. The economic and psychological impact of the Great Depression made extremist parties promising dramatic quick fixes more attractive. The Nazis maintained that they stood above classes and parties. Hitler vowed to create a new Germany free of class differences and party infighting. His appeal to national pride, national honor, and traditional militarism struck chords of emotion in his listeners. After attending one of Hitler’s rallies, a schoolteacher in Hamburg said, “When the speech was over, there was roaring enthusiasm and applause. . . . Then he went—how many look up to him with touching faith as their savior, their deliverer from unbearable distress.”

Increasingly, the right-wing elites of Germany—the industrial magnates, landed aristocrats, military establishment, and higher bureaucrats—came to see Hitler as the man who had the mass support to establish a right-wing, authoritarian regime that would save Germany and their privileged positions from a Communist takeover. Under pressure, since the Nazi Party had the largest share of seats in the Reichstag, President Paul von Hindenburg agreed to allow Hitler to become chancellor (on January 30, 1933) and create a new government.

Within two months, Hitler had laid the foundations for the Nazis’ complete control over Germany. The crowning step in Hitler’s “legal seizure” of power came on March 23, when the Reichstag passed the Enabling Act by a two-thirds vote. This legislation, which empowered the government to dispense with constitutional forms for four years while it issued laws that dealt with the country’s problems, provided the legal basis for Hitler’s subsequent acts. In effect, Hitler became a dictator appointed by the parliamentary body itself.

With their new source of power, the Nazis acted quickly to coordinate all institutions under Nazi control. The civil service was purged of Jews and democratic elements, concentration camps were established for opponents of the new regime, the autonomy of the federal states was eliminated, trade unions were dissolved, and all political parties except the Nazis were abolished. By the end of the summer of 1933, less than seven months after being appointed chancellor, Hitler and the Nazis had established the foundations for a totalitarian state. When Hindenburg died on August 2, 1934, the office of Reich president was abolished, and Hitler became sole ruler of Germany. Public officials and soldiers were all required to take a personal oath of loyalty to Hitler as the “Führer (FYOOR-ur) (leader) of the German Reich and people.”

THE NAZI STATE, 1933–1939 Having smashed the parliamentary state, Hitler now felt that the real task was at hand: to develop the “total state.” Hitler’s goal was the development of an “Aryan” racial state that would dominate Europe and possibly the world for generations to come. That required a movement in which the German people would be actively involved, not passively cowed by force. Hitler stated:

We must develop organizations in which an individual’s entire life can take place. Then every activity and every need of every individual will be regulated by the collectivity represented by the party. There is no longer any arbitrary will; there are no longer any free realms in which the individual belongs to himself. . . . The time of personal happiness is over.4

The Nazis pursued the creation of this totalitarian state in a variety of ways. Mass demonstrations and spectacles were
Propaganda and Mass Meetings in Nazi Germany

Propaganda and mass rallies were two of the chief instruments that Hitler used to prepare the German people for the tasks he set before them. In the first selection, taken from Mein Kampf, Hitler explains the psychological importance of mass meetings in creating support for a political movement. In the second excerpt, taken from his speech to a crowd at Nuremberg, he describes the kind of mystical bond he hoped to create through his mass rallies.

Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf

The mass meeting is also necessary for the reason that in it the individual, who at first, while becoming a supporter of a young movement, feels lonely and easily succumbs to the fear of being alone, for the first time gets the picture of a larger community, which in most people has a strengthening, encouraging effect. . . . When from his little workshop or big factory, in which he feels very small, he steps for the first time into a mass meeting and has thousands and thousands of people of the same opinions around him, when, as a seeker, he is swept away by three or four thousand others into the mighty effect of suggestive intoxication and enthusiasm, when the visible success and agreement of thousands confirm to him the rightness of the new doctrine and for the first time arouse doubt in the truth of his previous conviction—then he himself has succumbed to the magic influence of what we designate as “mass suggestion.” The will, the longing, and also the power of thousands are accumulated in every individual. The man who enters such a meeting doubting and wavering leaves it inwardly reinforced: he has become a link in the community.

Adolf Hitler, Speech at the Nuremberg Party Rally, 1936

Do we not feel once again in this hour the miracle that brought us together? Once you heard the voice of a man, and it struck deep into your hearts; it awakened you, and you followed this voice. Year after year you went after it, though him who had spoken you never even saw. You heard only a voice, and you followed it. When we meet each other here, the wonder of our coming together fills us all. Not every one of you sees me, and I do not see every one of you. But I feel you, and you feel me. It is the belief in our people that has made us small men great, that has made us poor men rich, that has made brave and courageous men out of us wavering, spiritless, timid folk; this belief made us see our road when we were astray; it joined us together into one whole! . . . You come, that . . . you may, once in a while, gain the feeling that now we are together; we are with him and he with us, and we are now Germany!

Q In Hitler’s view, what would mass meetings accomplish for his movement? How do mass rallies further the development of nationalism?

employed to integrate the German nation into a collective fellowship and to mobilize it as an instrument for Hitler’s policies (see the box above). These mass demonstrations, especially the Nuremberg party rallies that were held every September, combined the symbolism of a religious service with the merriment of a popular amusement. They had great appeal and usually evoked mass enthusiasm and excitement.

The apparatus of Hitler’s total state had some confusing features. One usually thinks of Nazi Germany as having an all-powerful government that maintained absolute control and order. In truth, Nazi Germany was the scene of almost constant personal and institutional conflict, which resulted in administrative chaos. Incessant struggle characterized the relationships within the party, within the state, and between party and state. Hitler, of course, remained the ultimate decision maker and absolute ruler.

In the economic sphere, Hitler and the Nazis also established control. Although the regime pursued the use of public works projects and “pump-priming” grants to private construction firms to foster employment and end the depression, there is little doubt that rearmament contributed far more to solving the unemployment problem. Unemployment, which had stood at 6 million in 1932, dropped to 2.6 million in 1934 and less than 500,000 in 1937. The regime claimed full credit for solving Germany’s economic woes, and this was an important factor in convincing many Germans to accept the new regime, despite its excesses.

For Germans who needed coercion, the Nazi total state had its instruments of terror. Especially important were the Schutzstaffel (SHOOTS-shtah-fuhn) (guard squadrons), known simply as the SS. Originally created as Hitler’s personal bodyguard, the SS, under the direction of Heinrich Himmler (1900–1945), came to control all of the regular and secret police forces. Himmler and the SS functioned on the basis of two principles: terror and ideology. Terror included the instruments of repression and murder: the secret police, criminal police, concentration camps, and later the execution squads and death camps for the extermination of the Jews. For Himmler, the SS was a crusading order whose primary goal was to further the Aryan master race.

Other institutions, such as the Catholic and Protestant churches, primary and secondary schools, and universities,
Hugo Jaeger/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images

Führer, I swear to devote all my energies and my strength to ''In the presence of this blood banner, which represents our
the degree of dedication expected of youth in the Nazi state:

The oath required of Hitler Youth members demonstrates (League of German Maidens)—were given special attention.

Bund Deutscher Maedel (Hitler Youth) and its female counterpart, the

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BOONT DOIT-chur MAY-dul) (League of German Maidens)—were given special attention.

The oath required of Hitler Youth members demonstrates the degree of dedication expected of youth in the Nazi state: ''In the presence of this blood banner, which represents our Führer, I swear to devote all my energies and my strength to the
to the savior of our country, Adolf Hitler. I am willing and ready
give up my life for him, so help me God.''

The creation of the Nazi total state also had an impact on
women. Women played a crucial role in the Aryan racial state as
bearers of the children who would bring about the triumph of
the Aryan race. To the Nazis, the differences between men and
women were natural: men were warriors and political
leaders, while women were destined to be wives and mothers.

Nazi ideas determined employment opportunities for
women. The Nazis hoped to drive women out of certain areas of the labor market, including heavy industry or other
jobs that might hinder them from bearing healthy children.
Certain professions, including university teaching, medicine,
and law, were also considered inappropriate for women,
especially married women. Instead, the Nazis encouraged
women to pursue professional occupations that had direct
practical application, such as social work and nursing. The
Nazi regime pursued its campaign against working women

were also brought under the control of the Nazi totalitarian
state. Nazi professional organizations and leagues were
formed for civil servants, teachers, women, farmers, doctors,
and lawyers. Since the early indoctrination of youth would
create the foundation for a strong totalitarian state for the
future, youth organizations—the Hitler Jugend (HIT-luh YOO-gunt) (Hitler Youth) and its female counterpart, the
Bund Deutscher Maedel (BOONT DOIT-chur MAY-dul) (League of German Maidens)—were given special attention.

The oath required of Hitler Youth members demonstrates the degree of dedication expected of youth in the Nazi state:

The Nazi Mass Spectacle. Hitler and the Nazis made clever use of mass spectacles to rally the
German people behind the Nazi regime. These mass demonstrations evoked intense enthusiasm, as is
evident in this photograph of Hitler arriving at the Bückerberg (BOOK-uh-bayrk) near Hamelin for
the Harvest Festival in 1937. Almost one million people were present for the celebration.

The Nazi total state was intended to be an Aryan racial state. From its beginning, the Nazi Party reflected Hitler’s
strong anti-Semitic beliefs. In September 1935, the Nazis announced new racial laws at the annual party rally in
Nuremberg. These “Nuremberg laws” excluded German Jews from German
citizenship and forbade marriages and extramarital relations between Jews and
German citizens. The Nuremberg
laws essentially separated Jews from the
Germans politically, socially, and
legally and were the natural extension
of Hitler’s stress on the creation of a
“pure” Aryan race.

A more violent phase of anti-Jewish activity took place in 1938 and 1939,
initiated on November 9–10, 1938, by the infamous Kristallnacht (kri-
STAHL-nahkt), or night of shattered glass. The assassination of a secretary
in the German embassy in Paris became the pretext for a Nazi-led
rampage against the Jews in which synagogues were burned,
7,000 Jewish businesses were destroyed, and at least one hun-
dred Jews were killed. Moreover, 20,000 Jewish males were
rounded up and sent to concentration camps. Jews were
barred from all public buildings and prohibited from owning,
managing, or working in any retail store. Finally, under the
direction of the SS, Jews were encouraged to “emigrate from
Germany.”

The Stalinitic Era in the Soviet Union

Joseph Stalin made a significant shift in Soviet economic policy
in 1928 when he launched his first five-year plan. Its real
goal was nothing less than the transformation of the agrarian
Soviet Union into an industrial country virtually overnight.
Instead of consumer goods, the first five-year plan empha-
sized maximum production of capital goods and armaments
and succeeded in quadrupling the production of heavy ma-
achinery and doubling oil production. Between 1928 and 1937,
during the first two five-year plans, steel production increased
from 4 million to 18 million tons per year.

Rapid industrialization was accompanied by an equally rapid collectivization of agriculture. Stalin believed that the
capital needed for industrial growth could be obtained
through agricultural surpluses that would be created by elimin-
ating private farms and pushing people onto collective farms
(see the box on p. 731). By eliminating private property, a
Communist ideal would also be achieved.

By 1934, Russia’s 26 million family farms had been collec-
tivized into 250,000 units. This was done at tremendous cost,
since Stalin did not hesitate to starve the peasants, especially
The Formation of Collective Farms

Accompanying the rapid industrialization of the Soviet Union was the collectivization of agriculture, a feat that involved nothing less than transforming Russia’s 26 million family farms into 250,000 collective farms called kolkhozes (kuhl-KAHZ-zuhz). This selection provides a firsthand account of how the process worked.

Max Belov, The History of a Collective Farm

General collectivization in our village was brought about in the following manner: Two representatives of the [Communist] Party arrived in the village. All the inhabitants were summoned by the ringing of the church bell to a meeting at which the policy of general collectivization was announced. . . . The upshot was that although the meeting lasted two days, from the viewpoint of the Party representatives nothing was accomplished.

After this setback the Party representatives divided the village into two sections and worked each one separately. Two more officials were sent to reinforce the first two. A meeting of our section of the village was held in a stable which had previously belonged to a kulak [wealthy farmer]. The meeting dragged on until dark. Suddenly someone threw a brick at the lamp, and in the dark the peasants began to beat the Party representatives, who jumped out the window and escaped from the village barely alive. The following day seven people were arrested. The militia was called in and stayed in the village until the peasants, realizing their helplessness, calmed down. . . . By the end of 1930 there were two kolkhozes in our village. Though at first these collectives embraced at most only 70 percent of the peasant households, in the months that followed they gradually absorbed more and more of them.

