

AP REVIEW 1914-PRESENT

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY IN CHUNKS

A. THE WORLD WAR I ERA

By 1914, most of the world was either colonized by Europe, or was once colonized by Europe, and so everyone around the world was connected to the rowdiness on that small but powerful continent. Tragically, that meant that when European powers were at war with each other, the colonies were dragged into the fight. To be sure, European rivalries had had a global impact for centuries, particularly during the colonial period. The Seven Years' War in the eighteenth century between the French and British, for example, impacted their colonial holdings everywhere. France, too, jumped in to help the US in its revolution against the British.

But in 1914, a major fight among European powers had a far more substantial and destructive effect. The industrialization had given Europe some powerful new weapons plus the ships and airplanes that could be used to deliver them. Large industrial cities had millions of people, creating the possibility of massive casualties in a single bombing raid. A rise in nationalism fed a military build-up and the desire to use it. And after the unifications of Germany and Italy, Europe simply had too many power-grabbing rivals. Not a good combination of factors if you like peace.

Shifting Alliances: A Prewar Tally of European Countries

In the decades leading up to World War I, the European powers tried to keep the balance of power in check by forming **alliances**. The newly unified Germany quickly gained industrial might, but it was worried about France. So, before he resigned from office, Otto von Bismarck created and negotiated the **Triple Alliance** among Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy in the 1880s. On the side, Bismarck also had a pact with Russia.

After William II ousted Bismarck from power in 1890, he ignored Russia and allowed previous agreements between the two countries to wither. With Russia now on its own, France jumped at the chance to ally itself with Russia. Because France is to the west and Russia is to the east of Germany, a Franco-Russo alliance helped keep Germany in check. By 1907, Britain had also signed friendly agreements with France and Russia, creating what became known as the Triple Entente. The countries became so obsessed with a possible war that their generals were already putting plans into motion in the event of an outbreak. The **Schlieffen Plan** in Germany, for example, called for a swift attack on France through Belgium, an officially neutral country that had a growing relationship with Britain. Clearly, everyone was anticipating the possibility of an outbreak.

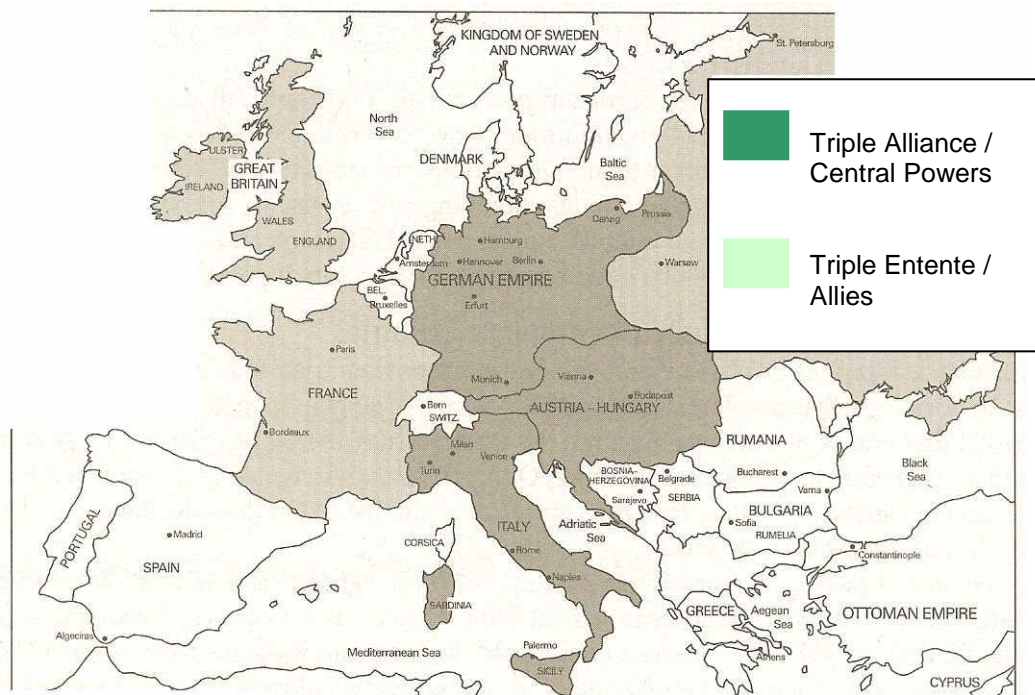
Trouble in the Balkans: Europe in a Tizzy

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the Ottoman Empire was still around, but it was in such bad shape that Europeans were calling it the "sick man of Europe." It kept losing territory to its neighbors. After Greece won its independence in 1829, the Slavic areas to the north of Greece began to win their independence as well, including Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro. Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, were under the control of Austria-Hungary, as decided by the Berlin Conference of 1878, the same conference that led to the European scramble to colonize Africa. Serbia wanted Bosnia and Herzegovina for itself. To complicate matters, Russia was allied with Serbia, its fellow Slavic country.

