Chapter 26

World War II and Its Aftermath, 1931-1949

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. Introduction

On June 22, 1940 French delegates signed an armistice accepting the defeat of France by Nazi Germany. After a six-week war, Germany dominated the European continent. To celebrate his victories, Hitler called for the rebuilding of German cities in grandiose style. Five years later, Hitler was defeated and Germany lay in ruins. From the rubble was emerging a new Europe divided into two opposing camps: western Europe dominated by the U.S. and eastern Europe dominated by the Soviet Union.

II. The Coming of War

A. Introduction

Twenty years after the end of World War I, Europe and the world were again engulfed in total war. The main cause was Hitler’s desire for a German empire in eastern Europe.

B. An Uneasy Peace

The origins of the Second World War are tied to the settlements of the First World War. The treaties signed in 1919 created a fragile peace for several reasons. First, redrawing the map of Europe created as many territorial resentments as it settled. Germans resented the loss of territory to Poland, and Hungary resented the loss of territory to Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia. Second, the League of Nations was too weak to be the basis of the new international order. This was partly because it lacked the power to enforce its decisions and partly because several of the major powers were not members. Lastly, the settlements failed to satisfy several of the victors. Italy and Japan did not feel they had been adequately compensated for their participation in the war. Also, Japan saw the 1921 Washington Conference’s guarantee of China’s territorial integrity as a threat to Japan.

C. The 1930s: Prelude to World War II

The Great Depression increased international instability. First, the various countries used tariff barriers to protect their economies. Second, several leaders saw territorial expansion as a solution to their economic problems. In 1931, the Japanese seized Manchuria and in 1937 invaded China. In 1935 Italy invaded Ethiopia. In each case the League of Nations did little against the invaders. In 1933 Hitler withdrew from the League of Nations and began re-arming in violation of the restrictions imposed by the Versailles Treaty. In 1936 Hitler signed an alliance with Italy (Rome-Berlin Axis). Hitler
violated the Versailles Treaty in 1936 by sending troops into the Rhineland in 1938, by joining (Anschluss) Germany and Austria. In each case France and England did not act against Germany. By September of 1938, Europe was on the brink of war because Hitler demanded the German inhabited Sudentenland of Czechoslovakia. France and the Soviet Union pledged to protect Czechoslovakia. War was averted by British Prime Minister Chamberlain’s negotiation of the Munich Agreement giving Hitler the Sudentenland. Peace lasted only one year. On August 23, Hitler and Stalin agreed to the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact keeping the Soviet Union neutral in exchange for half of Poland and the Baltic States. On September 1, 1939 Germany invaded Poland. The British and French declared war against Germany.

D. Evaluating Appeasement

Since World War II there has been much debate on the issue of appeasing vs. stopping Hitler. Appeasement was not a policy of cowardice, but rather a reaction to the loss of human life in World War I. The Great Depression had left the western power weakened. Many people felt that anything to avoid another horrendous war was worth the price. As a businessman, Chamberlain felt that through negotiation the “best price” could be found to avoid war. Also, many people felt that a strong Germany could neutralize the threat of communist Russia.

III. Europe at War, 1939-1941

A. Introduction

Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. By the autumn of 1941, almost the entire continent was either allied or occupied by Nazi Germany.

B. A New Kind of Warfare

The German military successes were the result of the technology of modern offensive warfare that avoided the stalemate of trench fighting. Germany invaded Poland using a new offensive strategy commonly known as blitzkrieg warfare. It used aerial bombardment to destroy the enemy defenses and tanks to push through the enemy lines. Poland surrendered within ten days. Western Europe experienced the blitzkrieg in the Spring of 1940 when the German army invaded Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands and France. British and French forces were quickly trapped at Dunkirk. The British navy and civilian boats were only able to rescue them because the Royal Airforce held off the German Luftwaffe. On June 14, the German troops entered Paris and the French parliament turned power over to Marshal Philippe Pétain who set up a French government at Vichy and formerly surrendered to the Germans on June 22, 1940. In England the discredited Chamberlain was replaced by Winston Churchill as the head of a coalition government. Churchill refused to negotiate with Hitler. On July 10, Germans bombers began the Battle of Britain to destroy the RAF in preparation for a cross-channel invasion. Fortunately for the British, they had begun building up the RAF and the aerial defenses in 1935 and were capable of withstanding the German attacks. In September of 1940, Hitler postponed the invasion of Britain indefinitely.

