From Stearns, Peter N. World civilizations : the global experience. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Longman, 2011.

Read the **Document** on **MyHistoryLab**: Stalin Demands Rapid Industrialization of the USSR (1931)

FIGURE **34.7** Russian children help carry the propaganda for Stalin's campaign for collectivization of agriculture. The banner reads, "Everybody to the collective farms!" These happy faces belie the tragedy resulting from the collectivization program, in which millions fell victim to slaughter or starvation.

Toward Revolution in China

The abdication of Puyi, the Manchu boy-emperor in 1912, marked the end of a century-long losing struggle on the part of the Qing dynasty to protect Chinese civilization from foreign invaders and revolutionary threats from within, such as the massive Taiping movement (see Chapter 31). The fall of the Qing opened the way for an extended struggle over which leader or movement would be able to capture the mandate to rule the ancient society that had for millennia ordered the lives of at least one-fifth of humankind. Contenders included regional warlords; the loose alliance of students, middle-class politicians and secret societies, many of them attracted to a Western political model; and soon, Japanese intruders and a new communist movements as well. Internal divisions and foreign influences paved the way for the ultimate victory of the Chinese Communist party under Mao Zedong.

After the fall of the Qing dynasty, the best-positioned of the contenders for power were regionally based military commanders or warlords, who would dominate Chinese politics for the next three decades. Many of the warlords combined in cliques or alliances to protect their own territories and to crush neighbors and annex their lands. The most powerful of these cliques, centered in north China, was headed by the unscrupulous **Yuan Shikai**, who hoped to seize the vacated Manchu throne and found a new dynasty. By virtue of their wealth, the merchants and bankers of coastal cities like Shanghai and Canton made up a second power center in post-Manchu China. Their involvement in politics resulted from their willingness to bankroll both favored warlords and Western-educated, middle-class politicians like Sun Yat-sen.

Yuan Shikai [yoo-ahn shur-geye] Warlord in northern China after fall of Qing dynasty; hoped to seize imperial throne; president of China after 1912; resigned in the face of Japanese invasion in 1916.

Sometimes supportive of the urban civilian politicians and sometimes wary of them, university students and their teachers, as well as independent intellectuals, provided yet another factor in the complex post-Qing political equation. Although the intellectuals and students played critical roles in shaping new ideologies to rebuild Chinese civilization, they were virtually defenseless in a situation

in which force was essential to those who hoped to exert political influence. Deeply divided, but very strong in some regions, secret societies represented another contender for power. Like many in the military, members of these societies envisioned the restoration of monarchical rule, but under a Chinese dynasty, not a foreign one. As if the situation were not confused enough, it was further complicated by the continuing intervention of the Western powers, eager to profit from China's divisions and weakness. Their inroads, however, were increasingly overshadowed by the entry into the contest for the control of China by the newest imperialist power, Japan. From the mid-1890s, when the Japanese had humiliated their much larger neighbor by easily defeating it in war, until 1945, when Japan's surrender ended World War II, the Japanese were a major factor in the long and bloody contest for mastery of China.

China's May Fourth Movement and the Rise of the Marxist Alternative

Sun Yat-sen headed the Revolutionary Alliance, a loose coalition of anti-Qing political groups that had spearheaded the 1911 revolt. After the Qing were toppled, Sun claimed that he and the parties of the alliance were the rightful claimants to the mandate to rule all of China. But he could do little to assert civilian control in the face of warlord opposition. The Revolutionary Alliance had little power and virtually no popular support outside the urban trading centers of the coastal areas in central and south China. Even in these areas, they were at the mercy of the local warlords. The alliance formally elected Sun president at the end of 1911, set up a parliament modeled after those in Europe, and chose cabinets with great fanfare. But their decisions had little effect on warlord-dominated China.

Sun Yat-sen conceded this reality when he resigned the acting presidency in favor of the northern warlord Yuan Shikai in 1912. As the most powerful of the northern clique of generals, Yuan appeared to have the best chance to unify China under a single government. He at first feigned sympathy for the democratic aims of the alliance leaders but soon revealed his true intentions. He took foreign loans to build up his military forces and buy out most of the bureaucrats in the capital at Beijing. When Sun and other leaders of the Revolutionary Alliance called for a second revolution to oust Yuan in the years after 1912, he made full use of his military power and more underhanded methods, such as assassinations, to put down their opposition. By 1915 it appeared that Yuan was well on his way to realizing his ambition of becoming China's next emperor. His schemes were foiled, however, by the continuing rivalry of other warlords, republican nationalists like Sun, and the growing influence of Japan in China. The latter increased dramatically as a result of World War I.

As England's ally according to terms of a 1902 treaty, Japan immediately entered the war on the side of the Entente, or Western allied powers. Moving much too quickly for the comfort of the British and the other Western powers, the Japanese seized German-held islands in the Pacific and occupied the Germans' concessionary areas in China. With all the great powers except the United States embroiled in war, the Japanese sought to establish a dominant hold over their giant neighbor. In early 1915, they presented Yuan's government with Twenty-One Demands, which, if accepted, would have reduced China to the status of a dependant protectorate. Although Sun and the Revolutionary Alliance lost much support by refusing to repudiate the Japanese demands, Yuan was no more decisive. He neither accepted nor rejected the demands but concentrated his energies on an effort to trump up popular enthusiasm for his accession to the throne. Disgusted by Yuan's weakness and ambition, one of his warlord rivals plotted his overthrow. Hostility to the Japanese won Yuan's rival widespread support, and in 1916, Yuan was forced to resign the presidency. His fall was the signal for a free-for-all power struggle between the remaining warlords for control of China.

As one of the victorious allies of World War I, Japan managed to solidify its hold on northern China by winning control of the former German concessions in the peace negotiations at Versailles in 1919. But the Chinese had also allied themselves to the Entente powers during the war. Enraged by what they viewed as a betrayal by the Entente powers, students and nationalist politicians organized mass demonstrations in numerous Chinese cities on May 4, 1919. The demonstrations began a prolonged period of protest against Japanese inroads. This protest soon expanded from marches and petitions to include strikes and mass boycotts of Japanese goods.

May Fourth movement Resistance to Japanese encroachments in China began on this date in 1919; spawned movement of intellectuals aimed at transforming China into a liberal democracy; rejected Confucianism.

The fourth of May, 1919, the day when the resistance began, gave its name to a movement in which intellectuals and students played a leading role. Initially at least, the **May Fourth movement** was aimed at transforming China into a liberal democracy. Its program was enunciated in numerous

speeches, pamphlets, novels, and newspaper articles. Confucianism was ridiculed and rejected in favor of a wholehearted acceptance of all that the Western democracies had to offer. Noted Western thinkers, such as Bertrand Russell and John Dewey, toured China, praising democracy and basking in the cheers of enthusiastic Chinese audiences. Chinese thinkers called for the liberation of women (including the abolition of footbinding), the simplification of the Chinese script in order to promote mass literacy, and the promotion of Western-style individualism. Many of these themes are captured in the literature of the period. In the novel *Family* by Ba Jin, for example, a younger brother audaciously informs his elder sibling that he will not accept the marriage partner the family has arranged for him. He clearly sees his refusal as part of a more general revolt of the youth of China against the ancient Confucian social code.

> Big Brother, I'm doing what no one in our family has ever dared do before—I'm running out on an arranged marriage. No one cares about my fate, so I've decided to walk my own road alone. I'm determined to struggle against the old forces to the end. Unless you cancel the match, I'll never come back. I'll die first.