Memorize This: IT WAS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT **ARCHDUKE FRANCIS FERDINAND** OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARY VISITED SARAJEVO, THE CAPITAL OF BOSNIA, IN 1914. WHILE THERE, **GAVRILO PRINCIP**, A SERBIAN NATIONALIST, SHOT AND KILLED THE ARCHDUKE AND HIS WIFE. IN AN AGE WHEN EUROPE WAS SO TIGHTLY WOUND IN ALLIANCES, SUSPICION, AND RIVALRY THAT A SNEEZE COULD HAVE SET OFF A WAR, THE DOMINOS QUICKLY STARTED TO FALL. AUSTRIA-HUNGARY DECLARED WAR ON SERBIA. RUSSIA, ALLIED WITH SERBIA, THEN DECLARED WAR ON AUSTRIA-HUNGARY. BECAUSE RUSSIA AND AUSTRIA-HUNGARY WERE ON OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE TRIPLE ENTENTE-TRIPLE ALLIANCE DIVIDE, THE PRESSURE MOUNTED ON FRANCE, ITALY, GERMANY, AND BRITAIN TO JOIN IN. BRITAIN WAS RELUCTANT TO HONOR ITS COMMITMENTS AT FIRST, BUT WHEN GERMANY IMPLEMENTED THE SCHLIEFFEN PLAN AND STORMED THROUGH BELGIUM TOWARD FRANCE, BRITAIN WAS ON BOARD. ITALY, ON THE OTHER HAND, MANAGED TO WIGGLE OUT OF ITS OBLIGATIONS AND DECLARE ITSELF

NEUTRAL, BUT THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE TOOK ITS PLACE, FORMING WITH GERMANY AND AUSTRIA-HUNGARY AN ALLIANCE CALLED THE CENTRAL POWERS.

World War I: The War to End All Wars?



Europe on the Eve of World War I

Since the European powers had colonies or strong economic ties with most of the rest of the world, the original gunshot by a Serbian nationalist resulted in widespread casualties across the globe. More than 40 countries found themselves taking up arms, including Japan, which fought on the side of Britain, France, and Russia, now known as the Allies. In 1915, Italy managed to complete its about-face and joined the Allies as well.

As for the United States, it declared its neutrality at first, preferring to focus on its own internal affairs, a policy known as isolationism. But when a German submarine (wow, technology came a long way quickly) sank the British passenger liner *The Lusitania* in 1915, killing more than 100 Americans who happened to be on board, public opinion in the United States shifted away from isolationism. The next year, as Germany tried to cut off all shipments to Britain, thereby starving the island country, it attacked U.S. merchant ships en route to Britain, further fueling American sentiment toward war. Then the **Zimmerman telegram**-a secret message sent between German diplomats suggesting that Mexico might want to join forces with Germany and thereby regain the territory it had lost to the United States in the Mexican-American War of 1846-was intercepted by the United States. The public and President Wilson flipped out. On April 2, 1917, America entered the war on the side of the allies. On November 11, 1918, after brutal battles, trench warfare, and enormous loss of life, Germany and the Central Powers finally gave up.

The consequences of the war were staggering. Eight and a half million soldiers were killed. Untold millions of civilians perished. The social impact on the home front was substantial as well. Most governments took over industrial production during the war, while instituting price controls and rationing of products that were needed on the front lines. With huge numbers of men taking up arms, women moved into the factories to fill empty positions. This experience revved up the women's suffrage movement, and became the basis for a successful push by women in Britain and the United States to gain the vote after the war.

Of course, World War II didn't happen yet, so no one referred to the war as World War I. Instead, most people called it the Great War, mistakenly thinking that there would never again be one as big or bloody. Indeed, the war was so horrendous that commentators called it "the war to end all wars."