C. The Invasion of the Soviet Union
Hitler’s plan for a German empire in Europe involved the destruction of the Soviet Union. In July of 1940, he ordered the military to plan for an invasion of the Soviet Union in April of 1941. The invasion was delayed, because Mussolini’s invasion of Greece and attack on the English colonies in North Africa failed. The Balkans were the major supplier for Germany’s oil and other materials needed for the war effort. Fearing that Mussolini’s failure would leave the Balkans vulnerable to British attack, Hitler invaded Yugoslavia and Greece in April 1941 and send German troops to North Africa.

The invasion of Russia took place on June 22, 1941. The German army smashed through the Russian defenses and by October was within eighty miles of Moscow. The Soviet Union was caught unprepared because Stalin refused to believe that Hitler would break the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact or to believe the intelligence warnings of the attack. Also helpful to the Germans was that the peoples of the western territories had suffered greatly under Stalin and welcomed the Germans. Several factors halted the German advance. First, the Germans had a difficult time supplying their over-stretched lines. Second, the Russian winter made the road impassable and the subzero temperatures killed men and froze machines. Third, German ravaging of the occupied zones stiffened resistance against the Germans. Despite the early losses, the Soviet war effort was saved because they were able to dismantle much of its industrial plants and ship them to Siberia were they were re-assembled and began out-producing Germany by 1943.

IV. The World at War, 1941-1945

A. Introduction

In December 1941, Japan attacked the United States and the European colonies in southeast Asia turning the war into a global conflict.

B. The Globalization of the War

World War II involved people outside of Europe from the beginning. Italy tried to expand in North Africa. Britain relied on materials and manpower from the colonies and dominions. Although the U.S. was officially neutral until December of 1941, it had been supplying goods to the British since March under the Lend-Lease Act. On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor and over the next few days attacked the American, British, and Dutch colonies in southeast Asia. On December 11, 1941, Germany also declared war on the U.S.

C. From Allied Defeat to Allied Victory

Until the second half of 1942, the allies remained on the defensive against Germany and Japan. The turning point on the Pacific came at the Battle of Midway on June 4, 1942 where the U.S. destroyed four Japanese carriers and the Japanese First Air Fleet. In Europe the turning point was at the Battle of Stalingrad (August 1942-January 1943). In their drive to take control of Caucasus oil fields, Hitler decided to attack Stalingrad which controlled the main waterway for transporting oil and food to the rest of the Soviet Union. The German and Soviet forces fought each other house by house, but by November the Russians had surrounded the Germans. Hitler refused to allow the General Von Paulus to surrender. By the time von Paulus surrendered, his army had been decimated. The Germans never recovered from the defeat. Now the allies went on the offensive. The RAF brought the war to German cities. In North Africa, the Germans
under General Rommel defeated the British at the Battle of El Alamein in October 1942, but a joint landing of British and American troops in French North Africa was able to defeat the Rommel’s forces in the Spring of 1943. In July 1943 the allies invaded Italy. Although Mussolini was overthrown, the Germans took control of Italy and the allied campaign got bogged down until 1944.

Meanwhile, the Russians pushed the Germans to the Polish border by the Spring of 1944. On June 6, 1944 the English and American forces began the invasion of France. By March of 1945, the Russians were approaching Berlin and the Anglo-American forces were at the Rhine. On May 2, Berlin surrendered to the Russians. Two days earlier Hitler had committed suicide. Germany formerly surrendered to the allies on May 7, 1945. In the Pacific, the Americans pushed the Japanese back island by island. The closer the Japanese homeland, the stiffer the resistance encountered by the Americans. Both sides suffered tens of thousands of casualties. At Okinawa 110,000 Japanese soldiers were killed and 50,000 Americans were killed or wounded along with an unknown number of Okinawans. By July 1945, the U.S. had blockaded Japan. Japan only surrendered after the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

V.  The Home Fronts

A. Introduction

While the war raged, European society was transformed to meet the needs of total war.