In these kolkhozes the great bulk of the land was held and worked communally, but each peasant household owned a house of some sort, a small plot of ground and perhaps some livestock. All the members of the kolkhoz were required to work on the kolkhoz a certain number of days each month; the rest of the time they were allowed to work on their own holdings. They derived their income partly from what they grew on their garden strips and partly from their work in the kolkhoz.

When the harvest was over, and after the farm had met its obligations to the state and to various special funds (for insurance, seed, etc.) and had sold on the market whatever undesignated produce was left, the remaining produce and the farm’s monetary income were divided among the kolkhoz members according to the number of “labor days” each one had contributed to the farm’s work. . . . It was in 1930 that the kolkhoz members first received their portions out of the “communal kettle.” After they had received their earnings, at the rate of 1 kilogram of grain and 55 kopecks per labor day, one of them remarked, “You will live, but you will be very, very thin.”

In the spring of 1931 a tractor worked the fields of the kolkhoz for the first time. The tractor was “capable of plowing every kind of hard soil and virgin sod,” as Party representatives told us at the meeting in celebration of its arrival. The peasants did not then know that these “steel horses” would carry away a good part of the harvest in return for their work. . . . By late 1932 more than 80 percent of the peasant households . . . had been collectivized. . . . That year the peasants harvested a good crop and had hopes that the calculations would work out to their advantage and would help strengthen them economically. These hopes were in vain. The kolkhoz workers received only 200 grams of flour per labor day for the first half of the year; the remaining grain, including the seed fund, was taken by the government. The peasants were told that industrialization of the country, then in full swing, demanded grain and sacrifices from them.

What was the purpose of collectivizing Soviet agriculture? According to Belov, why did the peasants of his village assault the Communist Party representatives? What was the result of their protest?

in Ukraine, to force them to comply with the policy of collectivization. Stalin himself supposedly told Winston Churchill during World War II that 10 million peasants died in the artificially created famines of 1932 and 1933. The only concession Stalin made to the peasants was to allow each household to have one tiny, privately owned garden plot.

Stalin’s program of rapid industrialization entailed additional costs as well. To achieve his goals, Stalin strengthened the party bureaucracy under his control. Anyone who resisted was sent into forced labor camps in Siberia. Stalin’s desire for sole control of decision making also led to purges of the Old Bolsheviks. Between 1936 and 1938, the most prominent Old Bolsheviks were put on trial and condemned to death. During this same time, Stalin undertook a purge of army officers, diplomats, union officials, party members, intellectuals, and numerous ordinary citizens. One old woman was sent to Siberia for saying, “If people prayed, they would work better.” Estimates are that 8 million Russians were arrested; millions died in Siberian forced labor camps. This gave Stalin the distinction of being one of the greatest mass murderers in

Retreat from Democracy: Dictatorial Regimes
The Rise of Militarism in Japan

The rise of militarism in Japan resulted not from a seizure of power by a new political party but from the growing influence of militant forces at the top of the political hierarchy. During the 1920s, a multiparty system based on democratic practices appearing to be emerging. Two relatively moderate political parties, the Minseito (men-SAY-toh) and the Seiyukai (say-YOO-ky), dominated the legislature and took turns providing executive leadership in the cabinet. Nevertheless, the political system was probably weaker than it seemed at the time. Both of the major parties were heavily dependent on campaign contributions from powerful corporations, and conservative forces connected to the military or the old landed aristocracy were still highly influential behind the scenes. As in the Weimar Republic in Germany during the same period, the actual power base of modern political forces was weak, and politicians unwittingly undermined the fragile system by engaging in bitter attacks on each other.

In the early 1930s, the growing confrontation with China in Manchuria, combined with the onset of the Great Depression, brought an end to the fragile stability of the immediate postwar years. The depression had a disastrous effect on Japan. The value of Japanese exports dropped by 50 percent from 1929 to 1931, and wages dropped nearly as much. Hardest hit were farmers as the price of rice and other staple food crops plummeted.

During the early 1930s, civilian cabinets managed to cope with the economic challenges presented by the depression. By abandoning the gold standard, Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi (ih-NOO-ky tsoo-YOH-shee) was able to lower the price of Japanese goods on the world market, and exports climbed back to earlier levels. But the political parties were no longer able to stem the growing influence of militant nationalist elements.

In May 1932, Tsuyoshi was assassinated by right-wing extremists. He was succeeded by a moderate, Admiral Saito Makoto (sy-TOH muh-KAH-toh), but extremist patriotic societies composed of ultranationalists began to terrorize opponents, assassinating businessmen and public figures identified with the Shidehara (shee-deh-HAH-rah) policy of conciliation toward the outside world (see Chapter 24). Some, such as the publicist Kita Ikki (KEE-tuh IK-kee), were convinced that the parliamentary system had been corrupted by materialism and Western values and should be replaced by a system that would return to traditional Japanese values and imperial authority. His message, “Asia for the Asians,” had not won widespread support during the relatively prosperous 1920s but increased in popularity after the Great Depression, which convinced many Japanese that capitalism was unsuitable for Japan. These same people advocated the use of military force to create a self-sufficient Japan that would acquire the resources and raw materials it needed by controlling East Asia.

During the mid-1930s, the government steadily came under the influence of the military and extreme nationalists. Minorities and left-wing elements were persecuted, and moderates were intimidated into silence. Terrorists on trial for participating in assassination attempts portrayed themselves as selfless patriots and received light sentences. Japan continued to hold national elections, and moderate candidates continued to receive substantial popular support, but the cabinets were dominated by the military or advocates of Japanese expansionism. In February 1936, junior army officers led a coup, briefly occupying the Diet building and other key
government installations in Tokyo and assassinating several members of the cabinet. The ringleaders were quickly tried and convicted of treason, but under conditions that further strengthened the influence of the military.

The Path to War

FOCUS QUESTION: What were the underlying causes of World War II, and what specific steps taken by Nazi Germany and Japan led to war?

Only twenty years after the “war to end war,” the world plunged back into the nightmare. The efforts at collective security in the 1920s—the League of Nations, the attempts at disarmament, the pacts and treaties—all proved meaningless in view of the growth of Nazi Germany and the rise of Japan.

The Path to War in Europe

World War II in Europe had its beginnings in the ideas of Adolf Hitler, who believed that only so-called Aryans were capable of building a great civilization. But to Hitler, the Germans, the leading group of Aryans, were threatened from the east by a large mass of “inferior” peoples, the Slavs, who had learned to use German weapons and technology. Germany needed more land to support a larger population and be a great power. Already in the 1920s, in the second volume of Mein Kampf, Hitler had indicated where a National Socialist regime would find this land: “And so we National Socialists...take up where we broke off six hundred years ago. We stop the endless German movement to the south and west, and turn our gaze toward the land in the east...If we speak of soil in Europe today, we can primarily have in mind only Russia and her vassal border states.” Once Russia had been conquered, its land could be resettled by German peasants while the Slavic population could be used as slave labor to build the Aryan racial state that would dominate Europe for a thousand years. Hitler’s conclusion was apparent: Germany must prepare for its inevitable war with the Soviet Union.

A DIPLOMATIC REVOLUTION: SCRAPPING THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES When Hitler became chancellor on January 30, 1933, Germany’s situation in Europe seemed weak. The Versailles treaty had created a demilitarized zone on Germany’s western border that would allow the French to move into the heavily industrialized parts of Germany in the event of war. To Germany’s east, the smaller states, such as Poland and Czechoslovakia, had defensive treaties with France. The Versailles treaty had also limited Germany’s army to 100,000 troops, with no air force and only a small navy.

Posing as a man of peace in his public speeches, Hitler emphasized that Germany wished only to revise the unfair provisions of Versailles by peaceful means and achieve Germany’s rightful place among the European states. On March 9, 1935, he announced the creation of a new air force and one week later the introduction of a military draft that would expand Germany’s army from 100,000 to 550,000 troops. Hitler’s unilateral repudiation of the Versailles treaty brought a swift reaction, as France, Great Britain, and Italy condemned Germany’s action and warned against future aggressive steps. But nothing concrete was done.

On March 7, 1936, buoyed by his conviction that the Western democracies had no intention of using force to maintain the Treaty of Versailles, Hitler sent German troops into the demilitarized Rhineland. According to the Versailles treaty, the French had the right to use force against any violation of the demilitarized Rhineland. But France would not act without British support, and the British viewed the occupation of German territory by German troops as reasonable action by a dissatisfied power. The London Times noted that the Germans were only “going into their own back garden.”

Meanwhile, Hitler gained new allies. In October 1935, Benito Mussolini had committed Fascist Italy to imperial expansion by invading Ethiopia. Angered by French and British opposition to his invasion, Mussolini welcomed Hitler’s support and began to draw closer to the German dictator he had once called a buffoon. The joint intervention of Germany and Italy on behalf of General Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War in 1936 also drew the two nations closer. In October 1936, Mussolini and Hitler concluded an agreement that recognized their common political and economic interests, and one month later, Mussolini referred publicly to the new Rome-Berlin Axis. Also in November, Germany and Japan (the rising military power in the Far East) concluded the Anti-Comintern Pact and agreed to maintain a common front against communism.

By the end of 1936, Hitler and Nazi Germany had achieved a “diplomatic revolution” in Europe. The Treaty of Versailles had been virtually scrapped, and Germany was once more a “world power,” as Hitler proclaimed. Hitler was convinced that neither the French nor the British would provide much opposition to his plans and decided in 1938 to move on Austria. By threatening Austria with invasion, Hitler coerced the Austrian chancellor into putting Austrian Nazis in charge of the government. The new government promptly invited German troops to enter Austria and assist in maintaining law and order. One day later, on March 13, 1938, after his triumphal return to his native land, Hitler formally annexed Austria to Germany. Great Britain’s ready acknowledgment of Hitler’s action only increased the German dictator’s contempt for Western weakness.

THE TAKEOVER OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA The annexation of Austria improved Germany’s strategic position in central Europe and put Hitler in position to achieve his next objective—the destruction of Czechoslovakia. This goal might have seemed unrealistic, as democratic Czechoslovakia was fully prepared to defend itself and was well supported by pacts with France and the Soviet Union. Hitler believed, however, that France and Britain would not use force to defend Czechoslovakia.

He was right again. On September 15, 1938, Hitler demanded the cession of the Sudetenland (SOO-TAY-than-land) (an area in northwestern Czechoslovakia inhabited largely by ethnic Germans) to Germany and expressed his willingness to risk “world war” if he was refused. Instead of
Munich confirmed Hitler’s perception that the Western democracies were weak and would not fight. Hitler was increasingly convinced of his own infallibility, and he had been pleased but by no means satisfied at Munich. In March 1939, Germany occupied all the Czech lands (Bohemia and Moravia) while the Slovaks, with his encouragement, declared their independence of the Czechs and became a puppet state (Slovakia) of Nazi Germany. On the evening of March 15, 1939, Hitler triumphantly declared in Prague that he would be known as the greatest German of them all.

At last, the Western states realized that they had to react vigorously to the Nazi threat. Hitler’s unrelenting aggression made clear that his promises were worthless. When he began to demand the return to Germany of Danzig, which had been made a free city by the Treaty of Versailles to serve as a seaport for Poland, Britain recognized the danger and offered to protect Poland in the event of war. At the same time, both France and Britain realized that, among the European powers, only the Soviet Union was powerful enough to counter Nazi aggression and so began political and military negotiations with Stalin. Their distrust of Soviet communism, however, made an alliance unlikely.

Meanwhile, Hitler pressed on in the belief that Britain and France would not fight over Poland. To preclude an alliance between the western European states and the Soviet Union, which would create the danger of a two-front war, Hitler, ever the opportunist, negotiated his own nonaggression pact with Stalin and shocked the world with its announcement, on August 23, 1939. The treaty with the Soviet Union gave Hitler the freedom to attack Poland. He told his generals, “Now Poland is in the position in which I wanted her...I am only afraid that at the last moment some swine or other will yet submit to me a plan for mediation.” He need not have worried. On September 1, German forces invaded Poland; two days later, Britain and France declared war on Germany. Europe was again at war.