The Treaty of Versailles: Make the Germans Cry

Signed in 1919, the **Treaty of Versailles** brought an official end to World War I. It was extremely punitive against Germany, which was required to pay war **reparations**, release territory, and downsize its military. It also divided Austria-Hungary into separate nations, while creating others nations such as Czechoslovakia. The treaty represented a departure from **President Wilson's Fourteen Points**, which was less punitive toward Germany and more focused on establishing future peace and a workable balance of power. However, Wilson's proposal was not acceptable to the allies of the United States. Britain and France needed to justify the human and financial cost of the war and the duration of the war to their own demoralized populations. So the victors blamed the war on Germany and then forced Germany to sign an extremely punitive treaty over the objections of the United States. The victors hoped that as a result of the treaty, Germany would never threaten the security of Europe again. Instead, the treaty caused widespread economic problems and resentment in Germany, which created conditions for the later rise of the nationalistic **Adolf Hitler**.

The League of Nations: Can't We All Just Get Along?

President Wilson was the voice of moderation at Versailles. He had hoped that the postwar treaties would be an opportunity to establish international laws and accepted standards of fairness in international conduct. His Fourteen Points speech addressed these issues and called for the creation of a joint council of nations called the **League of Nations**. The leaders at Versailles agreed with the idea in principle, and they set out to create the organization to preserve peace and establish humanitarian goals. The United States openly rejected it, a major embarrassment for President Wilson, who couldn't persuade the isolationist U.S. Congress that the league was a step toward peace. (Congress said it would lead to further foreign entanglements.)

The Russian Revolution: Czar Out, Lenin In

The Russian Revolution occurred even before the war had ended. Russia entered the war with the world's largest army, though not the world's most powerful one, because the nation was not nearly as industrialized as its Western neighbors. Very quickly, the army began to suffer large-scale losses and found itself short on food, munitions, and good leadership. In February 1917, in the face of rising casualties and food shortages, **Czar Nicholas II** was forced to abdicate his throne. The Romanov Dynasty came to an end. Under Alexander Kerensky, a provisional government was established. It was ineffectual, in part because it shared power with the local councils, called soviets, which represented the interests of workers, peasants, and soldiers. Although the provisional government affirmed natural rights (such as the equality of citizens and the principle of religious toleration--Changes that were inconceivable under the czar), it wanted to continue war against Germany in the hope that Russia could then secure its borders and become a liberal democracy. But the working classes, represented by the **soviets**, were desperate to end the suffering from the war.

By 1918, the soviets rallied behind the socialist party, now called the **Bolsheviks**. Amid this turmoil, **Vladimir Lenin**, the Marxist leader of the party, mobilized the support of the workers and soldiers. He issued his April Theses, which demanded peace, land for peasants, and power to the soviets. Within six months, the Bolsheviks took command of the government. Under his vision of mass **socialization**, Lenin rigidly set about nationalizing the assets and industries of Russia. In March 1918, the soviets signed an armistice with Germany, the **Treaty of Brest-Litovsk**, which ceded a huge chunk of western Russia to Germany, and Russia thereby dropped out of World War I. It therefore wasn't part of the negotiations during the Treaty of Versailles.

In the Baltic republics of what would soon be called the Soviet Union, and in the Ukraine, Siberia, and other parts of the former Russian Empire, counterrevolutionary revolts broke out. The Bolsheviks faced nonstop skirmishes between 1918 and 1921. To put down these struggles, the Bolsheviks created the **Red Army**, a military force under the command of **Leon Trotsky**. By 1918, the Red Army was a sizeable force, and with the support of the peasants, it defeated the counterrevolutionaries. But the counterrevolution had two lasting implications. First, the prolonged civil war deepened the distrust between the new Marxist state and its western neighbors, who had supported the counterrevolutionaries. And second, the Bolsheviks now had a very powerful army, the Red Army, at its disposal.

Here Come the Turks: The Sick Man of Europe Is Put Out of His Misery

The Ottoman Empire, already on its last legs, made a fatal mistake by joining the losing Central Powers of World War I. In the peace negotiations, it lost most of its remaining land, and was therefore ripe for attack from the Greeks, who picked up arms in 1919. **Mustafa Kemal**, who later became known as **Ataturk**, "the Father of the Turks," led successful military campaigns against the Greeks, and then overthrew the Ottoman sultan. In 1923, Ataturk became the first president of modern Turkey. He successfully secularized the overwhelmingly Muslim nation, introduced western-style dress and customs (abolishing the fez), changed the alphabet from Arabic to Latin, set up a parliamentary system (which he dominated), changed the legal code from Islamic to Western, and set Turkey on a path toward Europe as opposed to the Middle East. However, he instituted these reforms against opposition, and sometimes was ruthless in his determination to institute change.