B. The Other Wars

During World War II the home front was not safe from the violence of war. Both allied and Nazi bombers targeted civilian populations. In occupied Europe, the willingness of Nazis to use brutal force against civilians, and the presence of German concentration camps served as a deterrent against civilians’ involvement in resistance activities. For example, when Czech agents murdered SS official Reinhard Heydrich, the Germans massacred the entire population of Lidice. Nevertheless resistance movements made up of both men and women disrupted transportation systems and delivered information to the allies. In France, once General DeGaule established the Free French provisional government, the French began more active participation in the resistance. In Yugoslavia, the struggle to free the country turned into a political and ethnic civil war. In Croatia, the fascist regime engaged in a savage campaign of ethnic homogenization against, Serbs, Muslims, and Jews. In other parts of Yugoslavia the royalist Chetnik resistance fought the Germans, engaged in slaughter of Muslims and Jews, and fought the communist Partisan Resistance led by Tito. In 1944, the Partisans joined the Soviet army in freeing Yugoslavia and assumed control of the country.

For many Europeans, war was brought home by the bombing raids against cities undertaken by both sides. In May 1942, the British destroyed Cologne and in July 1943 Hamburg. In occupied Europe, Nazi racial ideology determined the treatment of POWs and civilians. The Slavs were deemed by the Germans as racially inferior. In the Soviet Union and Poland, the political, economic and intellectual elite were executed and the ordinary people endured hard labor and starvation. Of 2.5 million Russia POW’s captured by the Germans in 1941, 2 million died of disease and starvation by the Spring of 1942. In western Europe, the population was considered of “Germanic stock” and most POWs survived the war. Because of the need for German men at the front and the
unwillingness of Hitler to mobilize women for the war effort, the Germans imported workers from eastern Europe to provide the needed labor for industry. These laborers had no rights and were starved and overworked. Their presence allowed the regime to avoid unpopular measures and cushion Germans from the impact of the war almost until the end.

C. Women’s Work

The obliteration of the distinction between home front and front lines meant the women participated in the war to an unprecedented degree. British women were fully mobilized for the war effort and worked in both war industries and in civilian defense. In the Soviet Union, women made up 80% of the agricultural labor and 50% of the industrial labor. By 1944, there were 246,000 Soviet women as soldiers in the front-lines. In Germany the use of foreign labor took the place of the mobilization of women. In the last year of the war, German women were mobilized for the labor force. The U.S. never fully mobilized its economy. The distinction between soldier and civilian was maintained. In the U.S. 70% of adult women remained outside of the labor force. U.S. cities also did not experience bombardment.

D. What Are We Fighting For?

All nations involved used propaganda campaigns to maintain the morale of their populations. The arts, entertainers, and mass media were recruited for morale building. The movie industry played an important role creating myths of national unity. Part of the propaganda involved the planning for reconstruction of a new Europe. In England the Beveridge Report called for the government to ensure public welfare and social justice. Churchill’s failure to consider these suggestions brought the Labor Party in June 1945. After the war the Beveridge Report became the basis for social welfare program across Europe. The radical reorientation of Europe to social democracy was caused by several factors. First, Europeans demanded that their war suffering be worthwhile. Second, the war discredited the political right and the Great Depression discredited the liberal-free market ideal. Third, the role of Communists and Socialists in the resistance enhanced their respectability. The end result was that Europeans concluded that they should use the power of the state to improve the lives of their citizens.

VI. A Dubious Peace, 1945-1949

A. Introduction

At the end of the war, much of Europe was a rubble heap. Post-war purges and deportations continued after 1945.

B. Devastation, Death, and Continuing War

By the end of the war, an estimated 55 million had been killed. Soviet deaths alone were estimated at 25 million. The death toll continued as the victors inflicted vengeance on the defeated. Over 11 million Germans were deported from Eastern
Europe and the Soviet Union. Poland was given part of eastern Germany and expelled the Germans living there. At least 2 million Germans died in the forced deportation. In the Soviet Union millions of people were deported to Siberia for collaboration with the Germans.