**The Path to War in Asia**

In September 1931, on the pretext that the Chinese had attacked a Japanese railway near Mukden (Mook-dun) (the “Mukden incident” had actually been carried out by Japanese saboteurs), Japanese military units seized Manchuria. Japanese officials in Tokyo were divided over the wisdom of the takeover, but the moderates were unable to control the army. Eventually, worldwide protests against the Japanese action led the League of Nations to send an investigative commission to Manchuria. When the commission issued a report condemning the seizure, Japan withdrew from the League. Over the next several years, the Japanese consolidated their hold on Manchuria, renaming it Manchukuo (man-choo-kwoh) and placing it under the titular authority of the former Chinese emperor and now Japanese puppet Puyi (Poo-YEE). Japan now began to expand into northern China.

Not all politicians in Tokyo agreed with this aggressive policy, but right-wing terrorists assassinated some of the key critics and intimidated others into silence. By the mid-1930s, militarists connected with the government and the armed forces were effectively in control of Japanese politics. The United States refused to recognize the Japanese takeover of Manchuria but was unwilling to threaten the use of force. Instead, the Americans attempted to appease Japan in the hope of encouraging Japanese moderates. As a senior U.S. diplomat with long experience in Asia warned in a memorandum to the president:

Utter defeat of Japan would be no blessing to the Far East or to the world. It would merely create a new set of stresses, and substitute for Japan the USSR as the successor to Imperial Russia—as a contestant (and at least an equally unscrupulous and dangerous one) for the mastery of the East. Nobody except perhaps Russia would gain from our victory in such a war.8

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**POLAND** Munich confirmed Hitler’s perception that the Western democracies were weak and would not fight. Hitler was increasingly convinced of his own infallibility, and he had been pleased but by no means satisfied at Munich. In March 1939, Germany occupied all the Czech lands (Bohemia and Moravia) while the Slovaks, with his encouragement, declared their independence of the Czechs and became a puppet state (Slovakia) of Nazi Germany. On the evening of March 15, 1939, Hitler triumphantly declared in Prague that he would be known as the greatest German of them all.

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At the Munich Conference, the leaders of France and Great Britain capitulated to Hitler’s demands on Czechoslovakia. Although the British prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, defended his actions at Munich as necessary for peace, another British statesman, Winston Churchill, characterized the settlement at Munich as “a disaster of the first magnitude.”

Winston Churchill, Speech to the House of Commons, October 5, 1938

I will begin by saying what everybody would like to ignore or forget but which must nevertheless be stated, namely, that we have sustained a total and unmitigated defeat, and that France has suffered even more than we have. . . . The utmost my right honorable Friend the Prime Minister . . . has been able to gain for Czechoslovakia and in the matters which were in dispute has been that the German dictator, instead of snatching his victuals from the table, has been content to have them served to him course by course. . . . And I will say this, that I believe the Czechs, left to themselves and told they were going to get no help from the Western Powers, would have been able to make better terms than they have got. . . .

We are in the presence of a disaster of the first magnitude which has befallen Great Britain and France. Do not let us blind ourselves to that. . . .

And do not suppose that this is the end. This is only the beginning of the reckoning. This is only the first sip, the first foretaste of a bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year unless by a supreme recovery of moral health and mar-

JAPANESE AGGRESSION IN CHINA For the moment, the prime victim of Japanese aggression was China. Chiang Kai-shek attempted to avoid a confrontation with Japan so that he could deal with the Communists, whom he considered the greater threat. When clashes between Chinese and Japanese troops broke out, he sought to appease the Japanese by granting them the authority to administer areas in northern China. But as Japan moved steadily southward, popular protests in Chinese cities against Japanese aggression intensified. In December 1936, Chiang was briefly kidnapped by military forces commanded by General Zhang Xueliang (JAHNG sheh-LEE-AHNG), who compelled him to end his military efforts against the Communists in Yan’an and form a new united front against the Japanese. After Chinese and Japanese forces clashed at Marco Polo Bridge, south of Beijing, in July 1937, China refused to apologize, and hostilities spread.

Japan had not planned to declare war on China, but neither side would compromise, and the 1937 incident eventually turned into a major conflict. The Japanese advanced up the Yangtze River valley and seized the Chinese capital of Nanjing in December, but Chiang Kai-shek refused to capitulate and moved his government upriver to Hankou (HAHN-kow). When the Japanese seized that city, he moved on to Chongqing (chung-CHING), in remote Sichuan (suh-CHWAHN) province. Japanese strategists had hoped to force Chiang to join a Japanese-dominated New Order in East Asia, comprising Japan, Manchuria, and China. This was part of a larger plan to seize Soviet Siberia with its rich resources and create a new “Monroe Doctrine for Asia” under which Japan would guide its Asian neighbors on the path to development and prosperity (see the box on p. 736). After all, who better to instruct Asian societies on modernization than the one Asian country that had already achieved it?

ADVANCE TO THE SOUTH During the late 1930s, Japan began to cooperate with Nazi Germany on the assumption that the two countries would ultimately launch a joint attack on the Soviet Union and divide up its resources between them. But when Germany surprised the world by signing a
Advocates of Japanese expansion justified their proposals by claiming both economic necessity and moral imperatives. Note the familiar combination of motives in this passage written by an extremist military leader in the late 1930s.

**Hashimoto Kingoro on the Need for Emigration and Expansion**

We have already said that there are only three ways left to Japan to escape from the pressure of surplus population. We are like a great crowd of people packed into a small and narrow room, and there are only three doors through which we might escape, namely emigration, advance into world markets, and expansion of territory. The first door, emigration, has been barred to us by the anti-Japanese immigration policies of other countries. The second door, advance into world markets, is being shut by tariff barriers and the abrogation of commercial treaties. What should Japan do when two of the three doors have been closed against her?

It is quite natural that Japan should rush upon the last remaining door.

It may sound dangerous when we speak of territorial expansion, but the territorial expansion of which we speak does not in any sense of the word involve the occupation of the possessions of other countries, the planting of the Japanese flag thereon, and the declaration of their annexation to Japan. It is just that since the Powers have suppressed the circulation of Japanese materials and merchandise abroad, we are looking for some place overseas where Japanese capital, Japanese skills and Japanese labor can have free play, free from the oppression of the white race.

We would be satisfied with just this much. What moral right do the world powers who have themselves closed to us the two doors of emigration and advance into world markets have to criticize Japan’s attempt to rush out of the third and last door?

If they do not approve of this, they should open the doors which they have closed against us and permit the free movement overseas of Japanese emigrants and merchandise.

At the time of the Manchurian incident, the entire world joined in criticism of Japan. They said that Japan was an untrustworthy nation. They said that she had recklessly brought cannon and machine guns into Manchuria, which was the territory of another country, flown airplanes over it, and finally occupied it. But the military action taken by Japan was not in the least a selfish one. Moreover, we do not recall ever having taken so much as an inch of territory belonging to another nation. The result of this incident was the establishment of the splendid new nation of Manchuria. The Powers are still discussing whether or not to recognize this new nation, but regardless of whether or not other nations recognize her, the Manchurian empire has already been established, and now, seven years after its creation, the empire is further consolidating its foundations with the aid of its friend, Japan.

And if it is still protested that our actions in Manchuria were excessively violent, we may wish to ask the white race just which country it was that sent warships and troops to India, South Africa, and Australia and slaughtered innocent natives, bound their hands and feet with iron chains, lashed their backs with iron whips, proclaimed these territories as their own, and still continues to hold them to this very day.

**Q.** What arguments does Hashimoto Kingoro make in favor of territorial expansion? What is his reaction to the condemnation of his proposal by western European nations?

Nonaggression pact with the Soviets in August 1939, Japanese strategists were compelled to reevaluate their long-term objectives. Japan was not strong enough to defeat the Soviet Union alone, as a small but bitter border war along the Siberian frontier near Manchuria had amply demonstrated. So the Japanese began to shift their sights southward to the vast resources of Southeast Asia—the oil of the Dutch East Indies, the rubber and tin of Malaya, and the rice of Burma and Indochina.

A move southward, of course, would risk war with the European colonial powers and the United States. Japan’s attack on China in the summer of 1937 had already aroused strong criticism abroad, particularly from the United States, where President Franklin Roosevelt threatened to “quarantine” the aggressors after Japanese military units bombed an American naval ship operating in China. Public fear of involvement forced the president to draw back, but when Japan suddenly demanded the right to occupy airfields and exploit economic resources in French Indochina in the summer of 1940, the United States warned the Japanese that it would cut off the sale of oil and scrap iron unless Japan withdrew from the area and returned to its borders of 1931.

The Japanese viewed the American threat of retaliation as an obstacle to their long-term objectives. Japan badly needed oil and scrap iron from the United States. Should they be cut off, Japan would have to find them elsewhere. The Japanese were thus caught in a vise. To obtain guaranteed access to natural resources that were necessary to fuel the Japanese military machine, Japan must risk being cut off from its current source of raw materials that would be needed in case of a conflict. After much debate, the Japanese decided to launch
a surprise attack on American and European colonies in Southeast Asia in the hope of a quick victory that would evict the United States from the region.

World War II

FOCUS QUESTION: What were the main events of World War II in Europe and Asia?

Unleashing an early form of **Blitzkrieg** (BLITZ-kreeeg), or “lightning war,” Hitler stunned Europe with the speed and efficiency of the German attack. Moving into Poland with about 1.5 million troops from two fronts, German forces used armored columns or panzer divisions (a **panzer division** was a strike force of about three hundred tanks and accompanying forces and supplies) supported by airplanes to break quickly through Polish lines and encircle the outnumbered and poorly equipped Polish armies. The coordinated air and ground assaults included the use of Stuka dive bombers; as they descended from the skies, their sirens emitted a blood-curdling shriek, adding a frighteningly destructive element to the German attack. Regular infantry units, still on foot with their supplies drawn by horses, then marched in to hold the newly conquered territory. Soon afterward, Soviet military forces attacked eastern Poland. Within four weeks, Poland had surrendered. On September 28, 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union officially divided Poland between them.

Europe at War

Although Hitler’s hopes to avoid a war with the western European states were dashed when France and Britain declared war on September 3, he was confident that he could control the situation. After a winter of waiting (called the “phony war”), Hitler resumed his aggression on April 9, 1940, with another Blitzkrieg, against Denmark and Norway (see Map 25.1). One month later, on May 10, the Germans launched an attack on the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. The main assault through Luxembourg and the Ardennes forest was completely unexpected by the French and British forces. German panzer divisions broke through the weak French defensive positions there and raced across northern France, splitting the Allied armies and trapping French troops and the entire British army on the beaches of Dunkirk. Only by heroic efforts did the British succeed in a gigantic evacuation of 330,000 Allied (mostly British) troops. The French capitulated on June 22. German armies occupied about three-fifths of France, while the French hero of World War I, Marshal Henri Pétain (AHN-ree pay-TANH) (1856–1951), established an authoritarian regime—known as Vichy (VISH-ee) France—over the remainder. Germany was now in control of western and central Europe, but Britain still had not been defeated.

**THE PROBLEM OF BRITAIN** As Hitler realized, an amphibious invasion of Britain would be possible only if Germany

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**CHRONOLOGY**  
**The Path to War, 1931–1939**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japan seizes Manchuria</td>
<td>September 1931</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany</td>
<td>January 30, 1933</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hitler announces a German air force</td>
<td>March 9, 1935</td>
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<td>Hitler announces military conscription</td>
<td>March 16, 1935</td>
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<td>Mussolini invades Ethiopia</td>
<td>October 1935</td>
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<td>Hitler occupies the demilitarized Rhineland</td>
<td>March 7, 1936</td>
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<td>Mussolini and Hitler intervene in the Spanish Civil War</td>
<td>1936</td>
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<td>Rome-Berlin Axis formed</td>
<td>October 1936</td>
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<td>Anti-Comintern Pact (Japan and Germany)</td>
<td>November 1936</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan invades China</td>
<td>July 1937</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany annexes Austria</td>
<td>March 13, 1938</td>
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<td>Munich Conference: Sudetenland goes to Germany</td>
<td>September 29, 1938</td>
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<td>Germany occupies the rest of Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>March 1939</td>
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<tr>
<td>German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact</td>
<td>August 23, 1939</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany invades Poland</td>
<td>September 1, 1939</td>
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<tr>
<td>Britain and France declare war on Germany</td>
<td>September 3, 1939</td>
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Although he had no

...YU...