B. THE WORLD WAR II ERA

Even though World War II didn't get started until 1939, its causes were already well underway in the 1920s. In some ways, World War II isn't a separate war from World War I, but more simply, Great War Part II.

Stalin: The Soviet Union Goes Totalitarian

Once the Soviets removed themselves from World War I, they concentrated on their own domestic problems. Lenin first instituted the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the early 1920s, which had some capitalistic aspects, such as allowing farmers to sell portions of their grain for their own profit. The plan was successful in agriculture, but Lenin didn't live long enough to chaperone its expansion into other parts of the Soviet economy. When Lenin died, the leadership of the Communist Party shifted to **Joseph Stalin**.

Stalin believed the NEP was ridiculously slow, so he discarded it. Instead, he imposed his **Five Year Plans**, which called for expedient agricultural production by ruthlessly taking over private farms and combining them into state-owned enterprises—a process known as **collectivization**—and construction of large, nationalized factories. This process was achieved in the name of communism, but it was really totalitarianism. The people didn't share in the power or the profits, and had no choices regarding participation. Untold numbers died fighting to protect their farms. Even more died in famines that resulted when Stalin usurped crops to feed government workers at the expense of the farmers themselves.

Stalin's plans successfully industrialized the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), the formal name for the Soviet Union, and improved economic conditions for the country as a whole, but Stalin relied on terror tactics, such as a secret police force, bogus trials, and assassinations. These murders peaked between 1936 and 1938. Collectively, they are sometimes referred to as the "**Great Purge**" because the government systematically killed so many of its enemies. Stalin also established labor camps to punish anyone who opposed him. It's hard to know for sure how many Soviet citizens were imprisoned or killed during the 1930s, especially because so many died of famines during the collectivization process, but all historians agree that millions of Soviets were slaughtered under Stalin's direction.

The Great Depression: Capitalism Crashes, Germany Burns

World War I was shockingly expensive. Countries spent more than \$180 billion on armaments, boats, and trench warfare. Europe spent an additional \$150 billion rebuilding. The massive scale of the war meant massive spending, at a level that nations had never experienced previously, and in the years following World War I, capitalism financed most of the recovery. As a consequence, the financial headquarters of the world shifted from London to New York, which had become a major center of credit to Europe during and after the war. In other words, Americans lent Europeans money, and lots of it.

In particular, the economies of two countries relied on American credit: France and Germany.

France had loaned huge sums of money to Russia, its prewar ally, but the Bolshevik government refused to honor the czar's debts, leaving France almost out of luck, except that Germany owed it a bunch of cash as well. Germany experienced extreme financial hardship because of the wartime reparations they were required to make under the Treaty of Versailles. Germany used American credit to pay its reparations by issuing I.O.U.'s to countries like France. France took these "payments," backed up by American credit, and spent them on rebuilding its economy. From 1924 to 1929, this arrangement

looked great with growth in both the United States and European economies. But in many ways, the growth was artificial, based on loans that were never going to be repaid.

When the U.S. stock market crashed in October 1929, a spiral of monetary and fiscal problems called the **Great Depression** quickly escalated into an international catastrophe, and shattered the illusion of financial health in Europe. American banks immediately stopped extending credit. The effect was that Europe ran out of money, which it never really had in the first place. Germany couldn't pay its reparations without American credit, so France had no money either.

The depths of the depression were truly staggering. The United States and Germany were hit hardest. In both countries, almost one-third of the available workforce was eventually unemployed. In the United States, out-of-work Americans rejected the dominant Republican party and in 1932 elected Democrat Franklin Roosevelt as president in a landslide election. But other countries had much more fragile political structures. In places where democracy was new after WWI, the people lost confidence quickly in the democratic system and turned to **fascism**.

Fascism Gains Momentum

Between the First and Second World Wars, fascist parties emerged across Europe. They did not possess identical sets of beliefs, but they held a few important ideas in common. The main idea of fascism was to destroy the will of the individual in favor of "the people." Fascists wanted a unified society (as did the communists), but they weren't concerned with eliminating private property or class distinctions (the principal aim of communists). Instead, fascists pushed for another identity, one rooted in extreme nationalism, which often relied on racial identity.

Fascism in Italy: Another Step toward Another War

Italy was the first state to have a fascist government. The founder and leader was **Benito Mussolini**, who created the National Fascist Party in 1919. The Party paid squads, known as Blackshirts, to fight socialist and communist organizations, an action that won over the loyalty of both factory owners and landowners. By 1921, the party seated its first members in the Italian parliament.