However enthusiastically the program of the May Fourth movement was adopted by the urban youth of China, it was soon clear that mere emulation of the liberal democracies of the West could not provide effective solutions to China's prodigious problems. Civil liberties and democratic elections were meaningless in a China that was ruled by warlords. Gradualist solutions and parliamentary debates were folly in a nation where the great mass of the peasantry was destitute, much of them malnourished or dying of starvation. It soon became clear to many Chinese intellectuals and students, as well as to some of the nationalist politicians, that more radical solutions were needed. In the 1920s, this conviction gave rise to the communist left within the Chinese nationalist movement.

The Bolshevik victory and the programs launched to rebuild Russia prompted Chinese intellectuals to give serious attention to the works of Marx and other socialist thinkers and the potential they offered for the regeneration of China. But the careful study of the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky in the wake of the Russian Revolution also impressed a number of Chinese intellectuals with the necessity for major alterations in Marxist ideology if it was going to be of any relevance to China or other peasant societies. Marx, after all, had focused on advanced industrial societies and had regarded peasants as conservative or even reactionary. Taken literally, Marxism offered discouraging prospects for revolution in China.

The most influential of the thinkers who called for a reworking of Marxist ideology to fit China's situation was **Li Dazhao**. Li was from peasant origins, but he had excelled in school and eventually become a college teacher. He headed the Marxist study circle that developed after the 1919 upheavals at the University of Beijing. His interpretation of Marxist philosophy placed heavy emphasis on its capacity for promoting renewal and its ability to harness the energy and vitality of a nation's youth. In contrast to Lenin, Li saw the peasants, rather than the urban workers, as the vanguard of revolutionary change. He justified this shift from the orthodox Marxist emphasis on the working classes, which made up only a tiny fraction of China's population at the time, by characterizing the whole of Chinese society as proletarian. All of China, he argued, had been exploited by the bourgeois, industrialized West. Thus, the oppressed Chinese as a whole needed to unite and rise up against their exploiters.

Li Dazhao [lee duh-JOH] (1888–1927) Chinese intellectual who gave serious attention to Marxist philosophy; headed study circle at the University of Beijing; saw peasants as vanguard of revolutionary communism in China.

Li's version of Marxism, with alterations or emphasis on elements that made it suitable for China, had great appeal for the students, including the young **Mao Zedong**, who joined Li's study circle. They, too, were angered by what they perceived as China's betrayal by the imperialist powers. They shared Li's hostility (very much a throwback to the attitudes of the Confucian era) to merchants and commerce, which appeared to dominate the West. They, too, longed for a return to a political system, like the Confucian, in which those who governed were deeply committed to social reform and social welfare. They also believed in an authoritarian state, which they felt ought to intervene constructively in all aspects of the peoples' lives. The Marxist study club societies that developed as a result of these discoveries soon spawned a number of more broadly based, politically activist organizations.

Mao Zedong [mow dzuh-doong] (1893–1976) Communist leader in revolutionary China; advocated rural reform and role of peasantry in Nationalist revolution; influenced by Li Dazhao; led Communist reaction against Guomindang purges in 1920s, culminating in Long March of 1934; seized control of all of mainland China by 1949; initiated Great Leap Forward in 1958.

In the summer of 1921, in an attempt to unify the growing Marxist wing of the nationalist struggle, a handful of leaders from different parts of China met in secret in the city of Shanghai. At this meeting, closely watched by the agents of the local warlord and rival political organizations, the Communist party of China was born. The party was minuscule in terms of the numbers of their

supporters, and at this time it was still dogmatically fixed on a revolutionary program oriented to the small and scattered working class. But the communists at least offered a clear alternative to fill the ideological and institutional void left by the collapse of the Confucian order.

The Seizure of Power by China's Guomindang

Guomindang [gwoh-mihn-dohng] Chinese Nationalist party founded by Sun Yat-sen in 1919; drew support from local warlords and Chinese criminal underworld; initially forged alliance with Communists in 1924; dominated by Chiang Kai-shek after 1925.

In the years when the communist movement in China was being put together by urban students and intellectuals, the **Guomindang**, or Nationalist party, which was to prove the communists' great rival for the mandate to rule in China, was struggling to survive in the south. Sun Yat-sen, who was the acknowledged head of the nationalist struggle from the 1911 revolution until his death in early 1925, had gone into temporary exile in Japan in 1914, while warlords such as Yuan Shikai consolidated their regional power bases. After returning to China in 1919, Sun and his followers attempted to unify the diverse political organizations struggling for political influence in China by reorganizing the revolutionary movement and naming it the Nationalist party of China (the Guomindang).

The Nationalists began the slow process of forging alliances with key social groups and building an army of their own, which they now viewed as the only way to rid China of the warlord menace (Map 34.3). Sun strove to enunciate a nationalist ideology that gave something to everyone. It stressed the need to unify China under a strong central government, to bring the imperialist intruders under control, and to introduce social reforms that would alleviate the poverty of the peasants and the oppressive working conditions of laborers in China's cities. Unfortunately for the great majority of the Chinese people, for whom social reforms were the main concern, the Nationalist leaders concentrated on political and international issues, such as relations with the Western powers and Japan, and failed to implement most of the domestic programs they proposed, most especially land reform.

In this early stage Sun and the Nationalists built their power primarily on the support provided by urban businesspeople and merchants in coastal cities such as Canton. Sun forged an alliance with the communists that was officially proclaimed at the first Nationalist party conference in 1924. For

MAP **34.3 China in the Era of Revolution and Civil War** Political reform was constrained by the nationalist-communist dispute and by Japanese invasion.

the time being at least, the Nationalist leaders were content to let the communists serve as their major link to the peasants and the urban workers. Nationalist leaders also turned to Soviet Russia, and the Bolsheviks sent advisors and gave material assistance.

In 1924 the **Whampoa Military Academy** was founded with Soviet help and partially staffed by Russian instructors. The academy gave the Nationalists a critical military dimension to their political maneuvering. The first head of the academy was an ambitious young military officer named **Chiang Kai-shek**. The son of a poor salt merchant, Chiang had made his career in the military and by virtue of connections with powerful figures in the Shanghai underworld. He had received some military training in Japan and managed by the early 1920s to work his way into Sun Yat-sen's inner circle of advisors. Chiang was not happy with the communist alliance. But he was willing to bide his time until he had the military strength to deal with both the communists and the warlords, who remained the major obstacles to the Nationalist seizure of power.

Whampoa Military Academy Founded in 1924; military wing of the Guomindang; first head of the academy was Chiang Kai-shek.

Chiang Kai-shek [jee-ahng keye-shehk] A military officer who succeeded Sun Yat-sen as the leader of the Guomindang or Nationalist party in China in the mid-1920s; became the most powerful leader in China in the early 1930s, but his Nationalist forces were defeated and driven from China by the Communists after World War II.

Political tensions distracted the Nationalist leaders from the growing deterioration of the economy. The peasantry, 90 percent of the population, suffered increasing misery following a long period of government ineffectiveness and depredations by the landlords. Famine and disease stalked the countryside, while irrigation systems deteriorated. Many peasants could not even bury their deceased parents, whose bodies were left for animals to devour.

Sun gave lip service to the Nationalist party's need to deal with the peasant problem. But his abysmal ignorance of rural conditions was revealed by statements in which he denied that China had exploitive landlords and his refusal to believe that there were "serious difficulties" between the great mass of the peasantry and the landowners.