A

se and allies, 1941

Axis conquers, 1939–1942

World War II in Europe and North Africa.

Nevertheless, the British air force suffered critical losses by

At this point, Hitler pursued the possibility of a Mediterranean strategy, which would involve capturing Egypt and the Suez Canal and closing the Mediterranean to British ships, thereby shutting off Britain’s supply of oil. Hitler’s commitment to the Mediterranean was never wholehearted, however. His initial plan was to let the Italians defeat the British in North Africa, but this strategy failed when the British routed the Italian army. Although Hitler then sent German troops to the North African theater of war, his primary concern lay elsewhere; he had already reached the decision to fulfill his lifetime obsession with the acquisition of territory in the east.

INVASION OF THE SOVIET UNION Although he had no desire for a two-front war, Hitler became convinced that...
Britain was remaining in the war only because it expected Soviet support. If the Soviet Union were smashed, Britain's last hope would be eliminated. Moreover, Hitler had convinced himself that the Soviet Union, with what he contemptuously regarded as its Jewish-Bolshevik leadership and a pitiful army, could be defeated quickly and decisively. Although the invasion of the Soviet Union was scheduled for spring 1941, the attack was delayed because of problems in the Balkans. Hitler had already obtained the political cooperation of Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania, but Mussolini's disastrous invasion of Greece in October 1940 exposed Hitler's southern flank to British air bases in that country. To secure his Balkan flank, German troops seized both Yugoslavia and Greece in April 1941. Feeling reassured, Hitler turned to the east and invaded the Soviet Union, believing that the Soviets could still be decisively defeated before winter set in.

On June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany launched its attack on the Soviet Union, by far the largest invasion the Germans had yet attempted. The German force consisted of 180 divisions, including 20 panzer divisions, 8,000 tanks, and 3,200 airplanes. German troops were stretched out along an 1,800-mile front. The Soviets had 160 infantry divisions but were able to mobilize another 300 divisions out of reserves within half a year. Hitler had badly miscalculated the potential power of the Soviets. The German troops advanced rapidly, capturing 2 million Soviet soldiers. By November, one German army group had swept through Ukraine, while a second was besieging Leningrad; a third approached within 25 miles of Moscow, the Russian capital.

An early winter and unexpected Soviet resistance, however, brought the German advance to a halt. Armor and transport vehicles stalled in temperatures of 30 degrees below zero. Hitler's commanders wished to withdraw and regroup for the following spring, but Hitler refused. Fearing the disintegration of his lines, he insisted that there would be no retreat. A Soviet counterattack in December 1941 by an army supposedly exhausted by Nazi victories came as an ominous ending to the year. Although the Germans managed to hold on and reestablish their lines, a war diary kept by a soldier in Panzer Group Three described the desperate situation: "Discipline is breaking down. More and more soldiers are heading west on foot without weapons. . . . The road is under constant air attack. Those killed by bombs are no longer being buried. All the hangers-on (cargo troops, Luftwaffe, supply trains) are pouring to the rear in full flight." By December 1941, another of Hitler's decisions—the declaration of war on the United States—probably made his defeat inevitable and turned another European conflict into a global one.

Japan at War

On December 7, 1941, Japanese carrier-based aircraft attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands. The same day, other units launched assaults on the Philippines and began advancing toward the British colony of Malaya (see Map 25.2). Shortly thereafter, Japanese forces invaded the Dutch East Indies and occupied a number of islands in the Pacific Ocean. In some cases, as on the Bataan (buh-TAN or buh-TAHN) peninsula and the island of Corregidor (kuh-REG-ih-dor) in the Philippines, resistance was fierce, but by the spring of 1942, almost all of Southeast Asia and much of the western Pacific had fallen into Japanese hands. Japan then announced its intention to liberate the colonies of Southeast Asia from Western rule. For the moment, however, it needed the resources of the region for its war machine and placed its conquests on a wartime basis.

Japanese leaders had hoped that their lightning strike at American bases would destroy the U.S. Pacific fleet and persuade the Roosevelt administration to accept Japanese domination of the Pacific. The American people, in the eyes of Japanese leaders, had been made soft by material indulgence. But the Japanese had miscalculated. The attack on Pearl Harbor galvanized American public opinion and won broad support for Roosevelt's war policy. The United States now joined with European nations and Nationalist China in a combined effort to defeat Japan and bring an end to its hegemony in the Pacific. Believing that American involvement in the Pacific would render the United States ineffective in the European theater of war, Hitler declared war on the United States four days after Pearl Harbor.

The Turning Point of the War, 1942–1943

The entry of the United States into the war created a coalition (the Grand Alliance) that ultimately defeated the Axis Powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan). Nevertheless, the three major Allies—Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union—had to overcome mutual suspicions before they could operate as an effective alliance. Two factors aided that process. First, Hitler's declaration of war on the United States made it easier for the Americans to accept the British and Russian contention that the defeat of Germany should be the first priority of the United States. For that reason, the United States, under its lend-lease program (which had begun before U.S. entry into the war), sent large amounts of military aid, including $50 billion worth of trucks, planes, and other arms, to the British and the Soviets. Also important to the alliance was the tacit agreement of the three chief Allies to stress military operations while ignoring political differences and larger strategic issues concerning any postwar settlement. At the beginning of 1943, the Allies agreed to fight until the Axis Powers surrendered unconditionally. Although this principle of unconditional surrender prevented a repeat of the mistake of World War I, which ended in 1918 with an armistice rather than a total victory, it likely discouraged dissident Germans and Japanese from attempting to overthrow their governments in order to arrange a negotiated peace. At the same time, it did have the effect of cementing the Grand Alliance by making it nearly impossible for Hitler to divide his foes.

Defeat, however, was far from Hitler's mind at the beginning of 1942. As Japanese forces advanced into Southeast Asia and the Pacific after crippling the American naval fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hitler and his European allies continued the war in Europe against Britain and the Soviet Union. Until the fall of 1942, it appeared that the Germans might still prevail on the battlefield. Reinforcements in North Africa enabled
In North Africa, the Afrika Korps under General Erwin Rommel (RAHM-ul) to break through the British defenses in Egypt and advance toward Alexandria. In the spring of 1942, a renewed German offensive in the Soviet Union led to the capture of the entire Crimea, causing Hitler to boast in August 1942:

As the next step, we are going to advance south of the Caucasus and then help the rebels in Iran and Iraq against the English. Another thrust will be directed along the Caspian Sea toward Afghanistan and India. Then the English will run out of oil. In two years we'll be on the borders of India. Twenty to thirty elite German divisions will do. Then the British Empire will collapse. But this would be Hitler's last optimistic outburst. By the fall of 1942, the war had turned against the Germans.

NORTH AFRICA AND THE EASTERN FRONT In North Africa, British forces had stopped Rommel's troops at El Alamein (ell ah-lah-MAYN), Egypt, in the summer of 1942 and then forced them back across the desert. In November 1942, British and American forces invaded French North Africa and forced the German and Italian troops to surrender in May 1943. On the Eastern Front, the turning point of the war occurred at Stalingrad. After the capture of the Crimea, Hitler's generals wanted him to concentrate on the Caucasus and its oil fields, but Hitler decided that Stalingrad, a major industrial center on the Volga, should be taken first. Between November 1942 and February 1943, German troops were stopped, then encircled, and finally forced to surrender on February 2, 1943 (see the box on p. 741). The entire German Sixth Army of 300,000 men was lost. By February 1943, German forces in Russia were back to their positions of June 1942. By the spring of 1943, long before western Allied troops returned to the European continent, even Hitler knew that the Germans would not defeat the Soviet Union.
A German Soldier at Stalingrad

The Soviet victory at Stalingrad was a major turning point in World War II. This excerpt comes from the diary of a German soldier who fought and died in the Battle of Stalingrad. His dreams of victory and a return home with medals were soon dashed by the realities of Soviet resistance.

Diary of a German Soldier

Today, after we’d had a bath, the company commander told us that if our future operations are as successful, we’ll soon reach the Volga, take Stalingrad, and then the war will inevitably soon be over. Perhaps we’ll be home by Christmas.

July 29. The company commander says the Russian troops are completely broken, and cannot hold out any longer. To reach the Volga and take Stalingrad is not so difficult for us. The Führer knows where the Russians’ weak point is. Victory is not far away.

August 10. The Führer’s orders were read out to us. He expects victory of us. We are all convinced that they can’t stop us.

August 12. This morning outstanding soldiers were presented with decorations. . . . Will I really go back to Elsa without a decoration? I believe that for Stalingrad the Führer will decorate even me. . . .

September 4. We are being sent northward along the front toward Stalingrad. We marched all night and by dawn had reached Voroponovo Station. We can already see the smoking town. It’s a happy thought that the end of the war is getting nearer. That’s what everyone is saying. . . .

September 8. Two days of nonstop fighting. The Russians are defending themselves with insane stubbornness. Our regiment has lost many men. . . .

September 16. Our battalion, plus tanks, is attacking the [grain storage] elevator, from which smoke is pouring—the grain in it is burning; the Russians seem to have set fire to it themselves. Barbarism. The battalion is suffering heavy losses.

October 10. The Russians are so close to us that our planes cannot bomb them. We are preparing for a decisive attack. The Führer has ordered the whole of Stalingrad to be taken as rapidly as possible. . . .

October 22. Our regiment has failed to break into the factory. We have lost many men; every time you move you have to jump over bodies.

November 10. A letter from Elsa today. Everyone expects us home for Christmas. In Germany everyone believes we already hold Stalingrad. How wrong they are. If they could only see what Stalingrad has done to our army. . . .

November 21. The Russians have gone over to the offensive along the whole front. Fierce fighting is going on. So, there it is—the Volga, victory, and soon home to our families! We shall obviously be seeing them next in the other world.

November 29. We are encircled. It was announced this morning that the Führer has said: “The army can trust me to do everything necessary to ensure supplies and rapidly break the encirclement.”

December 3. We are on hunger rations and waiting for the rescue that the Führer promised. . . .

December 14. Everybody is racked with hunger. Frozen potatoes are the best meal, but to get them out of the ice-covered ground under fire from Russian bullets is not so easy. . . .

December 26. The horses have already been eaten. I would eat a cat; they say its meat is also tasty. The soldiers look like corpses or lunatics, looking for something to put in their mouths. They no longer take cover from Russian shells; they haven’t the strength to walk, run away, and hide. A curse on this war!

Q What did this soldier believe about the Führer? Why? What was the source of his information? Why is the battle for Stalingrad considered a major turning point in World War II?

ASIA  The tide of battle in the Far East also turned dramatically in 1942. In the Battle of the Coral Sea on May 7 and 8, 1942, American naval forces stopped the Japanese advance and temporarily relieved Australia of the threat of invasion. On June 4, at the Battle of Midway Island, American carrier planes destroyed all four of the attacking Japanese aircraft carriers and established American naval superiority in the Pacific. The victory came at high cost; about two-fifths of the American planes were shot down in the encounter. By the fall of 1942, Allied forces were beginning to gather for offensive operations in three areas: from bases in north Burma and India into the rest of Burma; in the Solomon Islands and on New Guinea, with forces under the direction of American general Douglas MacArthur moving toward the Philippines; and across the Pacific where combined U.S. Army, Marine, and Navy forces would mount attacks against Japanese-held islands. After a series of bitter engagements in the waters of the Solomon Islands from August to November 1942, Japanese fortunes began to fade.