Although the fascists held only a few seats in the legislature, Mussolini demanded that King Victor Emmanuel III name him and several other fascists to cabinet posts. To rally support, Mussolini organized his parliamentary thugs to march to Rome and possibly attempt to seize power. If the king had declared martial law and brought in the army, most believe that the fascists would have scattered. However, the king was a timid man-facing economically troubling times-who was not unsympathetic to the fascist program. So, he named Mussolini prime minister, and the fascist march on Rome turned into a celebration.

As the postwar economy failed to improve, Italy was demoralized. Mussolini faced very little opposition to his consolidation of political power. He dabbled as a parliamentary leader for several months before completely taking over Parliament in 1922. He then implemented a number of constitutional changes to ensure that the niceties of democracy no longer limited his actions, and, by 1926, Italy was transformed into a totalitarian fascist regime. To rally the people in a nationalistic cause, Italy started to focus on expansion, specifically in North Africa.

The Rise of Hitler

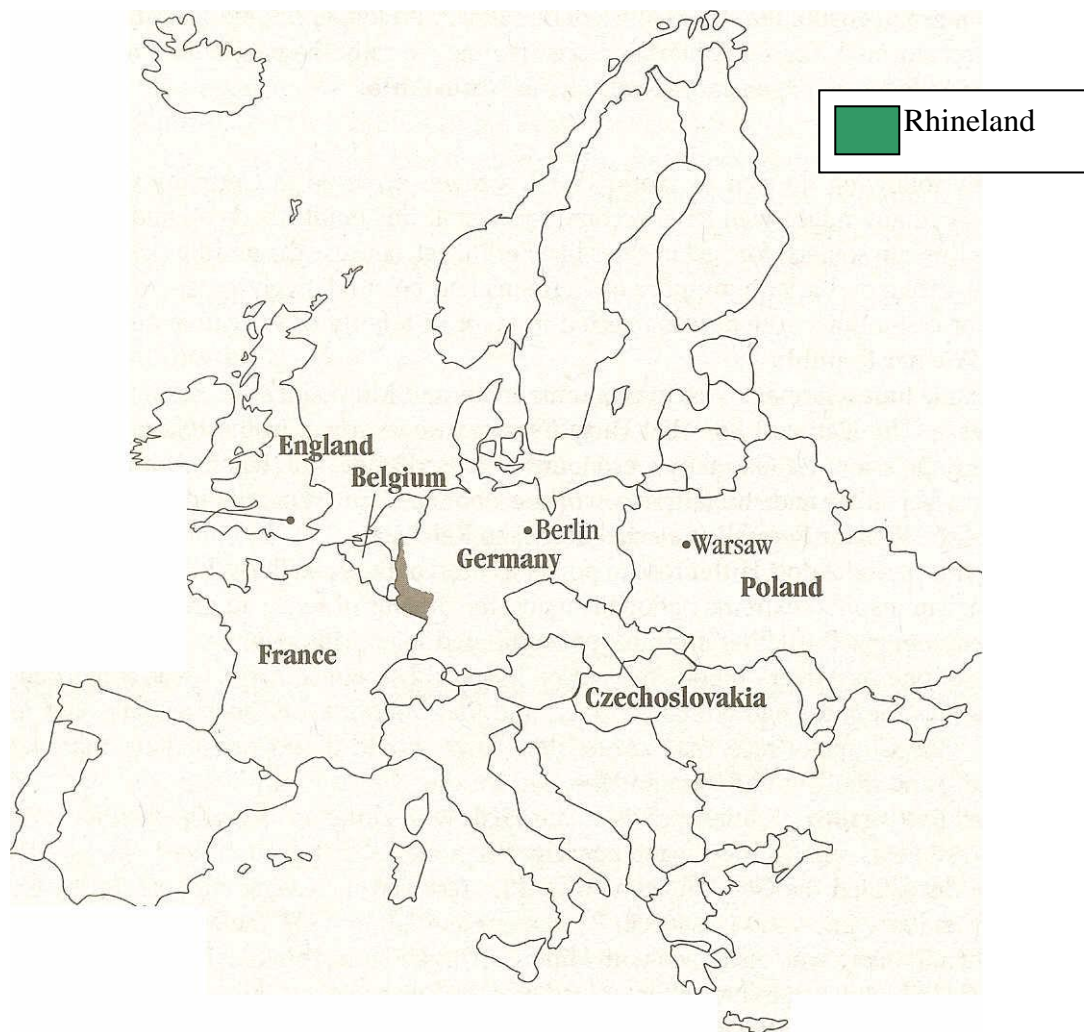
Immediately following the end of World War I, a revolt occurred in Germany when the emperor abdicated. Germany might well have become socialist at this point. Workers' and soldiers' councils (not unlike Russian soviets) formed in cities like Berlin. Yet, because the middle class in Germany was quite conservative and a large number of Germans had been relatively prosperous before the war, a socialist or communist system was rejected in favor of a fairly conservative democratic republic, called the **Weimar Republic**.