Mao and the Peasant Option

Although the son of a fairly prosperous peasant, Mao Zedong had rebelled early in his life against his father's exploitation of the tenants and laborers who worked the family fields. Receiving little assistance from his estranged father, Mao was forced to make his own way in the world. Through much of his youth and early adulthood, he struggled to educate himself in the history, philosophy, and economic theory that most other nationalist and revolutionary leaders mastered in private schools. Having moved to Beijing in the post–May Fourth era, Mao came under the influence of thinkers such as Li Dazhao, who placed considerable emphasis on solutions to the peasant problem as one of the keys to China's survival. In his early writings, Mao indicated almost from the outset his commitment to revolutionary solutions that depended on peasant support. Mao viewed revolution as a violent act in which one social class overthrows another. According to Mao, in the countryside, a revolution involves peasants overthrowing the power of the landlord class and the feudal system. If they do not use extreme force, Mao believed, peasants cannot displace the power of the landlords, which had existed for thousands of years and which had very deep roots in Chinese society.

Read the **Document** on **MyHistoryLab:** Mao Zedong, "A Single Spark Can Start a Prairie Fire," 1953

The Nationalists' successful drive for national power began only after Sun Yat-sen's death in 1925, which opened the way for Chiang Kai-shek and his warlord allies to seize control of the party. After winning over or eliminating the military chiefs in the Canton area, Chiang marched north with his newly created armies. His first campaign culminated in the Nationalists' seizure of the Yangzi River valley and Shanghai in early 1927. Later his forces also captured the capital at Beijing and the rest of the Yellow River basin. The refusal of most of the warlords to end their feuding meant that Chiang could defeat them or buy them out, one by one. By the late 1920s, he was the master of China in name and international standing, if not in actual fact. He was, in effect, the head of a warlord hierarchy. But most political leaders within China and in the outside world recognized him as the new president of China.

Long March Communist escape from Hunan province during civil war with Guomindang in 1934; center of Communist power moved to Shanxi province; firmly established Mao Zedong as head of the Communist party in China.

Chiang quickly turned against the communists, attacking them in various places. A brutal massacre occurred in Shanghai in 1927, with many workers gunned down or beheaded. Chiang carefully wooed support from western Europe and the United States, while lining up most police and landlord leaders at home. The offensive propelled Mao Zedong to leadership. An attack on the communist rural stronghold in south central China, supported by German advisors, caused Mao to spearhead a **Long March** of 90,000 followers in 1934, across thousands of miles to the more remote northwest. Here, in Shanxi, where some peasant communes had already been established, the new communist center took shape (Map 34.3).

While the Long March solidified Mao's leadership of Chinese communism and gave many followers a sense that they could not be defeated, it was the Japanese invasions of China in the 1930s that would begin to give communists a new advantage. Chiang had to ally with communists to fight the Japanese threat, while his own power base, along the coast, was eroded by the powerful Japanese advance. The Chinese revolution was far from over.

Several weaknesses in the world economy led to a major collapse, beginning in 1929. Massive economic and personal dislocation affected many regions, and responses to the crisis were mixed. The results deepened divisions in the world as a whole.

THE GLOBAL GREAT DEPRESSION

34.3 What were the principal regional differences in the impact of and response to the Great Depression?

Great Depression International economic crisis following World War I; began with collapse of American stock market in 1929; actual causes included collapse of agricultural prices in 1920s, collapse of banking houses in the United States and western Europe, massive unemployment; contradicted optimistic assumptions of 19th century.

Coming barely a decade after the turmoil of World War I, the onset of global economic depression constituted a crucial next step in the mounting spiral of international crises. The crash of the New York stock market hit the headlines in 1929, but in fact the **Great Depression** had begun, sullenly, in many parts of the world economy even earlier. The Depression resulted from new problems in the industrial economy of Europe and the United States, combined with the long-term weakness in economies, like those of Latin America, that depended on sales of cheap exports in the international market. The result was a worldwide collapse that spared only a few economies and brought political as well as economic pressures on virtually every society.

Causation

Structural problems affected many industrial societies during the 1920s, even after postwar recovery. Farmers throughout much of the Western world, including the United States, faced almost chronic overproduction of food and resulting low prices. Food production had soared in response to wartime needs; during the postwar inflation many farmers, both in western Europe and in North America, borrowed heavily to buy new equipment, overconfident that their good markets would be sustained. But rising European production combined with large imports from the Americas and New Zealand sent prices down, which lowered earnings and made debts harder to repay. One response was continued population flight from the countryside as urbanization continued. Remaining farmers were hard pressed and unable to sustain high demand for manufactured goods.

Thus, although economies in France and Germany seemed to have recovered by 1925, problems continued: The fears that massive postwar inflation had generated limited the capacity of governments to respond to other problems. Much of the mid-decade prosperity rested on exceedingly fragile grounds. Loans from U.S. banks to various European enterprises helped sustain demand for goods but on condition that additional loans pour in to help pay off the resultant debts.

Furthermore, most of the dependent areas in the world economy, colonies and noncolonies alike, were suffering badly. Pronounced tendencies toward overproduction developed in the smaller nations of eastern Europe, which sent agricultural goods to western Europe, as well as among tropical producers in Africa and Latin America. Here, continued efforts to win export revenue pressed local estate owners to drive up output in coffee, sugar, and rubber. As European governments and businesses organized their African colonies for more profitable exploitation, they set up large estates devoted to goods of this type. Again, production frequently exceeded demand, which drove prices and earnings down in both Africa and Latin America. This meant, in turn, that many colonies and dependant economies were unable to buy many industrial exports, which weakened demand for Western products precisely when output tended to rise amid growing U.S. and Japanese competition. Several food-exporting regions, including many of the new eastern European nations, fell into a depression, in terms of earnings and employment, by the mid-1920s, well before the full industrial catastrophe.

Governments of the leading industrial nations provided scant leadership during the emerging crisis of the 1920s. Most Western leaders had only a feeble grasp of economics. Nationalistic selfishness predominated. Western nations were more concerned about insisting on repayment of any debts owed to them or about constructing tariff barriers to protect their own industries than about facilitating balanced world economic growth. Protectionism, in particular, as practiced even by traditionally free-trade Great Britain and by the many nations in eastern Europe, simply reduced

market opportunities and made a bad situation worse. By the later 1920s employment in key Western industrial sectors—coal (also beset by new competition from imported oil), iron, and textiles—began to decline, the foretaste of more general collapse.

The Debacle

The formal advent of the Depression occurred in October 1929, when the New York stock market collapsed. Stock values tumbled as investors quickly lost confidence in prices that had been pushed ridiculously high. Banks, which had depended heavily on their stock investments, rapidly echoed the financial crisis, and many institutions failed, dragging their depositors along with them. Even before this crash, Americans had begun to call back earlier loans to Europe. Yet the European credit structure depended extensively on U.S. loans, which had fueled some industrial expansion but also less productive investments, such as German reparations payments and the construction of fancy town halls and other amenities. In Europe, as in the United States, many commercial enterprises existed on the basis not of real production power but of continued speculation. When one piece of the speculative spiral was withdrawn, the whole edifice quickly collapsed. Key bank failures in Austria and Germany followed the U.S. crisis. Throughout most of the industrial West, investment funds dried up as creditors went bankrupt or tried to cut their losses.

With investment receding, industrial production quickly began to fall, beginning with the industries that produced capital goods and extending quickly to consumer products fields. Falling production—levels dropped by as much as one-third by 1932—meant falling employment and lower wages, which in turn withdrew still more demand from the economy and led to further hardship. Unemployed and underpaid workers could not buy goods whose production might give other workers jobs. The existing weakness of some markets, such as the farm sector or the nonindustrial world, was exacerbated as demand for foods and minerals plummeted. New and appalling problems developed among workers, now out of jobs or suffering from reduced hours and reduced pay (Figure 34.8), as well as among the middle classes. The Depression, in sum, fed on itself, growing steadily worse from 1929 to 1933. Even countries initially less hard hit, such as France and Italy, saw themselves drawn into the vortex by 1931.