C. Imperial Encounters

World War II also sparked violent revolt in the colonies as the imperial powers tried to regain control. Japanese take over in Indonesia, Indochina, and Burma pushed the colonial elites out of power. In Indonesia the nationalist resistance movement succeeded in forcing the Dutch out in 1949. In Indochina, Ho Chi Minh fought for thirty years against the French and American attempts to gain control of the region. In Burma the nationalists fought against both the Japanese and the British. After the war, the British government of Clement Attlee relinquished India, Burma, and Palestine. In Palestine ethnic conflict continued to devastate the region through several Arab-Israeli wars. In India, the Muslim nationalists refused to be part of a Hindu dominated state. Partition of India between Muslim and Hindu states led to mass slaughter.

D. From Hot to Cold War

The major conflict of the post-war years was the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Stalin’s chief post-war concern was to secure the Soviet Union’s western boundary by establishing friendly regime in eastern Europe. U.S. President Roosevelt favored establishing democracies based on liberal free market principles. The question of post-war Europe included the issue of German repartitions and Polish boundaries. Disagreements over these questions were papered over at the Teheran and Yalta Conferences. Hoping to avoid a new depression, American and European economists drew up the Bretton Woods Agreement in 1944. It established the U.S. dollar as the world reserve currency and created the IMF and the World Bank to maintain currency stability and promote economic development. By the Yalta Conference, the Soviet army occupied eastern Europe and Yugoslavia was ruled by the communist partisans. Since the American and British leaders were unwilling to engage in armed conflict with the Soviet Union, they agreed to setting up of pro-Soviet regimes in Eastern Europe. They also agreed to have Germany pay reparations to the Soviet Union.

After the war, the U.S. reduced its military presence in Europe and the Soviet Union cut the size of its army. The issue of Germany led to the collapse of the war-time alliances. The British and Americans decided to give priority to German economic recovery. They joined their zones into a single economic unit and stopped reparations payment to the Soviet Union. In 1949 the American, English, and French zones were merged to create the Federal Republic of Germany. The Soviet zone became the German Democratic Republic. In 1947 the United States began the policy of containment with the introduction of the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan. The Truman Doctrine promised to provide aid the countries resisting subjugation. The Marshall Plan provided aid for the economic recovery of Europe. The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe refused to participate in the Marshall Plan. In 1949 the U.S. and nine West European nations formed NATO as a military alliance to block Soviet expansion. In 1949, the Soviet Union tested its first nuclear bomb and in 1955 the Soviet Union and the east European countries formed the Warsaw Pact. Europe was once again divided between hostile military blocks, now armed with nuclear weapons.
In eastern Europe the Cold War brought a tightening of Soviet control. In Yugoslavia Tito resisted Stalin’s effort to dictate policy. By 1948, Stalin had lost control of Yugoslavia. In order to avoid the rise of Tito imitators, Stalin purged the eastern European leadership. Prominent leaders were arrested, tortured and forced to confess to sabotage and espionage. Anyone who had contact with “the West” or international organizations was a suspect and was arrested.
TIMELINE

Insert the following events into the timeline. This should help you to compare important historical events chronologically.

Munich Conference held
Germany attacks Poland, initiates World War II
United States forms NATO
Allied forces land in Normandy
Japan attacks Pearl Harbor
Italy invades Ethiopia

1935
1938
1939
1941
1944
1949

TERMS, PEOPLE, EVENTS

The following terms, people, and events are important to your understanding of the chapter. Define each one.

appeasement  Neville Chamberlain  Munich Agreement
blitzkrieg  Rome-Berlin Axis  Non-Aggression Pact of 1939
Vichy Regime  Battle of Britain  Winston Churchill
Pearl Harbor  Stalingrad  Charles de Gaulle
Lend-Lease Act  Battle of Midway  Chetniks
Partisans  Josip Broz (Tito)  Hiroshima
Dimitri Shostakovich  Teheran Conference  Yalta Conference
Cold War  Nagasaki  Warsaw Pact
atom bomb  NATO  Potsdam Conference
Harry Truman  Ernest Bevin  Bretton Woods Agreement
Clement Atlee  Truman Doctrine  Marshall Plan
social democracy  Big Three  containment
MAP EXERCISE

The following exercise is intended to clarify the geophysical environment and the spatial relationships among the important objects and places mentioned in the chapter.