The Last Years of the War

By the beginning of 1943, the tide of battle had turned against Germany, Italy, and Japan. After the Axis forces had surrendered in Tunisia on May 13, 1943, the Allies crossed the Mediterranean and carried the war to Italy. After taking Sicily, Allied troops began the invasion of mainland Italy in September. In the meantime, after the ouster and arrest of Benito Mussolini, a new Italian government offered to surrender to Allied forces. But Mussolini was liberated by the Germans in
a daring raid and then set up as the head of a puppet German state in northern Italy while German troops moved in and occupied much of the rest of the country. The new defensive lines established by the Germans in the hills south of Rome were so effective that the Allied advance up the Italian peninsula was a painstaking affair accompanied by heavy casualties. Rome did not fall to the Allies until June 4, 1944. By that time, the Italian war had assumed a secondary role anyway as the Allies prepared to open their long-awaited “second front” in western Europe.

**ALLIED ADVANCES IN EUROPE** Since the autumn of 1943, the Allies had been planning a cross-channel invasion of France from Britain. Under the direction of the American general Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890–1969), the Allies landed five assault divisions on the beaches of Normandy on June 6, 1944, in history’s greatest naval invasion. An initially indecisive German response enabled the Allied forces to establish a beachhead. Within three months, they had landed 2 million men and a half-million vehicles that pushed inland and broke through German defensive lines.

After the breakout, Allied troops moved south and east and liberated Paris by the end of August. By March 1945, they had crossed the Rhine River and advanced farther into Germany. At the end of April 1945, Allied armies in northern Germany moved toward the Elbe River, where they finally linked up with the Soviets. The Soviets had come a long way since the Battle of Stalingrad in 1943. In the summer of 1943, Hitler had gambled on taking the offensive by making use of newly developed heavy tanks, but the German forces were soundly defeated by the Soviets at the Battle of Kursk (KOORSK) (July 5–12), the greatest tank battle of World War II. Soviet forces then began a relentless advance westward. The Soviets had reoccupied Ukraine by the end of 1943 and lifted the siege of Leningrad and moved into the Baltic states by the beginning of 1944. Advancing along a northern front, Soviet troops occupied Warsaw in January 1945 and entered Berlin in April. Meanwhile, Soviet troops along a southern front swept through Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria.

In January 1945, Hitler had moved into a bunker 55 feet under Berlin to direct the final stages of the war. In his final political testament, Hitler, consistent to the end in his rabid anti-Semitism, blamed the Jews for the war: “Above all I charge the leaders of the nation and those under them to scrupulous observance of the laws of race and to merciless...
opposition to the universal poisoner of all peoples, international Jewry." Hitler committed suicide on April 30, two days after Mussolini had been shot by partisan Italian forces. On May 7, German commanders surrendered. The war in Europe was over.

DEFEAT OF JAPAN The war in Asia continued. Beginning in 1943, American forces had gone on the offensive and advanced their way, slowly at times, across the Pacific. The Americans took an increasing toll of enemy resources, especially at sea and in the air. As Allied military power drew inexorably closer to the main Japanese islands in the first months of 1945, President Harry Truman, who had succeeded to the presidency on the death of Franklin Roosevelt in April, had an excruciatingly difficult decision to make. Should he use atomic weapons (at the time, only two bombs had been developed, and their effectiveness had not been demonstrated) to bring the war to an end without the necessity of an Allied invasion of the Japanese homeland? As the world knows, Truman answered that question in the affirmative. The first bomb was dropped on the city of Hiroshima (hee-roh-SHEE-muh) on August 6. Truman then called on Japan to surrender or expect a "rain of ruin from the air." When the Japanese did not respond, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki (nah-gah-SAH-kee). Japan surrendered unconditionally on August 14. World War II was finally over.

The New Order

FOCUS QUESTION: What was the nature of the new orders that Germany and Japan attempted to establish in the territories they occupied?

The initial victories of the Germans and the Japanese gave them the opportunity to create new orders in Europe and Asia. Although both countries presented positive images of these new orders for publicity purposes, in practice both followed policies of ruthless domination of their subject peoples.

The New Order in Europe

After the German victories, Nazi propagandists conjured up glowing images of a Nazi New Order in Europe based on "equal chances" for all nations and an integrated economic community. This was not Hitler's conception of a European New Order. He regarded the Europe he had conquered simply as subject to German domination. Only the Germans, he once said, "can really organize Europe."

THE NAZI EMPIRE The Nazi empire stretched across continental Europe from the English Channel in the west to the outskirts of Moscow in the east. In no way was this empire organized systematically or governed efficiently. Some areas, such as western Poland, were directly annexed by Nazi Germany and made into German provinces. The rest of occupied Europe was administered by German military or civilian officials in combination with varying degrees of indirect control from collaborationist regimes.

Racial considerations played an important role in determining how conquered peoples were treated. German civil administrations were established in Norway, Denmark, and the Netherlands because the Nazis considered their peoples

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Hitler’s Plans for a New Order in the East

Hitler’s nightly monologues to his postdinner guests, which were recorded by the Führer’s private secretary, Martin Bormann, reveal much about the New Order he wished to create. On the evening of October 17, 1941, Hitler expressed his views on what the Germans would do with their newly conquered territories in the east.

Hitler’s Secret Conversations, October 17, 1941

In comparison with the beauties accumulated in Central Germany, the new territories in the East seem to us like a desert. . . . This Russian desert, we shall populate it. . . . We’ll take away its character of an Asiatic steppe; we’ll Europeanize it. With this object, we have undertaken the construction of roads that will lead to the southermost point of the Crimea and to the Caucasus. These roads will be studded along their whole length with German towns, and around these towns our colonists will settle.

As for the two or three million men whom we need to accomplish this task, we’ll find them quicker than we think. They’ll come from Germany, Scandinavia, the Western countries, and America. I shall no longer be here to see all that, but in twenty years the Ukraine will already be a home for twenty million inhabitants besides the natives. In three hundred years, the country will be one of the loveliest gardens in the world.

As for the natives, we’ll have to screen them carefully. The Jew, that destroyer, we shall drive out. . . . We shan’t settle in the Russian towns, and we’ll let them fall to pieces without intervening. And, above all, no remorse on this subject! We’re not going to play at children’s nurses; we’re absolutely without obligations as far as these people are concerned. To struggle against the hovels, chase away the fleas, provide German teachers, bring out newspapers—very little of that for us! We’ll confine ourselves, perhaps, to setting up a radio transmitter, under our control. For the rest, let them know just enough to understand our highway signs, so that they won’t get themselves run over by our vehicles. . . . There’s only one duty: to Germanize this country by the immigration of Germans, and to look upon the natives as Redskins. If these people had defeated us, Heaven have mercy! But we don’t hate them. That sentiment is unknown to us. We are guided only by reason. . . .

All those who have the feeling for Europe can join in our work.

In this business I shall go straight ahead, cold-bloodedly. What they may think about me, at this juncture, is to me a matter of complete indifference. I don’t see why a German who eats a piece of bread should torment himself with the idea that the soil that produces this bread has been won by the sword.

What were Hitler’s plans for the conquered eastern territories and the peoples who inhabited these lands? Concerning eastern Europeans, do you believe Hitler’s statements that “we don’t hate them” and “we are guided only by reason”? What motivations do you see behind this monologue?

Aryan, racially kin to the Germans and hence worthy of more lenient treatment. “Inferior” Latin peoples, such as the occupied French, were given military administrations. By 1943, however, as Nazi losses continued to multiply, all the occupied territories of northern and western Europe were ruthlessly exploited for material goods and manpower for Germany’s labor needs.

PLANS FOR AN ARYAN RACIAL EMPIRE Because the conquered lands in the east contained the living space for German expansion and were populated in Nazi eyes by racially inferior Slavic peoples, Nazi administration there was considerably more ruthless. Hitler’s racial ideology and his plans for an Aryan empire were so important to him that he and the Nazis began to implement their race-based program soon after the conquest of Poland. Heinrich Himmler, a strong believer in Nazi racial ideology and the leader of the SS, was put in charge of German resettlement plans in the east. Himmler’s task was to evacuate the inferior Slavic peoples and replace them with Germans, a policy first applied to the new German provinces carved out of western Poland. One million Poles were uprooted and dumped in southern Poland. Hundreds of thousands of ethnic Germans (descendants of Germans who had migrated decades earlier from Germany to different parts of southern and eastern Europe) were encouraged to colonize designated areas in Poland. By 1942, 2 million ethnic Germans had been settled in Poland.

The invasion of the Soviet Union inflated Nazi visions of German colonization in the east. Hitler spoke to his intimate circle of a colossal project of social engineering after the war, in which Poles, Ukrainians, and Russians would become slave labor while German peasants settled on the abandoned lands and Germanized them (see the box above). Nazis involved in this planning were well aware of the human costs. Himmler told a gathering of SS officers that although the destruction of 30 million Slavs was a prerequisite for German plans in the east, “whether nations live in prosperity or starve to death interests me only insofar as we need them as slaves for our culture. Otherwise it is of no interest.”

USE OF FOREIGN WORKERS Labor shortages in Germany led to a policy of ruthless mobilization of foreign labor for
Germany. After the invasion of the Soviet Union, the 4 million Russian prisoners of war captured by the Germans along with more than 2 million workers conscripted in France became a major source of heavy labor, but it was wasted by allowing more than 3 million of them to die from neglect. In 1942, a special office was created to recruit labor for German farms and industries. By the summer of 1944, 7 million foreigners were laboring in Germany, constituting 20 percent of the nation’s workforce. At the same time, another 7 million workers were supplying forced labor in their own countries on farms, in industries, and even in military camps. Forced labor, however, often proved counterproductive because it created economic chaos in occupied countries and disrupted industrial production that could have helped Germany. The brutality of Germany’s recruitment policies often led more and more people to resist the Nazi occupation forces.

The Holocaust

No aspect of the Nazi New Order was more terrifying than the deliberate attempt to exterminate the Jewish people of Europe. Racial struggle was a key element in Hitler’s ideology and meant to him a clearly defined conflict of opposites: the Aryans, creators of human cultural development, against the Jews, parasites who were trying to destroy the Aryans. By the beginning of 1939, Nazi policy focused on promoting the “emigration” of German Jews from Germany. Once the war began in September 1939, the so-called Jewish problem took on new dimensions. For a while, there was discussion of the Madagascar Plan, which aspired to the mass shipment of Jews to the island of Madagascar off the east coast of Africa. When war contingencies made this plan impractical, an even more drastic policy was conceived (see the Film & History feature on p. 746).

THE SS AND THE EINSATZGRUPPEN Himmler and the SS organization shared Hitler’s racial ideology. The SS was given responsibility for what the Nazis called their Final Solution to the Jewish problem—the annihilation of the Jewish people. Reinhard Heydrich (RYN-hart HY-drikh) (1904–1942), head of the SS’s Security Service, was given administrative responsibility for the Final Solution. After the defeat of Poland, Heydrich ordered the Einsatzgruppen (YN-zahht-zroop-un), special strike forces that he had created, to round up all Polish Jews and concentrate them in ghettos established in a number of Polish cities.

In June 1941, the Einsatzgruppen were given new responsibilities as mobile killing units. These SS death squads followed the regular army’s advance into the Soviet Union. Their job was to round up Jews in the villages and execute and bury them in mass graves, often giant pits dug by the victims themselves before they were shot. Such constant killing produced morale problems among the SS executioners. During a visit to Minsk in the Soviet Union, Himmler tried to build morale by pointing out that “he would not like it if Germans did such a thing gladly. But their conscience was in no way impaired, for they were soldiers who had to carry out every order unconditionally. He alone had responsibility before God and Hitler for everything that was happening. . . . and he was acting from a deep understanding of the necessity for this operation.”

THE DEATH CAMPS Although it has been estimated that as many as a million Jews were killed by the Einsatzgruppen, this approach to solving the Jewish problem was soon perceived as inadequate. So the Nazis opted for the systematic annihilation of the European Jewish population in death camps. The plan was simple: Jews from countries occupied by Germany (or sympathetic to Germany) would be rounded up, packed like cattle into freight trains, and shipped to Poland, where six extermination centers were built for this purpose. The largest and most famous was Auschwitz-Birkenau (OW-shvitz-BER-kuh-now). Medical technicians chose Zyklon B (the commercial name for hydrogen cyanide) as the most effective gas for quickly killing large numbers of people in gas chambers designed to look like shower rooms to facilitate the cooperation of the victims.
CHAPTER 25  The Crisis Deepens: World War II

FILM & HISTORY

Europa, Europa (1990)

Directed by Agnieszka Holland, Europa, Europa (known as Hitlerjrunges Salomon [Hitler Youth Salomon] in Germany) is the harrowing story of one Jewish boy’s escape from the horrors of Nazi persecution. It is based on the memoirs of Salomon Perel, a German Jew of Polish background who survived by pretending to be a pure Aryan. The film begins in 1938 during Kristallnacht when the family of Solly (Salomon’s nickname) is attacked in their hometown of Peine, Germany. Solly’s sister is killed, and the family moves back to Poland. When the Nazis invade Poland, Solly (Marco Hofschneider) and his brother are sent east, but the brothers become separated, and Solly is placed in a Soviet orphanage in Grodno in the eastern part of Poland occupied by the Soviets.