In itself the Great Depression was not entirely unprecedented. Previous periods had seen slumps triggered by bank failures and overspeculation, yielding several years of falling production, unemployment, and hardship. But the intensity of the Great Depression had no precedent in the brief history of industrial societies. Its duration was also unprecedented; in many countries, full recovery came only after a decade and only with the forced production schedules provoked by World War II. Unlike earlier depressions, this one came on the heels of so much other distress—the economic hardships of war, for example, and the catastrophic inflation of the 1920s—and caught most governments totally unprepared.

The Depression was more, of course, than an economic event. It reached into countless lives, creating hardship and tension that would be recalled even as the crisis itself eased. Loss of earnings, loss of work, or simply fears that loss would come devastated people at all social levels. The suicides of ruined investors in New York were paralleled by the vagrants' camps and begging that spread among displaced workers. The statistics were grim: Up to one-third of all blue-collar workers in the West lost their jobs for prolonged periods. White-collar unemployment, although not quite as severe, was also unparalleled. In Germany 600,000 of 4 million white-collar workers had lost their jobs by 1931. Graduating students could not find work or had to resort to jobs they regarded as insecure or demeaning. Six million overall unemployed in Germany and 22 percent of the labor force unemployed in Britain were statistics of stark misery and despair. Families were disrupted; men felt emasculated at their inability to provide, and women and children were disgusted with authority figures whose

Read the **Document** on **MyHistoryLab:** Heinrich Hauser, With Germany's Unemployed (1933)

Read the **Document** on **MyHistoryLab:** The Great Depression: An Oral Account (1932)

FIGURE **34.8** This famous photograph of a tenant farmer and her children in the American South was published in the book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. It exemplifies the hardship and poverty endured by many during the Great Depression.

authority was now hollow. In some cases wives and mothers found it easier to gain jobs in a low-wage economy than their husbands did, and although this development had some promise in terms of new opportunities for women, it could also be confusing for standard family roles. For many, the agony and personal disruption of the Depression were desperately prolonged, with renewed recession around 1937 and with unemployment still averaging 10 percent or more in many countries as late as 1939.

View the **Closer Look** on **MyHistoryLab**: Bread line, 1930s

The Depression, like World War I, was an event that blatantly contradicted the optimistic assumptions of the later 19th century. To many it showed the fragility of any idea of progress, while to others it seemed to condemn the system of parliamentary democracy. Because it was a second catastrophic event within a generation, the Depression led to even more extreme results than the war had done—more bizarre experiments, more paralysis in the face of deepening despair. To be sure, there were some escapist alternatives: Hollywood movies put up a cheerful front, and in 1938 a new American comic book figure, Superman, provided an alternative to the constraints of normal life. But these were modest alternatives at best.

For most of the world outside the West, moreover, the Depression worsened an already bleak economic picture. Western markets could absorb fewer commodity imports as production fell and incomes dwindled. Hence the nations that produced foods and raw materials saw prices and earnings drop even more than before. Unemployment rose rapidly in the export sectors of the Latin American economy, creating a major political challenge not unlike that faced by the Western nations. Japan, a new industrial country, still heavily depended on export earnings for financing its imports of essential fuel and raw materials. The Japanese silk industry, an export staple, was already suffering from the advent of artificial silklike fibers produced by Western chemical giants. Now Western luxury purchases collapsed, leading to severe unemployment in Japan and a crucial political crisis. Between 1929 and 1931, the value of Japanese exports plummeted by 50 percent. Workers' real income dropped by almost one-third, and more than 3 million people were unemployed. Depression was compounded by poor harvests in several regions, leading to rural begging and near starvation. The Great Depression, although most familiar in its Western dimensions, was a truly international collapse.

Responses to the Depression in Western Europe

Western governments, already weakened, responded to the onset of the economic catastrophe counterproductively. National tariffs were raised to keep out the goods of other countries, but this merely worsened the international economy and curbed sales for everyone. Most governments tried to cut spending, reflecting the decline in revenues that accompanied falling production. They were concerned about avoiding renewed inflation, but in fact their measures further reduced economic stimulus and pushed additional workers—government employees—out of jobs. Confidence in the normal political process deteriorated. In many countries the Depression heightened political polarization. People sought solutions from radical parties or movements, both on the left and on the right. Support for communist parties increased in many countries, and in important cases the authoritarian movement on the right gained increased attention. Even in relatively stable countries, such as Britain, battles between the Conservative party and the labor movement made decisive policy difficult. Class conflict rose to new levels, in and out of politics.

In key cases, the Great Depression led to one of two effects: either a parliamentary system that became increasingly incapacitated, unable to come to grips with the new economic dilemma and too divided to take vigorous action, even in foreign policy, or the outright overturning of the parliamentary system.

France was a prime example of the first pattern. The French government reacted sluggishly to the Depression. Voters responded by moving toward the political extremes. Socialist and then communist parties expanded. Rightist movements calling for a strong leader and fervent nationalism grew, their adherents often disrupting political meetings in order to discredit the parliamentary system by making orderly debate impossible. In response liberal, socialist, and communist parties formed the **Popular Front** in 1936 to win the election. The Popular Front government, however, was unable to take strong measures of social reform because of the ongoing strength of conservative republicans hostile to change and the authoritarian right that looked to forceful leadership to contain the lower classes. The same paralysis crept into foreign policy, as Popular Front leaders, initially eager to support the new liberal regime in Spain that was attacked by conservative army leaders in the Spanish Civil War, found themselves forced to pull back. The Popular Front fell in 1938, but even before this France was close to a standstill.

Popular Front Combination of socialist and communist political parties in France; won election in 1936; unable to take strong measures of social reform because of continuing strength of conservatives; fell from power in 1938.

There were more constructive responses. Scandinavian states, most of them directed by moderate socialist parties, increased government spending, providing new levels of social insurance against illness and unemployment. This foreshadowed the welfare state. British policy was more tentative, but new industrial sectors emerged under the leadership of innovative businesspeople. The world's first television industry, for example, took shape in southern England in the late 1930s, although it was too small to break the hold of the Depression.

The New Deal

After a few years of floundering, the United States generated another set of creative responses. Initial American policies, under President Herbert Hoover, resembled those of western Europe, in seeking higher tariffs and attempting to cut spending in reaction to falling revenues. The United States also sought to accelerate war debt repayments from Europe, which also made matters worse internationally. In 1933 a new administration took over, under Franklin Roosevelt, offering a "new deal" to the American people.

New Deal policies, as they unfolded during the 1930s, offered more direct aid to Americans at risk, through increased unemployment benefits and other measures. Many unemployed people were given jobs on public works projects. A crucial innovation was the Social Security system, based on contributions from workers and employers and designed to provide protection in unemployment and old age. The New Deal also undertook some economic planning and stimulus, for both industry and agriculture, while installing new regulations on banking.

The New Deal ushered in a period of rapid government growth, a watershed in American history particularly as it was followed by the massive expansion of military operations in World War II. The regime did not solve the Depression, which sputtered on until wartime spending ended it in the early 1940s. It also did not install a full welfare state, holding back, for example, from plans to offer a health insurance system. But the New Deal did restore the confidence of most Americans in their political system, preempting more extremist political movements and minimizing the kind of paralysis that afflicted Britain and France in the same years.