At the same time, Germany was in economic crisis, and Mussolini's success influenced Germany in many ways. The **National Socialist Party (Nazis)** rose to power in the 1920s, helped by the worldwide depression. As Germany's economy collapsed under the harsh reparations dictated by the Treaty of Versailles and the faltering world economy, German people increasingly rejected the solutions of the Weimar Republic's elected body, the Reichstag.

During this period **Adolf Hitler** rose to power as head of the Nazi Party. Like Mussolini's Fascism, Hitler's Nazism inspired extreme nationalism and the dreams of renewed greatness for a depressed and divided country. But Hitler's philosophies differed from Mussolini's in their emphasis on the superiority of one race over others. Well versed in Social Darwinism, Hitler was convinced that the Aryan race was the most highly evolved race, and that inferior races, such as Slavs and Jews, had "corrupted" the German "race." He argued that Jews should be deported (later that changed to "eliminated") and that Germans should take over Europe.

The Nazi Party gained political power in the 1920s with Hitler as its leader, or **Fuhrer**. At first, the Nazis received votes democratically and participated in the Reichstag. In the early 1930s, as the Great Depression devastated the German economy, Hitler received increasing support. In the election of 1930, the Nazi Party increased its seats in Parliament tenfold. By 1932, the Nazis dominated German government and many who disagreed with Hitler still backed him, thinking he was the country's only hope. In 1933, Hitler became chancellor, or leader of the Reichstag. He then seized control of the government, known under his fascist rule as the Third Reich, and set his eyes on conquering Europe.

Appeasement: Go Ahead, You Nut, We Trust Ya !



Europe on the Brink of World War II

In 1933, Hitler began to rebuild the German military. This was a clear violation of the Treaty of Versailles-which was'

specifically intended to limit future German aggression-but the other nations of Europe, especially Britain and France, chose not to object, fearing another war. Later that year, Germany again snubbed world opinion by withdrawing from the League of Nations.

Spain's Democracy Falls

Meanwhile, Spain, which had established a parliamentary democracy in 1931, was falling apart following the fall of the Spanish monarchy after WWI. In the summer of 1936, a group of army officers under the leadership of General Francisco Franco took control of large parts of Spain. Democratic loyalists organized to defend the state, and a brutal and divisive civil war ensued. Germany and Italy supported Franco's troops, called "nationalists." Although Franco was not a fascist, the Germans and Italians believed that the defeat of democracy in Spain was a step in the right direction.

France and Great Britain adopted a nonintervention policy and refused to aid the supporters of the Spanish democracy. By 1939, Franco's troops captured Madrid and installed a dictatorship in Spain that managed to stay neutral throughout the war that soon erupted in Europe. The message was clear:

Germany and Italy were more than willing to exercise their influence and support antidemocratic uprisings.

Meanwhile back in Germany in 1935, Hitler continued his policy of restoring Germany to its former world-power status by taking back the Rhineland, a region west of the Rhine River that had been taken away from Germany after World War I. Still, the rest of Europe stayed quiet. In 1937, he formed an alliance with the increasingly militant Japan. Then, in 1938, he annexed Austria and moved to reclaim the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia. At the Munich Conference of 1938, which included Hitler, Mussolini, and Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain of England, Hitler was given the Sudetenland, without the consent of Czechoslovakia, in return for the promise to cease his expansionist activities. This incredibly optimistic (some would say stupid) policy is known as appeasement. Chamberlain agreed to appease (or give Hitler what he wanted) as a means of avoiding war, believing German claims that it would be satisfied with Austria and the northern half of Czechoslovakia and would not expand further. And Hitler, in fact, did stop his expansion-for one whole year. In 1939, Hitler invaded the remaining territories in Czechoslovakia.

The rest of Europe was shocked, but they didn't do anything to kick the Nazis out of Czechoslovakia. Instead, in March 1939, while Italy was invading Albania, Britain and France signed a nonaggression pact with Greece, Turkey, Romania, and Poland that provided that if anyone of them were attacked, they'd all go to war.