For two years, Solly becomes a dedicated Communist youth, but when the Germans invade in 1941, he falls into their hands and quickly assumes a new identity in order to survive. He becomes Josef “Jupp” Peters, supposedly the son of German parents from Latvia. Fluent in both Russian and German, Solly/Jupp becomes a translator for the German forces. After an unintended act of bravado, he is rewarded by being sent to a Hitler Youth school where he lives in fear of being exposed as a Jew because of his circumcised penis. He manages to survive the downfall of Nazi Germany and at the end of the war makes his way to Palestine with his brother, who has also survived. Throughout much of the movie, Solly/Jupp lives in constant fear that his true identity as a Jew will be recognized, but his luck, charm, and resourcefulness enable him to survive a series of extraordinary events.

Although there is no way of knowing if each detail of this movie is historically accurate (and a few are clearly inaccurate, such as a bombing run by a plane that was not developed until after the war), overall the story has the ring of truth. The fanaticism of both the Soviet and the Nazi officials who indoctrinate young people seems real. The scene in the Hitler Youth school on how to identify a Jew is realistic, even when it is made ironic by the instructor’s choice of Solly/Jupp to demonstrate the characteristics of a true Aryan. The movie also realistically portrays the fearful world in which Jews had to live under the Nazis before the war and the horrible conditions of the Jewish ghettos in Polish cities during the war. The film shows how people had to fight for their survival in a world of ideological madness, when Jews were killed simply for being Jews. The attitudes of the German soldiers also seem real. Many are shown following orders and killing Jews based on the beliefs in which they have been indoctrinated. But the movie also portrays some German soldiers whose humanity did not allow them to kill Jews. One homosexual soldier discovers that Solly/Jupp is a Jew when he tries—unsuccessfully—to have sex with him. The soldier then becomes the boy’s protector until he himself is killed in battle.

Many movies have been made about the horrible experiences of Jews during World War II, but this one is quite different from most of them. It might never have been made except for the fact that Salomon Perel, who was told by his brother not to tell his story because no one would believe it, was inspired to write his memoirs after a 1985 reunion with his former Hitler Youth group leader. This passionate and intelligent film is ultimately a result of that encounter.

The death camps were up and running by the spring of 1942. Although initial priority was given to the elimination of the ghettos in Poland, by that summer, Jews were also being shipped from France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Even as the Allies were making significant advances in 1944, Jews were being shipped from Greece and Hungary. These shipments depended on the cooperation of Germany’s Transport Ministry, and despite desperate military needs, the Final Solution was given priority in using railroad cars for the transportation of Jews to death camps.

A harrowing experience awaited the Jews when they arrived at one of the six camps. Rudolf Höss (HESS), commandant at Auschwitz-Birkenau, described it:

We had two SS doctors on duty at Auschwitz to examine the incoming transports of prisoners. The prisoners would be marched by one of the doctors, who would make spot decisions as they walked by. Those who were fit for work were sent into the camp. Others were sent immediately to the extermination plants. Children of tender years were invariably exterminated...
The Nazis were also responsible for the death of nearly two of every three Jews in Europe.

A French Doctor Describes the Victims

It is mid-day, when a long line of women, children, and old people enter the yard. The senior official in charge ... climbs on a bench to tell them that they are going to have a bath and that afterward they will get a drink of hot coffee. They all undress in the yard. ... The doors are opened and an indescribable jostling begins. The first people to enter the gas chamber begin to draw back. They sense the death which awaits them. The SS men put an end to this pushing and shoving with blows from their rifle butts beating the heads of the horrified women who are desperately hugging their children. The massive oak double doors are shut. For two endless minutes one can hear banging on the walls and screams which are no longer human. And then—not a sound. Five minutes later the doors are opened. The corpses, squashed together and distorted, fall out like a waterfall. ... The bodies which are still warm pass through the hands of the hairdresser who cuts their hair and the dentist who pulls out their gold teeth. One more transport has just been processed through No. IV crematorium.

Q: What equipment does Höss describe? What process does the French doctor describe? Is there any sympathy for the victims in either account? Why or why not? How could such a horrifying process have been allowed to occur?

THE OTHER HOLOCAUST  The Nazis were also responsible for another Holocaust, the death by shooting, starvation, or overwork of at least another 9 to 10 million people. Because the Nazis also considered the Gypsies of Europe (like the Jews) a race containing alien blood, they were systematically rounded up for extermination. About 40 percent of Europe’s one million Gypsies were killed in the death camps. The leading elements of the “subhuman” Slavic peoples—the clergy, intelligentsia, civil leaders, judges, and lawyers—were arrested and deliberately killed. Probably an additional 4 million Poles, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians lost their lives as slave laborers for Nazi Germany, and 3 to 4 million Soviet
Japan’s Plan for Asia

The Japanese objective in World War II was to create a vast Great East-Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere to provide Japan with needed raw materials and a market for its exports. The following passage is from a secret document produced by a high-level government committee in January 1942.

Draft Plan for the Establishment of the Great East-Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere

The Plan. The Japanese empire is a manifestation of morality and its special characteristic is the propagation of the Imperial Way. It is necessary to foster the increased power of the empire, to cause East Asia to return to its original form of independence and co-prosperity by shaking off the yoke of Europe and America, and to let its countries and peoples develop their respective abilities in peaceful cooperation and secure livelihood.

The Form of East Asiatic Independence and Co-Prosperity. The states, their citizens, and resources, comprised in those areas pertaining to the Pacific, Central Asia, and the Indian Oceans formed into one general union are to be established as an autonomous zone of peaceful living and common prosperity on behalf of the peoples of the nations of East Asia. The area including Japan, Manchuria, North China, lower Yangtze River, and the Russian Maritime Province, forms the nucleus of the East Asiatic Union. The Japanese empire possesses a duty as the leader of the East Asiatic Union.

The above purpose presupposes the inevitable emancipation or independence of Eastern Siberia, China, Indo-China, the South Seas, Australia, and India. . . .

Outline of East Asiatic Administration. It is intended that the unification of Japan, Manchukuo, and China in neighborly friendship be realized by the settlement of the Sino-Japanese problems through the crushing of hostile influences in the Chinese interior, and through the construction of a new China. . . . Aggressive American and British influences in East Asia shall be driven out of the area of Indo-China and the South Seas, and this area should be brought into our defense sphere. The war with Britain and America shall be prosecuted for that purpose. . . .

Chapter 3: Political Construction

Basic Plan. The realization of the great ideal of constructing Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity requires not only the complete prosecution of the current Greater East Asia War but also presupposes another great war in the future. . . .

The following are the basic principles for the political construction of East Asia. . . .

The desires of the peoples in the sphere for their independence shall be respected, and endeavors shall be made for their fulfillment, but proper and suitable forms of government shall be decided for them in consideration of military and economic requirements and of the historical, political, and cultural elements peculiar to each area.

It must also be noted that the independence of various peoples of East Asia should be based on the idea of constructing East Asia as “independent countries existing within the New Order of East Asia” and that this conception differs from an independence based on the idea of liberalism and national self-determination. . . .

Western individualism and materialism shall be rejected, and a moral worldview, the basic principle of whose morality shall be the Imperial Way, shall be established. The ultimate object to be achieved is not exploitation but co-prosperity and mutual help, not competitive conflict but mutual assistance and mild peace, not a formal view of equality but a view of order based on righteous classification, not an idea of rights but an idea of service, and not several worldviews but one unified worldview.

What were Japan’s proposals for a Japanese-led Asia? What distinction did the government committee that drafted this document draw between “Western individualism and materialism” and the “Imperial Way”? Based on this document, were individualism and materialism a part of the Imperial Way?

The New Order in Asia

Once the takeover was completed, Japanese war policy in the occupied areas in Asia became essentially defensive, as Japan hoped to use its new possessions to meet its burgeoning needs for raw materials, such as tin, oil, and rubber, and also as an outlet for Japanese manufactured goods. To provide an organizational structure for the arrangement, Japanese leaders set up the Great East-Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, a self-sufficient economic community designed to provide mutual benefits to the occupied areas and the home country (see the box above). The Ministry for Great East Asia, staffed by civilians, was established in Tokyo in October 1942 to handle arrangements between Japan and the conquered territories.

JAPANESE POLICIES The Japanese conquest of Southeast Asia had been accomplished under the slogan “Asia for the Asiatics,” and many Japanese probably sincerely believed that
their government was bringing about the liberation of the Southeast Asian peoples from European colonial rule. Japanese officials in the occupied territories quickly made contact with anticolonialist elements and promised that independent governments would be established under Japanese tutelage. Such governments were eventually established in Burma, the Dutch East Indies, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

In fact, however, real power rested with the Japanese military authorities in each territory, and the local Japanese military command was directly subordinated to the army general staff in Tokyo. The economic resources of the colonies were exploited for the benefit of the Japanese war machine, while local peoples were recruited to serve in local military units or conscripted to work on public works projects. In some cases, the people living in the occupied areas were subjected to severe hardships. In Indochina, for example, forced requisitions of rice by the local Japanese authorities for shipment abroad created a food shortage that caused the starvation of more than a million Vietnamese in 1944 and 1945.

The Japanese planned to implant a new moral and social order as well as a new political and economic order in the occupied areas. Occupation policy stressed traditional values such as obedience, community spirit, filial piety, and discipline that reflected the prevailing political and cultural bias in Japan, while supposedly Western values such as materialism, liberalism, and individualism were strongly discouraged. To promote this New Order, occupation authorities gave particular support to local religious organizations but discouraged the formation of formal political parties.

RESENTMENT AND RESISTANCE At first, many Southeast Asian nationalists took Japanese promises at face value and agreed to cooperate with their new masters. In Burma, an independent government was established in 1943 and subsequently declared war on the Allies. But as the exploitative nature of Japanese occupation policies became increasingly clear, sentiment turned against the New Order. Japanese officials sometimes unwittingly provoked resentment by their arrogance and contempt for local customs. In the Dutch East Indies, for example, Indonesians were required to bow in the direction of Tokyo and recognize the divinity of the Japanese emperor—practices that were repugnant to Muslims. In Burma, Buddhist pagodas were sometimes used as military latrines.

Like German soldiers in occupied Europe, Japanese military forces often had little respect for the lives of their subject peoples. In their conquest of Nanjing, China, in 1937, Japanese soldiers had devoted several days to killing, raping, and looting. Almost 800,000 Koreans were sent overseas, most of them as forced laborers, to Japan. Tens of thousands of women from Korea and the Philippines were forced to serve as “comfort women” (prostitutes) for Japanese troops. In construction projects to help their war effort, the Japanese also made extensive use of labor forces composed of both prisoners of war and local peoples. In building the Burma-Thailand railway in 1943, for example, the Japanese used 61,000 Australian, British, and Dutch prisoners of war and almost 300,000 workers from Burma, Malaya, Thailand, and the Dutch East Indies. By the time the railway was completed, 12,000 Allied prisoners of war and 90,000 local workers had died from the inadequate diet and appalling working conditions in an unhealthy climate.

Such Japanese behavior created a dilemma for many nationalists, who had no desire to see the return of the colonial powers. Some turned against the Japanese, while others lapsed into inactivity. Indonesian patriots tried to have it both ways, feigning support for Japan while attempting to sabotage the Japanese administration. In French Indochina, Ho Chi Minh’s Indochinese Communist Party established contacts with American military units in southern China and agreed to provide information on Japanese troop movements and rescue downed American flight crews in the area. In Malaya, where Japanese treatment of ethnic Chinese residents was especially harsh, many joined a guerrilla movement against the occupying forces. By the end of the war, little support remained in the region for the erstwhile “liberators.”