Watch the **Video** on **MyHistoryLab**: Responding to the Great Depression: Whose New Deal? (James Fraser)

New Deal President Franklin Roosevelt's precursor of the modern welfare state (1933–1939); programs to combat economic depression enacted a number of social insurance measures and used government spending to stimulate the economy; increased power of the state and the state's intervention in U.S. social and economic life.

THE NAZI RESPONSE

34.4 What were the main features of the Nazi state?

The Great Depression was centered in the West but had global roots and impact. Western responses to the Depression varied, but none succeeded in ending the crisis.

German patterns differed markedly from the wavering responses of Germany's neighbors and from democratic welfare innovation as well. In Germany the impact of the Depression led directly to a new fascist regime. Germany had suffered the shock of loss in World War I, enhanced by treaty arrangements that cast primary blame for the war on the German nation, which had only recent and shaky parliamentary traditions. A number of factors, in sum, combined to make Germany a fertile breeding ground for fascism, although it took the Depression to bring this current to the fore.

The Rise of Nazism

While Germany introduced the sharpest political change in response to the depression and to nationalist pattern, important political change also affected Japan, the Soviet Union, and later America. Western-style democracies were in substantial retreat.

Fascism in Germany, as in Italy, was a product of the war. The movement's advocates, many of them former veterans, attacked the weakness of parliamentary democracy and the corruption and class conflict of Western capitalism. They proposed a strong state ruled by a powerful leader who would revive the nation's forces through vigorous foreign and military policy. While fascists vaguely promised social reforms to alleviate class antagonisms, their attacks on trade unions as well as on socialist and communist parties pleased landlords and business groups. Although fascism won outright control only in Italy in the movement's early years, fascist parties complicated the political process in a number of other nations during the 1920s and beyond. But it was the advent of the National Socialist, or Nazi, regime in Germany under Adolf Hitler that made this new political movement a major force in world history. Here, a Western commitment to liberal, democratic political forms was challenged and reversed.

Isabel, returned to Argentina in 1973, and they won the presidential election in that year—she as vice president. When Perón died the next year, however, it was clear that Argentina's problems could not be solved by the old formulas. Argentina slid once more into military dictatorship.

The Militarization of Japan

Authoritarian military rule took over in Japan even earlier than in the West. Not fascist outright, it had some clear affinities with the new regimes in Europe, including its aggressive military stance. As early as 1931, as the Depression hit Japan hard, military officials completed a conquest of the Chinese province of Manchuria, without the backing of the civilian government (Map 34.3).

As political divisions increased in response to the initial impact of the Depression, a variety of nationalist groups emerged, some advocating a return to Shintoist or Confucian principles against the more Western values of urban Japan. This was more than a political response to economic depression. As in Germany, a variety of groups used the occasion for a more sweeping protest against parliamentary forms; nationalism here seemed a counterpoise to alien Western values. Older military officers joined some bureaucrats in urging a more authoritarian state that could ignore party politics; some wanted further military expansion to protect Japan from the uncertainties of the world economy by providing secure markets and sources of raw materials.

In May 1932 a group of younger army officers attacked key government and banking officers and murdered the prime minister. They did not take over the state directly, but for the next four years moderate military leaders headed the executive branch, frustrating both the military firebrands and the political parties. Another attempted military coup in 1936 was put down by forces controlled by the established admirals and generals, but this group, including General Tojo Hideki, increasingly interfered with civilian cabinets, blocking the appointment of most liberal bureaucrats. The result, after 1936, was a series of increasingly militaristic prime ministers.

The military superseded civilian politics, particularly when renewed wars broke out between Japan and China in 1937. Japan, continuing to press the ruling Chinese government lest it gain sufficient strength to threaten Japanese gains, became involved in a skirmish with Chinese forces in the Beijing area in 1937. Fighting spread, initially quite unplanned. Most Japanese military leaders opposed more general war, arguing that the nation's only interest was to defend Manchuria and Korea. However, influential figures on the General Staff held that China's armies should be decisively defeated to prevent trouble in the future. This view prevailed, and Japanese forces quickly occupied the cities and railroads of eastern China. Several devastating bombing raids accompanied this invasion.

Although Japanese voters had continued to prefer more moderate policies, their wishes were swept away by military leaders in a tide of growing nationalism. By the end of 1938 Japan controlled a substantial regional empire, including Manchuria, Korea, and Taiwan (Formosa), within which the nation sold half its exports and from which it bought more than 40 percent of all imports, particularly food and raw materials. Both the military leadership, eager to justify further modernization of Japan's weaponry and to consolidate political control, and economic leaders, interested in rich resources of other parts of Asia—such as the rubber of British Malaya or the oil of the Dutch East Indies—soon pressed for wider conquests as Japan surged into World War II (Map 34.4).

As war in Asia expanded, well before the formal outbreak of World War II, Japan also tightened its hold over its earlier empire, particularly in Korea. Efforts to suppress Korean culture were stepped up, and the Japanese military brutally put down any resistance. Japanese language and habits were forced on Korean teachers. Japanese industrialists dominated Korean resources, while peasants were required to produce rice for Japan at the expense of nutrition in Korea itself. Young men were pressed into labor groups, as the population was exhorted to join the Japanese people in "training to endure hardship."

Industrialization and Recovery

Japan's policies in the 1930s quelled the effects of the Depression for Japan even more fully than Hitler's policies were able to do for Germany. While the Depression initially hit Japan hard—half of all factories were closed by 1931, children in some areas were reduced to begging for food from passengers on passing trains, and farmers were eating tree bark—active government policies quickly responded. As a result, Japan suffered far less than many Western nations did during the Depression decade as a whole. Under the 1930s minister of finance, Korekiyo Takahashi, the government increased its spending to provide jobs, which in turn generated new demands for food and manufactured items,

MAP **34.4 The Expansion of Japan to the Outbreak of World War II** Two stages of Japan's attacks on China are clearly shown.

yielding not only the export boom but also the virtual elimination of unemployment by 1936. The same policy helped support government military purchasing, but it is not clear that this constituted an essential response.

Indeed, Japan made a full turn toward industrialization after 1931, its economy growing much more rapidly than that of the West and rivaling the surge of the Soviet Union. Production of iron, steel, and chemicals soared. The spread of electric power was the most rapid in the world. The number of workers, mainly men, in the leading industries rose sevenfold during the 1930s. Quality of production increased as assembly-line methods were introduced, and Japanese manufacturing goods began to rival those of the West. As the level of Japanese industrial goods rose, the first Western outcry against Japanese exports was produced—even though in 1936 the Japanese controlled only 3.6 percent of world trade.

Japan also initiated a series of new industrial policies designed to stabilize the labor force and prevent social unrest. These paralleled the growing emphasis on mass patriotism and group loyalty developed by the government. Big companies began to offer lifetime contracts to a minority of skilled workers and to develop company entertainments and other activities designed to promote hard work and devotion. These distinctive Japanese policies, not part of its initial industrialization, proved to be a durable feature of Japanese society.

By 1937 Japan boasted the third largest and the newest merchant marine in the world. The nation became self-sufficient in machine tools and scientific equipment, the fruit of the growth in technical training. The basis had been set for the more significant economic expansion of the later 20th century, delayed by Japan's dash into World War II.

Stalinism in the Soviet Union

The Soviet Union was buffered from the Depression by its separate economy. Soviet leaders made much of the nation's ongoing industrial growth, even as Western economies collapsed. But the 1930s saw a tightening of the communist system under Stalin in ways that echoed authoritarian responses in other societies.