1. Locate the following places on the map:

Norway          Belgium
Denmark         Italy
France          Sudentenland
Greece          Yugoslavia
Stalingrad      El Alamein
Vichy           Paris
Berlin          Poland
MAKING CONNECTIONS

The following questions are intended to emphasize important ideas within the chapter.

1. What was the policy of appeasement? Why was it popular?

2. What aggressive steps did Italy, Germany, and Japan take prior to 1939?

3. What new style of warfare did Hitler use that allowed his forces to sweep across Europe so swiftly?

4. In what ways was the Home Front involved in the war? What role did women play in the economic mobilization of Germany and the allied countries?

5. How did the German’s treat the conquered populations? What role did resistance movements play in the occupied countries of Europe?

6. How did Hitler’s policies of racial ideas affect the treatment of civilians and POWs in eastern and western Europe?

7. What were the major turning points of the war in Europe, North Africa, and Asia?

8. What were the divisive issues at conferences held by the leaders of the Allied powers? Why did the Soviet Union determine that its security required control of eastern Europe?

9. What steps were taken by the U.S. and the Soviet Union to divide Europe into two armed camps?

DOCUMENTS QUESTIONS

The following questions test your ability to interpret the primary source documents in the textbook.

1. Discuss the human horror of facing aerial bombardment. How does it compare with the experience of tank combat?

2. How does Zhdanov view the division of Europe into two camps? How does Zhdanov view differ from that of Churchill?

PUTTING TOGETHER LARGER CONCEPTS

1. Discuss the expectations concerning war in the 1920s and 1930s. How did these attitudes lead to war in both Europe and Asia?

2. How and why did the end of World War II lead so quickly to the beginning of the Cold War?
SELF-TEST OF FACTUAL INFORMATION

1. The League of Nations was unable to serve as a basis for a stable international order because
   a. it had never been intended as a source of post-war stability.
   b. it was boycotted by France and England.
   c. it did not include several of the major powers and lacked a military force to enforce its policies.
   d. it was dominated by the Soviet Union and the United States.

2. What was the policy adopted by France and England in the face of Hitler’s violations of the Versailles Treaty?
   a. detente
   b. rapprochement
   c. appeasement
   d. utilitarianism

3. Italian expansionism was primarily directed against
   a. Austria and Germany.
   c. the Soviet Union and Poland.
   d. the Balkans and North Africa.

4. The Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact
   a. gave the Sudentenland to Germany.
   b. divided Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union.
   c. allowed Italy to take Ethiopia and Greece.
   d. divided Germany into two separate states.

5. Which of the following statements is NOT accurate about blitzkrieg warfare?
   a. Blitzkrieg avoided the stalemate of trench warfare.
   b. Blitzkrieg combined aerial bombardment with fast moving motorized divisions.
   c. Blitzkrieg failed to be an effective offensive strategy.
   d. Blitzkrieg allowed the Germans to quickly defeat Poland and France.
6. Prior to Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt provided help to the British under the
   b. Appeasement policy.
   c. Lend-Lease Act.
   d. the Munich Accord.

7. What event caused the United States to enter World War II?
   a. the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor
   b. the German assault on Stalingrad
   c. the Italian invasion of Ethiopia
   d. Britain’s appeal for help in the Battle of Britain

8. Which of the following countries did not mobilize women for the war effort until the last
   year of the war?
   a. Yugoslavia
   b. the United States
   c. Germany
   d. Soviet Union

9. The economic agreement that reorganized the post-war global economy was the
   a. Munich Accord.
   c. Yalta Conference.
   d. Bretton Woods Agreement.

10. Which of the following was NOT an American initiative to contain Soviet Expansion after
    World War II?
    a. Marshall Plan
    b. Warsaw Pact
    c. Truman Doctrine
    d. NATO