Meanwhile, the Germans signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact in August of 1939. Stalin and Hitler agreed that Germany would not invade the Soviet Union if the Soviets stayed out of Germany's military affairs. Furthermore, the countries determined how Eastern Europe would be divided among them, giving Lithuania and eastern Poland to Germany and the remainder of Poland and Finland and the Baltic States to Russia. So Stalin got a measure of security, and Hitler got a clear path by which to take Poland. With a secure agreement with the Soviet Union, German forces marched into Poland. Two days later, Britain realized that all diplomacy had failed and declared war on Germany, and France reluctantly followed suit. World War II had begun.

Need to Read About Some More Aggression? How about Japan?

You should remember that after the Meiji Restoration in Japan, the country kicked out the Europeans and started industrializing quickly. You should also remember that by 1905, they had already defeated the Chinese and the Russians in wars for territory in and around Korea.

After World War I, in which Japan fought on the side of the Allies and was therefore one of the victors, Japan's economy and military really started to thrive. In 1915, during World War I, Japan sent a list of 21 demands to China, requiring China to give it trading rights and outright control over aspects of the government and economy, an act that was even more aggressive than some of the spheres of influence that had been established (and were still in effect) by the Europeans. In the 1920s, the country backtracked a little bit and focused on internal developments, softening its position toward China. But by 1930, the Great Depression severely impacted Japan and the Japanese militarists gained momentum, claiming that an empire would pull them out of the economic doldrums. In 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria, renaming it Manchukuo and establishing a colony there. After withdrawing from the League of Nations, Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany in

1936, thereby forming the beginnings of an alliance that would eventually lead to a more formal one during World War II. In 1937, Japanese troops invaded China, pillaging towns and cities as they made their way down the eastern shore. One of the worst offenses was the aptly named, "Rape of Nanjing," where in the city of Nanjing nearly 250,000 Chinese were slaughtered in a matter of a few weeks by occupying Japanese forces. Japan's war with China eventually merged into the global conflagration of World War II that later started to burn in Europe.

A Quick Review of World War II: Tens of Millions Dead

Hitler's forces were devastating. Their war tactic, known as **blitzkrieg** (literally "lightning war"), destroyed everything in its path with historically unprecedented speed. Poland's flat open plains were tragically well-suited for the German run. The swiftly moving German forces acquired so much territory in the west of Poland that Stalin was forced to mobilize quickly lest he lose the entire country to the German Reich. Within ten days, Germany and Russia had divided Poland between them. Hitler then focused on the western front. In early 1940, Germany assaulted Holland and Belgium. Two days later, German forces entered France. Within a year, the Axis power controlled most of continental Europe.

Hitler assumed that Great Britain would crumble quickly after the fall of her ally, France. But a new leader, **Winston Churchill**, replaced Britain's more diplomatically minded Chamberlain. Churchill proved to be a resolute and fierce prime minister. He refused to cut a deal with Germany, so Hitler launched a massive air bombing campaign in 1940 known as the **Battle of Britain**, which pitted the superior numbers of the German air force against the smaller numbers of the Royal Air Force. The British succeeded in keeping the German army out, and with their newly devised handy tool known as radar, they managed a successful, though costly, defense of the island.

In the meantime, Italy attacked Greece, but was unable to defeat the country until April 1941, when German armies rushed in to help out. The Nazi-Soviet Pact tacitly gave the Balkan state to Russia, so the takeover of Greece had serious consequences. Now that Germany had taken control of the Balkans, their previous agreement was moot, so they invaded the Soviet Union for good measure, advancing quickly. The resulting movement of men and supplies into the Soviet Union relieved pressure on the desperate British, the only Allied nation still fighting (other than the Soviet Union, of course).

Meanwhile in the Pacific, Japan continued its expansion in China and invaded **Indochina** (Vietnam). For trade reasons, the United States viewed this action as hostile, but the United States still didn't want to get involved in the war, so it froze Japanese assets in the United States and imposed sanctions instead. At the same time, Japan entered into the **Tripartite Pact** with Rome and Berlin, ensuring worldwide implications for a war that had, up until that time, been two regional wars. Japan also made war plans against the United States if the United States refused to lift sanctions against Japan. The United States didn't, and on December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed a U.S. naval station in Hawaii at **Pearl Harbor**. The United States was stunned, and promptly declared war against Japan, and in response, Germany declared war against the United States.