These gains, however, came with substantial costs in both human lives and human rights. The worst came during the Stalin years. Several million lives were lost during the forced collectivization after 1929, and millions more died in the *Gulags*, the forced labor camps of Siberia and the frozen north.[5] The situation improved after the death of Stalin, but the Soviet political system remained throughout its history a single-party state, brooking no political competition, protest activity, or independent press. All books, periodicals, and mass media were censored. Most churches, synagogues, and mosques were closed or destroyed. People who dared challenge the regime or its policies were subject to arrest and possibly death in the Stalinist era and imprisonment or exile in the years after that. People had little choice about where they worked or lived, were restricted in their travel within the country, and could travel abroad only with difficulty.

Despite all this, the Soviet Union became increasingly powerful and influential on the world stage. Through the Communist International (the Comintern), Moscow helped establish communist parties and encourage revolutionary movements all over the world, including the Communist Party of China, which won power in that country in 1949. The Soviet Union bore the brunt of the losses from Germany during World War II, but it was the Soviet army that managed to liberate Eastern Europe from the Germans and to seize Berlin and force German surrender in 1945. This placed Moscow in a position of unparalleled strength in the center of Europe and brought it into conflict with the other new global power, the United States, in the emerging Cold War. Elsewhere in the world, the Soviet Union and its economic successes became a model for leftists, anti-imperialists, and revolutionaries all over the Third World. Indeed, by the 1970s, almost half the world's population was living under governments inspired or supported by the communists of Russia.

From Mason, David S. A concise history of modern Europe : liberty, equality, solidarity. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011.

11

World War II and the Holocaust

The Paris Peace Settlements of 1919–1920 brought to a close the bitter divisions and seemingly endless conflict of World War I. European participants in the war were devastated and exhausted and yearned for peace, stability, and normality, and many of the European governments (and the United States) retreated into **isolationism**, neutrality, or pacifism. The Paris agreements, including the crucial Versailles Treaty affecting Germany, had established national and democratic states in Germany, as well as the new states of Eastern Europe, and had created the League of Nations to protect the peace and ward off future wars. A sense of calm and relief spread through much of the Continent.

There were, however, storm clouds on the horizon even in those first postwar years, with economic distress and inflation, irredentist discontent with the Versailles Treaty (especially in Germany), and the unsettling presence of a new communist state in Russia. By the 1930s, things fell apart as a worldwide economic depression weakened governments everywhere, and many of the newly established European democracies were subverted from within or without. In Germany, Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) capitalized on economic distress and discontent, seized absolute power, and began constructing his **Third Reich**. His aggressive military moves to reclaim German territory and then to conquer all of Europe led to World War II, which was even more devastating than the previous war, and to the Holocaust. The United States finally intervened to help end the war, as it had in World War I, and the potent alliance of the United States and the Soviet Union finally crushed Nazi Germany. But, with the end of

the war, this wartime friendship deteriorated into rivalry, distrust, and a period of political and military tension known as the Cold War.

EUROPE BETWEEN THE WORLD WARS

Woodrow Wilson had brought the United States into World War I pledging to "make the world safe for democracy," and his Fourteen Points called for national self-determination and democratic politics in central Europe. In large measure, these goals were achieved with the Paris peace agreements, which carved from the old Habsburg Empire the new states of Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, and from the old Russian Empire the states of Poland, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. All of them adopted written constitutions with legislatures elected through universal suffrage. In the city of Weimar, a German national assembly also adopted a constitution establishing a democratic republic, the **Weimar Republic**. In the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, a nationalist revolution led by Mustapha Kemal (later named Kemal Ataturk) abolished the sultanate and the caliphate and established a secular democratic republic of Turkey, the first Muslim country to separate religion from government. The 1920s saw democratic advances even in established democracies, for example, with the extension of voting rights to women in both Britain and the United States.

Germany was reconstituted as a democratic republic, but it was also forced to accept the terms of the Versailles Treaty, despite vigorous and sustained protests from every band of the political spectrum inside the country. The treaty not only assigned Germany responsibility for World War I and imposed reparation payments on the new government but also reduced the size of the country by restoring an independent Austria, returning Alsace-Lorraine to France, placing the Saar territory and the Rhineland under French or Allied occupation, ceding most of West Prussia to Poland, and establishing the port city of Danzig as a free city under the auspices of the League of Nations. In addition, the treaty placed German colonies (e.g., in Africa) under League of Nations control as mandates and limited the German army and armaments.

For Germans, the humiliation of all these provisions was compounded by the reparations payments, which eventually were set at the equivalent of $33 billion. The country simply could not make these payments (and in the long run paid only a fraction of them), so the government began printing more money, which contributed to unprecedented hyperinflation and rendered the German currency (the mark) almost worthless. By 1923, the exchange rate was four trillion marks to the dollar. German families had to cart wheelbarrows full of cash to the store just to purchase a loaf of bread.

The situation was stabilized somewhat the next year when the Dawes Plan, developed by an American board of experts, provided for a reduction in reparations payments, a stabilization of German finances, and the facilitation of German borrowing abroad. The ensuing years saw a period of economic growth and relative stability in both Germany and the rest of Europe. Germany was allowed to enter the League of Nations in 1926. In 1928, the Kellogg-Briand Pact, developed by the American and French foreign ministers and signed by sixty-five countries, renounced war as an instrument of policy. Once again, it seemed a period of peace and stability was at hand.

Then the U.S. stock market crashed, leading quickly to a worldwide depression. By 1929, stock values in the United States had been driven to fantastic heights by excessive speculation. When the crash came in October, stock prices dropped by 40 percent in a month and by 75 percent within three months. Five thousand banks closed, and many companies went bankrupt. U.S. investments abroad virtually ceased, and U.S. trade declined precipitously, undercutting the foundations of the economic revival of Germany and much of Europe. Between 1929 and 1932, world economic production declined by 38 percent and world trade by two-thirds. Germany was particularly hard hit, suffering more from the Depression than any other country in Europe. But all over the Continent, as unemployment skyrocketed and food lines swelled, people began looking for answers and demanding economic security. The situation was ripe for strong leaders and demagogues. Newly formed democracies withered under the strain.

THE RISE OF MILITARISM AND FASCISM

Hitler emerged from this environment, but he was not the first or the only right-wing dictator to rise to power in interwar Europe. He was preceded, most importantly, by Benito Mussolini (1883–1945), who seized power in Italy in 1922 and established the first fascist dictatorship in Europe in a country that had maintained parliamentary government since unification in 1861. Mussolini, born the son of a blacksmith in 1883, had in his youth dabbled in both revolutionary activity and radical journalism. He served in World War I, and after the war, organized a fighting band, made up mostly of ex-soldiers whom he called "fascists." **Fascism** emerged as a political ideology that was anticommunist and antisocialist, militantly nationalist, and in favor of economic security and law and order, if necessary through dictatorial rule.

In the years after the war, Italy, like Germany, suffered from wartime debts, economic depression, and unemployment. In 1921 and 1922, when

Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini ride in an open automobile through the streets of Munich during the Italian dictator's visit to Germany. National Archives (242-EB-7-38).

widespread strikes and demonstrations practically paralyzed the country, Mussolini and his fascists, dubbed "blackshirts," threatened a takeover of the government and promised to restore order and stability. Under the threat of Mussolini's ultimatum, the king appointed him prime minister. The parliament then granted him a year of emergency powers to restore order in the country. Within a few years, Mussolini had emasculated the parliament, put the press under censorship, and abolished all political parties except his fascists. He took the title *"Il Duce"* (the leader).