The Home Front

FOCUS QUESTION: What were conditions like on the home front for the major belligerents in World War II?

World War II was even more of a total war than World War I. Fighting was much more widespread and covered most of the planet. Economic mobilization was more extensive; so was the mobilization of women. The number of civilians killed was far higher: almost 20 million were killed from bombing raids, mass extermination policies, and attacks by invading armies.

Mobilizing the People

The home fronts of the major belligerents varied considerably, based on local circumstances.

THE SOVIET UNION World War II had an enormous impact on the Soviet Union. Known to the Soviets as the Great Patriotic War, the German-Soviet war witnessed the greatest land battles in history as well as incredible ruthlessness. To Nazi Germany, it was a war of oppression and annihilation that called for merciless measures. Two out of every five persons killed in World War II were Soviet citizens.

The initial defeats of the Soviet Union led to drastic emergency mobilization measures that affected the civilian population. Leningrad, for example, experienced nine hundred days of siege, during which its inhabitants became so desperate for food that they ate dogs, cats, and mice. As the German army made its rapid advance into Soviet territory, the factories in the western part of the Soviet Union were dismantled and shipped to the interior—to the Urals, western Siberia, and the Volga region. Machines were placed on the bare ground, and walls went up around them as workers began their work.

This widespread military, industrial, and economic mobilization created yet another industrial revolution for the Soviet Union (see the comparative essay “Paths to Modernization” on p. 750). Stalin labeled the war effort a “battle of machines,” and the Soviets won, producing 78,000 tanks and
To the casual observer, the most important feature of the first half of the twentieth century was the rise of a virulent form of competitive nationalism that began in Europe and ultimately descended into the cauldron of two destructive world wars. Behind the scenes, however, another competition was taking place over the most effective path to modernization.

The traditional approach, in which modernization was fostered by an independent urban merchant class, had been adopted by Great Britain, France, and the United States and led to the emergence of democratic societies on the capitalist model. In the second approach, adopted in the late nineteenth century by imperial Germany and Meiji Japan, modernization was carried out by traditional elites in the absence of a strong independent bourgeois class. Both Germany and Japan relied on strong government intervention to promote the growth of national wealth and power, and in both nations, modernization led ultimately to the formation of fascist and militarist regimes during the depression years of the early 1930s.

The third approach, selected by Vladimir Lenin after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, was designed to carry out an industrial revolution without going through an intermediate capitalist stage. Under the guidance of the Communist Party in the almost total absence of an urban middle class, an advanced industrial society would be created by destroying the concept of private property. Although Lenin’s plans ultimately called for the “withering away of the state,” the party adopted totalitarian methods to eliminate enemies of the revolution and carry out the changes needed to create a future classless utopia.

How did these various approaches contribute to the crises that afflicted the world during the first half of the twentieth century? The democratic-capitalist approach proved to be a considerable success in an economic sense, leading to advanced economies that could produce manufactured goods at a rate never seen before. Societies just beginning to undergo their own industrial revolutions tried to imitate the success of the capitalist nations by carrying out their own “revolutions from above,” as in Germany and Japan. But the Great Depression and competition over resources and markets soon led to an intense rivalry between the established capitalist states and their ambitious late arrivals, a rivalry that ultimately erupted into global conflict.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, imperial Russia appeared ready to launch its own bid to join the ranks of the industrialized nations. But that effort was derailed by its entry into World War I, and before that conflict had come to an end, the Bolsheviks were in power. Isolated from the capitalist marketplace by mutual consent, the Soviet Union was able to avoid being dragged into the Great Depression but, despite Stalin’s efforts, was unsuccessful in staying out of the “battle of imperialists” that followed at the end of the 1930s. As World War II came to an end, the stage was set for a battle of the victors—the United States and the Soviet Union—over political and ideological supremacy.

What were the three major paths to modernization in the first half of the twentieth century, and why did they lead to conflict?

The Soviet Path to Modernization. One aspect of the Soviet effort to create an advanced industrial society was the collectivization of agriculture, which included the rapid mechanization of food production. In this photograph, peasants are watching a new tractor at work.
In August 1914, Germans had enthusiastically poured into the military, only to be segregated in their own battle units, attacking blacks. Many of the one million blacks who enrolled in the military, and another 16 million, mostly wives and sweethearts of servicemen or workers looking for jobs, also relocated. The presence of blacks in areas where they had not lived before led to racial tensions and sometimes even racial riots. In Detroit in June 1943, white mobs roamed the streets attacking blacks. Many of the one million blacks who enrolled in the military, only to be segregated in their own battle units, were angered by the way they were treated. Some became militant and prepared to fight for their civil rights.

Japanese Americans were treated even more shabbily. On the West Coast, 110,000 Japanese Americans, 65 percent of whom had been born in the United States, were removed to camps encircled by barbed wire and made to take loyalty oaths. Although public officials claimed this policy was necessary for security reasons, no similar treatment of German Americans or Italian Americans ever took place. The racism inherent in this treatment of Japanese Americans was evident when the governor of California, Culbert Olson, said, “You know, when I look out at a group of Americans of German or Italian descent, I can tell whether they’re loyal or not. I can tell how they think and even perhaps what they are thinking. But it is impossible for me to do this with inscrutable orientals, and particularly the Japanese.”

**GERMANY** In August 1914, Germans had enthusiastically cheered their soldiers marching off to war. In September 1939, the streets were quiet. Many Germans were apathetic or, even worse for the Nazi regime, had a foreboding of disaster. Hitler was very aware of the importance of the home front. He believed that the collapse of the home front in World War I had caused Germany’s defeat, and in his determination to avoid a repetition of that experience, he adopted economic policies that may indeed have cost Germany the war.

To maintain the morale of the home front during the first two years of the war, Hitler refused to cut the production of consumer goods or increase the production of armaments. Blitzkrieg allowed the Germans to win quick victories, after which they believed they could plunder the food and raw materials of the conquered countries to avoid diverting resources from the civilian economy. After German defeats on the Russian front and the American entry into the war, the economic situation changed. Early in 1942, Hitler finally ordered a massive increase in armaments production and in the size of the army. Hitler’s architect, Albert Speer (AHL-bert SHPAYR), was made minister for armaments and munitions that year. By eliminating waste and rationalizing procedures, Speer was able to triple the production of armaments between 1942 and 1943 despite the intense Allied air raids. Speer’s urgent plea for a total mobilization of resources for the war effort went unheeded, however. Hitler, fearful of civilian morale problems that would undermine the home front, refused any dramatic cuts in the production of consumer goods. A total mobilization of the economy was not...
In Japan, society was placed on a wartime footing. The first sustained use of civilian service. Nazi magazines now proclaimed, “We see the woman as the eternal mother of our people, but also as the working and fighting comrade of the man.” But the number of women working in industry, agriculture, commerce, and domestic service increased only slightly. The total number of employed women in September 1944 was 14.9 million, compared to 14.6 million in May 1939. Many women, especially those of the middle class, resisted regular employment, particularly in factories. Even the introduction of labor conscription for women in January 1943 failed to achieve much as women found ingenious ways to avoid the regulations.

CHAPTER 25

The British failed to learn from the entry of the Americans into the war produced a new bombing strategy. American planes flew daytime missions aimed at the precision bombing of transportation facilities and wartime industries, while the British Bomber Command continued nighttime saturation bombing of all German cities with populations over 100,000. Bombing raids added an element of terror to circumstances already made difficult by growing shortages of food, clothing, and fuel. Germans especially feared the incendiary bombs, which set off fires that swept destructive paths through the cities. Four raids on Hamburg in August 1943 produced temperatures of 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit, obliterated half the city’s buildings, and

Women’s rights, too, were to be sacrificed to the greater national cause. Already by 1937, Japanese women were being exhorted to fulfill their patriotic duty by bearing more children and by espousing the slogans of the Greater Japanese Women’s Association. Nevertheless, Japan was extremely reluctant to mobilize women on behalf of the war effort. General Hideki Tojo (hee-DEK-ee TOH-joh), prime minister from 1941 to 1944, opposed female employment, arguing that “the weakening of the family system would be the weakening of the nation. . . . We are able to do our duties only because we have wives and mothers at home.”

Female employment increased during the war, but only in areas, such as the textile industry and farming, where women had traditionally worked. Instead of using women to meet labor shortages, the Japanese government brought in Korean and Chinese laborers.

The Bombing of Cities

BOMBING OF GERMANY The British failed to learn from their own experience, however, and soon retaliated by bombing Germany. Prime Minister Winston Churchill (1874–1965) and his advisers believed that destroying German communities would break civilian morale and bring victory. Major bombing raids began in 1942 under the direction of Arthur Harris, the wartime leader of the British air force’s Bomber Command, which was rearmed with four-engine heavy bombers capable of taking the war into the center of occupied Europe. On May 31, 1942, Cologne became the first German city to be subjected to an attack by a thousand bombers.

The destruction of smaller cities did produce morale problems as rumors of social collapse spread quickly in these communities (see the comparative illustration on p. 753). Nevertheless, morale was soon restored. In any case, war production in these areas seems to have been little affected by the raids.

LUFTWAFFE ATTACKS The first sustained use of civilian bombing contradicted Douhet’s theory. Beginning in early September 1940, the German Luftwaffe subjected London and many other British cities and towns to nightly air raids, making the Blitz (as the British called the German air raids) a national experience. Londoners took the first heavy blows and set the standard for the rest of the British population by refusing to panic. But London morale was helped by the fact that German raids were widely dispersed over a very large city. Smaller communities were more directly affected by the devastation. On November 14, 1940, for example, the Luftwaffe destroyed hundreds of shops and 100 acres of the city center of Coventry. The destruction of smaller cities did produce morale problems as rumors of social collapse spread quickly in these communities (see the comparative illustration on p. 753). Nevertheless, morale was soon restored. In any case, war production in these areas seems to have been little affected by the raids.

The war caused a reversal in Nazi attitudes toward women. Nazi resistance to female employment declined as the war progressed and more and more men were called up for military service. Nazi magazines now proclaimed, “We see the woman as the eternal mother of our people, but also as the working and fighting comrade of the man.” But the number of women working in industry, agriculture, commerce, and domestic service increased only slightly. The total number of employed women in September 1944 was 14.9 million, compared to 14.6 million in May 1939. Many women, especially those of the middle class, resisted regular employment, particularly in factories. Even the introduction of labor conscription for women in January 1943 failed to achieve much as women found ingenious ways to avoid the regulations.
killed thousands of civilians. The ferocious bombing of Dresden for three days in 1945 (February 13–15) created a firestorm that may have killed as many as 35,000 inhabitants and refugees. Even some Allied leaders began to criticize what they saw as the unnecessary terror bombing of German cities.

Germany suffered enormously from the Allied bombing raids. Millions of buildings were destroyed, and possibly half a million civilians died from the raids. Nevertheless, it is highly unlikely that Allied bombing sapped the morale of the German people. Instead, Germans, whether pro-Nazi or anti-Nazi, fought on stubbornly, often driven simply by a desire to live. Nor did the bombing destroy Germany’s industrial capacity. The Allied Strategic Bombing survey revealed that the production of war materiel actually increased between 1942 and 1944. Even in 1944 and 1945, Allied raids cut German armaments production by only 7 percent. Nevertheless, the widespread destruction of transportation systems and fuel supplies made it extremely difficult for the new materials to reach the German military.

**THE BOMBING OF JAPAN: THE ATOMIC BOMB** In Japan, the bombing of civilians reached a new level with the use of the first atomic bomb. Japan was especially vulnerable to air raids because its air force had been virtually destroyed in the course of the war and its crowded cities were built of flimsy materials. Attacks on Japanese cities by the new American B-29 Superfortresses, the biggest bombers of the war, began in June 1944. By the summer of 1945, many of Japan’s industries had been destroyed, along with one-fourth of its dwellings. After the Japanese government ordered the mobilization of all people between the ages of thirteen and sixty into the People’s Volunteer Corps, President Truman and his advisers feared that Japanese fanaticism might mean a million American casualties. This concern led them to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima (August 6) and Nagasaki (August 9). The destruction was incredible. Of 76,000 buildings near the center of the explosion in Hiroshima, 70,000 were flattened, and 140,000 of the city’s 400,000 inhabitants died by the end of 1945. Over the next five years, another 50,000 had perished from the effects of radiation. The dropping of the first atomic bomb marked the start of the nuclear age.