It took a while for the United States and Great Britain to coordinate a land attack against Germany because they needed a foothold in Europe from which to begin their assault. In the meantime, the allies fought the Japanese in the Pacific and Germans and Italians in Africa while the United States also secretly worked on its **Manhattan Project**-the development of an atomic bomb. By 1943, the United States and Britain were ready for their European offensive, and they started it by taking control of Italy. The next year, English, American, and Canadian forces launched their biggest offensive, landing on the French beaches of **Normandy** on what is now known as **D-day**. With the help of French resistance forces, Allied Forces battled their way across northern France in the summer of 1944 and liberated France.

On the opposite side of Europe, the Red Army won a stunning victory against the Germans at **Stalingrad** in 1942 and advanced steadily west for three years. By May 1945, the Allied forces closed in on Hitler's troops from the eastern and the western fronts until they reached Berlin, ending the European theatre of World War II. Hitler committed suicide.

The war in the Pacific continued to drag on for a few months. At great cost, the American forces defeated Japan from island to island in the South Pacific. But the Japanese refused to surrender, even though their fate was sealed. Believing that dropping an atomic bomb on Japan would end World War II quickly and result in fewer casualties than a prolonged war, President Truman of the United States ordered the dropping of an atomic bomb on the city of **Hiroshima** on August 6, 1945. The event marked the first time such a bomb had been used in warfare. The result was horrendous. More than 100,000 people were killed or injured and the city was completely leveled for miles. When the Japanese vowed to fight on, President Truman authorized the dropping of a second bomb on **Nagasaki** on August 9 with similar consequences. Japan finally surrendered and World War II was brought to a close.

The Consequences: What Didn't Change?

The close of World War II brought with it enormous global changes. Since they are so numerous, it's best to think about them in big chunks.

The Holocaust Revealed

Outside of Germany, few knew just how horrible the Nazi regime was until after the war was over. In an ongoing slaughter known now as the Holocaust, but known in Nazi Germany as "**The Final Solution**," millions of Jews who lived in Germany and German-occupied lands were rounded up, blamed for every conceivable problem in society, and methodically killed in gas chambers and firing lines, their bodies disposed of in ovens and mass graves. As many as 6 million Jews were killed, making the Holocaust one of the largest acts of genocide in history (in addition, as many as 6 million Poles, Slavs, gypsies, homosexuals, disabled people, and political dissidents were also killed in the Holocaust). When the news of the atrocity spread after the war, public sympathy for the creation of Israel as a homeland for Jews rose sharply. More on that later.

The Peace Settlement

The United States and the Soviet Union became superpowers. Germany was occupied by the Allies-more on that later too. War crimes tribunals were established to prosecute and sentence Nazi officials. Japan was forced to demilitarize and establish a democracy. It did. It also embraced capitalism and became an economic powerhouse within a decade, but this time friendly to the West.

Europe Torn to Shreds

In addition to a staggering loss of life (the Soviet Union alone lost more than 20 million soldiers and civilians), the infrastructure and communities of Europe were devastated. To help in the rebuilding effort, the United States instituted the **Marshall Plan**, offered to all European countries but ultimately only accepted by Western European nations, in which billions of dollars of American money flowed for reconstruction. The plan worked. The economies of Western Europe recovered in less than a decade.

The Decline of Colonialism

European imperialism was already on the wane before World War II, but the war affected attitudes about empire, and encouraged native populations to rise up against their oppressors. Much more on the decline of colonialism later.

Big Changes for Women

In many countries, women worked outside the home during the war, raising money to support themselves or their families, while also helping the war effort. In Britain alone, more than three-fourths of adult women under age 40 were employed during the war. After the war, many women kept their jobs, or sought higher education, or otherwise began to broaden their horizons.

The Creation of International Organizations

After World War II, the Allies believed that a network of international organizations could reduce the probability that such a great war would break out again. The first of these international organizations was the **United Nations**, created in the aftermath of World War II to replace what was seen as a failed League of Nations. Given more muscle than the League of Nations, the primary goal of the U.N. was simple: to mediate, and if necessary to intervene in, international disputes between nations. As time passed, the U.N. expanded beyond the realm of political conflicts and increasingly involved itself in the monitoring of human rights and other social problems. But in addition to the U.N., the **World Bank**, **International Monetary Fund**, and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (now known as the **World Trade Organization**), were formed to create and manage a more integrated global economy. The Allies believed that countries that were more connected economically would be less likely to invade one another.

The Start of the Cold War

Although they were allies during the war, the United States and the Soviet Union had very different world views. One was a democracy and capitalist, the other a totalitarian communist nation. Neither wanted the other to spread its influence beyond its borders, so even before the war ended, they were strategizing on how to contain each other. The strategizing lasted for nearly 50 years, and the following section in this chapter explains the consequences.