Adolf Hitler's early life paralleled that of Mussolini in some ways, and after Mussolini's seizure of power, Hitler consciously imitated Mussolini's tactics and success. Hitler was born in Austria, the son of a customs official, but lost both of his parents during his teenage years. He spent his early years in Vienna and Munich, a frustrated artist, mostly unemployed and poor. He welcomed the onset of World War I and served with distinction, becoming a corporal and receiving the Iron Cross for bravery. After the war, he founded the **National Socialist German Workers' Party**, which became known as the **Nazi Party**. In 1923, the year after Mussolini's March on Rome, Hitler and his Nazis made a similar attempt to seize control of the government in Bavaria, in southern Germany, in what became known as the Munich Beer Hall Putsch. The coup attempt was put down by the army, fourteen Nazis were killed, and Hitler was sentenced to jail.

During his year in jail, Hitler wrote his rambling memoirs, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), which was published in 1925 and became a best seller. The book was a strange conglomeration of autobiography, racism, nationalism, theories of history, and anti-Semitism. In this book, fifteen years before the gassing of Jews at Auschwitz, Hitler unveils his ideas of racial hierarchy and supremacy. Borrowing some of the language of social Darwinism and eugenics, he inveighs against the "crossing of breeds" in humans, which is "contrary to the will of Nature for a higher breeding of all life." In a chapter entitled "Nation and Race," which is mostly an invective against Jews and communists, and which ends with a call for "a German state of the German nation," he writes, "The stronger must dominate and not blend with the weaker, thus sacrificing his own greatness. Only the born weakling can view this as cruel . . . for if this law did not prevail, any conceivable higher development of organic living beings would be unthinkable."

The trial of Hitler for the putsch and the publication of *Mein Kampf* made him a political figure of national prominence. But the years after his release from jail were ones of relative prosperity and stability in Germany (following the Dawes Plan), and Hitler and his Nazis lost appeal and supporters. When the economic depression hit Germany in 1930, however, Hitler had new fodder for his charges against Versailles, Jews, communists, foreigners, and the Weimar Republic. As the economy collapsed and unemployment rates rose to 30 percent, Germans began looking for radical solutions from both the Left and the Right, and support grew for both the communists and the Nazis. In legislative elections, votes for the Nazis jumped from 3 percent in 1928 to 18 percent in 1930 to 37 percent in 1932. By that time, the Nazis were by far the largest party in the legislature, the *Reichstag*, although they did not have a majority of the seats. No other political party wanted to collaborate with Hitler in forming a coalition government, and the traditional conservative parties, led by President Hindenburg, all thought they could control Hitler by allowing him into the government and hemming him in with their own people in the cabinet. So, in January 1933, President Hindenburg appointed Hitler chancellor (prime minister) of the German Republic.

Hitler's appointment sparked a wave of brutal Nazi attacks on socialists, communists, Jews, and others who opposed Nazism. Hitler began to consolidate power in much the same way that Mussolini had in Italy a decade earlier. When a fire consumed the *Reichstag* building a week before elections, Hitler blamed it on the communists, frightening legislators and citizens alike with a Red scare and claiming a national emergency. The legislature voted to give him dictatorial powers. In July, Hitler declared that the Nazis were the only legal party. He initiated a public works program (and rearmament), which soon absorbed almost all of the unemployed in

Germany. When President Hindenburg died the next year, Hitler merged the offices of president and chancellor under his control. He proclaimed the establishment of the Third Reich. Like Mussolini, he took the title of *Führer* (leader). The groundwork was laid for a third totalitarian state, along with those of Stalin and Mussolini.

HITLER'S AGGRESSION

Hitler had gained both notoriety and popular support by condemning the Versailles Treaty and calling for a restoration of German honor, pride, and power and the recovery of lost German territories. Within a few months of becoming chancellor, he began to fulfill those promises in a steadily escalating series of aggressive moves. In October 1933, he pulled Germany out of the League of Nations and denounced the disarmament negotiations that were then under way. By 1935, he began rearming Germany, contrary to the provisions of Versailles, and had introduced compulsory military service. The League censured Germany but took no other action. In 1936, Hitler moved German troops into the Rhineland (on Germany's western border), an area that had been permanently demilitarized by the Versailles Treaty. The same year, Hitler signed mutual defense and assistance treaties with both Mussolini's Italy (the Rome–Berlin axis) and with the military government in Japan. And during the Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939, when government forces were pitted against Francisco Franco's rebel fascists, Hitler and Mussolini cooperated in assisting Franco, providing a testing ground for their troops and weapons (see Box 11.1).

By 1938, Hitler was prepared to press his demands to bring all Germans into the greater German Reich. In March of that year, he marched German troops into Austria, announced the *Anschluss* (merger) of Austria with Germany, and drove to Vienna in triumph. Even after this, neither the League nor the Western powers responded, in part due to a growing sentiment that there was some justification to Germany's nationalist claims. The annexation of Austria had added about [illegible] million Germans to the Reich, and now Hitler began making noises about the supposed intolerable conditions of the three million Germans living in the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia. As rumors spread that Germany was about to invade Czechoslovakia, the governments of France, England, and the Soviet Union issued warnings to Hitler. In September 1938, Hitler invited the prime ministers of England and France, Neville Chamberlain and Edouard Daladier, plus Mussolini, to a conference in Munich to discuss the situation. In the resulting agreement, the four powers renounced war on each other, ceded the Sudetenland to Hitler, and guaranteed the territorial integrity of the rest of Czechoslovakia. Prime Minister Chamberlain returned to London asserting he had achieved "peace with honor." Six

BOX 11.1
Picasso's *Guernica*: Art, War, and Politics

One of the most famous paintings of the twentieth century, Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* vividly depicts the horrors and suffering of war in the painter's homeland, Spain, during that country's civil war of 1936–1939. The war pitted the democratically elected (and leftist) Republican government against the right-wing and military forces (the Nationalists) under the command of General Francisco Franco. Franco's forces were assisted by Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany. In 1937, the German *Luftwaffe*, in support of Franco, bombed and leveled the little Basque village of Guernica, a Republican stronghold, killing more than sixteen hundred men, women, and children. This was the world's first aerial bombing of civilians, and a prelude to what was to come in World War II.

This massacre of innocent civilians shocked the world, including Picasso, who was living in Paris at the time. His large painting, more than eleven feet tall and twenty-five feet wide, employs the same black, gray, and white of the newspaper photos depicting the tragedy. It is a stark, hallucinatory nightmare. One woman grieves over a dead child in her arms; another screams as she is surrounded by flames. A shrieking horse, run through by a spear, represents the suffering Spanish Republic.

The painting was a sensation. Its tour throughout the world brought attention to the Spanish Civil War, but it also became a global antiwar icon, symbolizing the tragedy of war and the suffering it inflicts on individuals, especially innocent civilians.

Picasso refused to have the painting delivered to Spain, until democracy was established in that country. That took a long time. Franco, who won the civil war and took power in 1939, survived almost forty years as ruler of Spain. As the rest of Europe recovered and grew after World War II, Spain remained relatively poor and underdeveloped, separated and isolated, and outside the EU. Only after the death of Franco in 1975 and the re-establishment of democracy there did *Guernica* return to Spain. But by then, Picasso too was dead.

Pablo Picasso's Guernica. *Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia.*

From Merriman, John M. A history of modern Europe : from the Renaissance to the present. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010.

appealed to their dislike of Russia, their enemy on the eastern front during the Great War.

Most wealthy businessmen still preferred more traditional nationalists like Hindenburg and Papen and worried about Hitler's unpredictability and his early denunciations of capitalists and promises to create a new elite. The Nazi Party found only one major donor among big businessmen; a group of industrialists even tried to convince Hindenburg to leave Hitler out of the cabinet. Although some big businessmen shared the Nazis' virulent anti-Semitism, they were uneasy with the foreign condemnation it brought, and concerned that it might one day undercut their markets abroad.