After the war, Truman’s decision to approve the use of nuclear weapons to compel Japan to surrender was harshly criticized, not only for causing thousands of civilian casualties but also for introducing a frightening new weapon that could threaten the survival of the human race. Some have even charged that Truman’s real purpose in ordering the nuclear strikes was to intimidate the Soviet Union. Defenders of the decision argue that the human costs of invading the Japanese home islands would have been infinitely higher had the bombs not been dropped, and that the Soviet Union would have had ample time to consolidate its control over Manchuria.
World War II was the most destructive war in history. Much had been at stake. Nazi Germany followed a worldview based on racial extermination and the enslavement of millions in order to create an Aryan racial empire. The Japanese, fueled by extreme nationalist ideals, also pursued dreams of empire in Asia that led to mass murder and untold devastation. Fighting the Axis Powers in World War II required the mobilization of millions of ordinary men and women in the Allied countries who rose to the occasion and struggled to preserve a different way of life. As Winston Churchill once put it, “War is horrible, but slavery is worse.”

The Costs of World War II

The costs of World War II were enormous. At least 21 million soldiers died. Civilian deaths were even greater and are now estimated at around 40 million, of whom more than 28 million were Russian and Chinese. The Soviet Union experienced the greatest losses: 10 million soldiers and 19 million civilians. In 1945, millions of people around the world faced starvation; in Europe, 100 million people depended on food relief of some kind.

Millions of people had also been uprooted by the war and became “displaced persons.” Europe alone may have had 30 million displaced persons, many of whom found it hard to return home. After the war, millions of Germans were expelled from the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, and millions more were ejected from former eastern German territories turned over to Poland, all of which seemed reasonable to people who had suffered so much at the hands of the Germans. In Asia, millions of Japanese were returned from the former Japanese empire to Japan, while thousands of Korean forced laborers returned to Korea.

Devastation was everywhere. Most areas of Europe had been damaged or demolished, China was in shambles after eight years of conflict, the Philippines had suffered heavy damage, and large parts of the major cities in Japan had been destroyed in air raids. Millions of tons of shipping now lay beneath the seas; factories, farms, transportation systems, bridges, and dams lay in ruins. The total monetary cost of the war has been estimated at $4 trillion. The economies of most belligerents, with the exception of the United States, were left drained and on the brink of disaster.

World War II and the European Colonies: Decolonization

As we saw in Chapter 24, movements for independence had begun in earnest in Africa and Asia in the years between World War I and World War II. After World War II, these movements grew even louder. The ongoing subjugation of peoples by colonial powers seemed at odds with the goals the Allies had pursued in overthrowing the repressive regimes of Germany, Italy, and Japan. Then, too, indigenous peoples everywhere took up the call for national self-determination and expressed their determination to fight for independence.

The ending of the European powers’ colonial empires did not come easy, however. In 1941, Churchill had said, “I have not become His Majesty’s Chief Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.” Britain and France in particular seemed reluctant to let go of their colonies, but for a variety of reasons both eventually gave in to the obvious—the days of empire were over.

During the war, the Japanese had already humiliated the Western states by overrunning their colonial empires. In addition, colonial soldiers who had fought on behalf of the Allies (India, for example, had contributed large numbers of troops to the British Indian Army) were well aware that Allied war aims included the principle of self-determination for the peoples of the world. Equally important to the process of decolonization after the war, the power of the European states had been destroyed by the exhaustive struggles of World War II. The greatest colonial empire builder, Great Britain, no longer had the energy or the wealth to maintain its colonial empire. Given the combination of circumstances, a rush of decolonization swept the world after World War II.

The Allied War Conferences

The total victory of the Allies in World War II was not followed by a real peace but by the emergence of a new conflict known as the Cold War, which dominated world politics until the end of the 1980s. The Cold War grew out of military, political, and ideological differences, especially between the Soviet Union and the United States, that became apparent at the Allied war conferences held in the last years of the war. Although Allied leaders were mostly preoccupied with ending the war, they were also strongly motivated by differing, and often conflicting, visions of the postwar world.

THE CONFERENCE AT TEHRAN

Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill, the leaders of the Big Three of the Grand Alliance, met at Tehran, the capital of Iran, in November 1943 to decide the future course of the war. Their major tactical decision concerned the final assault on Germany. Stalin and Roosevelt argued successfully for an American-British invasion of the Continent through France, which they scheduled for the spring of 1944. The acceptance of this plan had important consequences. It meant that Soviet and British-American forces would meet in defeated Germany along a north-south dividing line and that eastern Europe would most likely be liberated by Soviet forces. The Allies also agreed to a partition of postwar Germany until denazification could take place.

THE YALTA CONFERENCE

By the time of the conference at Yalta in southern Russia in February 1945, the defeat of Germany was a foregone conclusion. The Western powers, which had earlier believed that the Soviets were in a weak position, now faced the reality of 11 million Red Army soldiers taking possession of eastern and central Europe. Like
Churchill, Stalin was still operating under the notion of spheres of influence. He was deeply suspicious of the Western powers and desired a buffer to protect the Soviet Union from possible future Western aggression. At the same time, however, Stalin was eager to obtain economically important resources and strategic military positions. Roosevelt by this time was moving away from the notion of spheres of influence toward the more Wilsonian idea of self-determination. He called for “the end of the system of unilateral action, exclusive alliances, and spheres of influence.” The Grand Alliance approved a declaration on liberated Europe. This was a pledge to assist Europeans in the creation of “democratic institutions of their own choice.” Liberated countries were to hold free elections to determine their political systems.

At Yalta, Roosevelt sought Soviet military help against Japan. The atomic bomb was not yet assured, and American military planners feared the possibility of heavy losses in amphibious assaults on the Japanese home islands. Roosevelt therefore agreed to Stalin’s price for military assistance against Japan: possession of Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands, as well as two warm-water ports and railroad rights in Manchuria.

The creation of the United Nations was a major American concern at Yalta. Roosevelt hoped to ensure the participation of the Big Three powers in a postwar international organization before difficult issues divided them into hostile camps. After a number of compromises, both Churchill and Stalin accepted Roosevelt’s plans for a United Nations organization and set the first meeting for San Francisco in April 1945.

The issues of Germany and eastern Europe were treated less decisively. The Big Three reaffirmed that Germany must surrender unconditionally and created four occupation zones (see Map 25.3). German reparations were set at $20 billion. A compromise was also worked out in regard to Poland. Stalin agreed to free elections in the future to determine a new government. But the issue of free elections in eastern Europe caused a serious rift between the Soviets and the Americans. The principle was that eastern European governments would be freely elected, but they were also supposed to be pro-Soviet. As Churchill expressed it, “The Poles will have their future in their own hands, with the single limitation that they must honestly follow in harmony with their allies, a policy friendly to Russia.”

This attempt to reconcile two irreconcilable goals was doomed to failure, as soon became evident at the next conference of the Big Three powers.

THE POTSDAM CONFERENCE Even before the conference at Potsdam took place in July 1945, Western relations with the Soviets were deteriorating rapidly. The Grand Alliance had been a collaboration of necessity in which ideological incompatibility had been subordinated to the pragmatic concerns of the war. The Allies’ only common aim was the defeat of Nazism. Once this aim had been accomplished, the many differences that antagonized East-West relations came to the surface.

The Potsdam conference of July 1945 consequently began under a cloud of mistrust. Roosevelt had died on April 12 and had been succeeded as president by Harry Truman. During the conference, Truman received word that the atomic bomb had been successfully tested. Some historians have argued that this knowledge resulted in Truman’s stiffened resolve against the Soviets. Whatever the reasons, there was a new coolness in the relations between the Soviets and Americans. At Potsdam, Truman demanded free elections throughout eastern Europe. Stalin responded, “A freely elected government in any of these east European countries would be anti-Soviet, and that we cannot allow.” After a bitterly fought and devastating war, Stalin sought absolute military security. To him, it could be gained only by the presence of Communist states in eastern Europe. Free elections might result in governments hostile to the Soviets. By the middle of 1945, only an invasion by Western forces could undo developments in eastern Europe, and after the world’s most destructive conflict had ended, few people favored such a policy.

EMERGENCE OF THE COLD WAR As the war slowly receded into the past, the reality of conflicting ideologies had reappeared. Many in the West interpreted Soviet policy as part of a worldwide Communist conspiracy. The Soviets viewed Western, especially American, policy as nothing less than
global capitalist expansionism or, in Leninist terms, economic imperialism. Vyacheslav Molotov (v'yach-slav Molotov), the Russian foreign minister, referred to the Americans as “insatiable imperialists” and “war-mongering groups of adventurers.” In March 1946, in a speech to an American audience, the former British prime minister Winston Churchill declared that “an iron curtain” had “descended across the continent,” dividing Europe into two hostile camps. Stalin branded Churchill’s speech a “call to war with the Soviet Union.” Only months after the world’s most devastating conflict had ended, the world seemed once again to be bitterly divided.

**CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Between 1933 and 1939, Europeans watched as Adolf Hitler rebuilt Germany into a great military power. For Hitler, military power was an absolute prerequisite for the creation of a German racial empire that would dominate Europe and the world for generations to come. During that same period, the nation of Japan fell under the influence of military leaders who conspired with right-wing forces to push a program of expansion at the expense of China and the Soviet Union as well as territories in Southeast Asia. The ambitions of Germany in Europe and those of Japan in Asia led to a global
conflict that became the most devastating war in human history.

The Axis nations, Germany, Italy, and Japan, proved victorious during the first two years of the war, which began after the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. By 1942, the war had begun to turn in favor of the Allies, an alliance of Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States. The Japanese advance was ended at the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway in 1942. In February 1943, the Soviets won the Battle of Stalingrad and began a push westward. By mid-1943, Germany and Italy had been driven out of North Africa; in June 1944, Rome fell to the Allies, and an Allied invasion force landed in Normandy in France. After the Soviets linked up with British and American forces in April 1945, Hitler committed suicide, and the war in Europe came to an end. After atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, the war in Asia also ended.

During its domination of Europe, the Nazi empire brought death and destruction to many, especially Jews, minorities, and others that the Nazis considered racially inferior peoples. The Japanese New Order in Asia, while claiming to promote a policy of “Asia for the Asians” also brought economic exploitation, severe hardship, and often death for the peoples under Japanese control. All sides bombed civilian populations, making World War II as devastating for civilians as for the frontline soldiers.

If Hitler had been successful, the Nazi New Order, built on authoritarianism, racial extermination, and the brutal oppression of peoples, would have meant a triumph of barbarism and the end of freedom and equality, which, however imperfectly realized, had become important ideals in Western civilization.

The Nazis lost, but only after tremendous sacrifices and costs. Much of European civilization lay in ruins, and the old Europe had disappeared forever. Europeans, who had been accustomed to dominating the world at the beginning of the twentieth century, now watched helplessly at mid-century as the two new superpowers created by the two world wars took control of their destinies. Even before the last battles had been fought, the United States and the Soviet Union had arrived at different versions of the postwar European world. No sooner had the war ended than their differences gave rise to a new and potentially even more devastating conflict known as the Cold War.

**CHAPTER TIMELINE**

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CHAPTER REVIEW

Upon Reflection

Q How do you account for the early successes of the Germans from 1939 to 1941?

Q How did the Nazis attempt to establish a New Order in Europe after their military victories, and what were the results of their efforts?

Q How did the attempt to arrive at a peace settlement after World War II lead to the beginnings of a new conflict known as the Cold War?

Key Terms

totalitarian state (p. 726)
squadristi (p. 727)
appeasement (p. 734)
Blitzkrieg (p. 737)
unconditional surrender (p. 739)
Nazi New Order (p. 743)
Final Solution (p. 745)
Einsatzgruppen (p. 745)
decolonization (p. 754)
Cold War (p. 754)

Suggested Reading


Go to the CourseMate website at www.cengagebrain.com for additional study tools and review materials—including audio and video clips—for this chapter.