But big business nonetheless contributed to the fall of Weimar. Most Rhineland industrialists were no more in favor of parliamentary government than were Prussian Junkers. Hitler flattered business leaders and promised public order, which was good for business, even if achieved at gunpoint.

The Nazi State

Hitler's appointment as chancellor sparked a wave of systematic and brutal Nazi attacks on union members, Socialists, Communists, Jews, and some Catholics who opposed Nazism. Mussolini had consolidated his power over the Italian state in about three years. It took Hitler less than three months. During the night of February 27, 1933, a fire caused considerable damage to the Reichstag building in Berlin. The police arrested a deranged, homeless Dutch Communist, charging him with arson.

Citing an imaginary Communist plot, Hindenburg issued an emergency decree suspending virtually all individual rights. Penalties of imprisonment and even death could be imposed without due legal process as police arrested thousands of Communists. Hermann Göring (1893–1946), one of Hitler's long-time disciples and now minister of the interior in Prussia, authorized a new auxiliary police force made up of members of the S.A. and other paramilitary groups.

But the parliamentary elections of March 5, 1933, which Hitler promised would be the last held in Nazi Germany and which took place amid enormous Nazi intimidation, did not give Hitler the overwhelming majority he had anticipated—the Nazis emerged with 44 percent of the vote. Nonetheless, Hitler proceeded as if the vote had been unanimous. On March 23, the cowed Reichstag approved an Enabling Act, which extended the unlimited "emergency" powers of the Nazis. The liberal political parties of the Weimar Republic simply disbanded. In July 1933, Hitler banned all political parties except the Nazi Party. It tripled in size, with 2.5 million members by the end of 1933, adding so many people that the "old fighters" who had joined early in the 1920s began to grumble that the party was losing its so-called elite character.

The Nazis implemented a dictatorial state. In May 1933, they organized the state-controlled German Labor Front to replace the unions they had

Communists under arrest after the Reichstag fire of 1933.

decimated. Strikes were illegal. Hitler dissolved the state parliaments and took away the remaining autonomy of the individual German states, appointing Nazis to take over state governments. A new law empowered officials to dismiss subordinates whom they considered potentially disloyal to the Nazis, or who could not prove that they were of pure "Aryan" racial stock. In October, the first concentration camp began operation at Dachau near Munich for the incarceration of political prisoners.

Despite Nazi rhetoric about a racially pure community of Germans, Hitler was far from envisioning social equality, which he associated with socialism and communism. Still, for some Germans, the Nazi Party, and particularly the S.S. (*Schutzstaffel*, security units that guarded Hitler), provided a means of social mobility; military trappings conveyed the respectability many Germans associated with a uniform. Although the Nazis drew support from all social classes (although proportionately less support from workers), the Depression in particular drove desperate middle-class Germans into the Nazi fold.

Hitler needed the loyalty of Germany's army. But many German officers were becoming increasingly wary of the S.A., which was now almost 3 million strong and which seemed out of control. Its members openly competed with Nazi officials for appointments and influence. Röhm announced that henceforth members of his force could not be tried by courts and that they were not subject to police authority. Believing that Hitler would betray the party's radicalism, he foolishly bragged that he would free Hitler from his "stupid and dangerous" advisers.

The S.S. and the Gestapo (the Nazi secret police) crushed the S.A. on June 30, 1934. They killed at least eighty people, including Röhm. The

"night of the long knives" also swept up some conservatives and military officers, as Hitler had feared trouble from the old right as well as from the S.A. Hitler convinced President Hindenburg that the gory purge had saved the German Third Reich (Third Empire) from a plot.

Hindenburg's death in August 1934 allowed Hitler to combine the titles of chancellor and *Führer* ("leader"), which replaced that of "president," a title that smacked of a republic. The army agreed to take an oath of personal allegiance to "the executor of the whole people's will." Ninety percent of those voting in a plebiscite approved Hitler's assumption of both functions.

The Nazi program of "coordination" was applied to most aspects of civil society, such as organized groups and activities outside the family. The Nazis had already gradually taken over voluntary associations, such as professional associations and sports clubs. Depoliticized, closely monitored voluntary associations and churches could remain centers of local public life without threatening Nazi domination. The Nazis worked to convert schools into mouthpieces for Hitler's state, providing new textbooks with instructions for teachers as to what should be taught, including "racial theory" and "Teutonic prehistory." Instead of students fearing their teachers, as had often been the case in German schools, non-Nazi teachers now had reason to fear their students; members of the Hitler Youth organization were quick to report to Nazi Party members teachers who did not seem enthusiastic about Nazism. New university chairs in "racial hygiene," military history, and German prehistory reflected Nazi interests. Pictures of Hitler went up in every classroom and radios broadcast his speeches.

The Nazis brought hundreds of thousands of active Germans into carefully controlled Nazi organizations, the goal of each being to "reach toward Hitler"—that is, to share the racist, nationalist goals of the Führer. By 1936 the Hitler Youth included almost half of all German boys between ten and fourteen years of age; a League of German Girls also flourished. The Nazis reduced social life to its most basic component, the family. (At

Hitler paying homage to Hindenburg shortly before the latter's death.

the same time, the Nazis encouraged children to denounce their parents for being disloyal to the fatherland, and the party sponsored "Aryan breeding" programs outside the family.) Vicarious participation in Nazi ceremonies and rituals also helped augment a sense of national identity.

Hitler implemented the Nazi "leadership principle," which he defined as a "doctrine of conflict." He applied a strategy of "divide and rule" to the higher echelons of government, such as the three chancelleries that replaced the cabinet. He tolerated and even encouraged open competition between his most trusted subordinates and between branches of government. Those who enjoyed Hitler's confidence ruthlessly and aggressively carved out personal fiefdoms. Unlike Stalin, who watched over even the most minor details with obsessive care, the Führer provided little supervision to government agencies. Occasionally something would catch Hitler's attention and brief, frenzied activity would follow. But he missed meetings, worked irregular hours, and was often disorganized. Hitler valued personal loyalty far more than efficiency.

The "doctrine of conflict" adversely affected the economic goals Hitler set for the state. The army and the air force quarreled over resources, the S.S. and the police over jurisdiction. The Four-Year Plan launched in 1936 under Göring's direction illustrated the functioning of the Nazi state. Hitler wanted to stimulate economic development, above all in industries necessary for rearmament: steel, iron, and synthetic fuel and rubber. Göring spent much time warring with other branches of government. Furthermore, industrialists resisted state intervention in their businesses. The Four-Year Plan failed to achieve its lofty goals.

Hitler had to confront the daunting challenge of unemployment. Although he knew or cared very little about economics, Hitler correctly determined that the rapid rearmament of Germany would help create jobs. Food shortages remained severe until 1936, but public works projects helped reduce unemployment and inflation. Big industrial concerns prospered, particularly those manufacturing war materials. The German gross national product rose by 81 percent, in part because of state direction of the economy. Hitler bragged that he had wrought an economic miracle. Millions of Germans believed him. An ordinary German woman wrote in her diary, "One feels absolutely insignificant in the face of the greatness, the truthfulness and the openness of such a man."

More consumer goods, such as radios, reached the consumer market, contributing to a sense of optimism about material conditions of life. The Labor Front organized cut-rate Nazi vacations. Some families of modest means who had never had the opportunity to travel took cruises in the Baltic Sea or even in the Mediterranean Sea. Hitler named this program "Strength Through Joy," taking the idea from Mussolini's after-work program of recreational trips in Italy. However, production of Hitler's planned low-cost "Volkswagen," or "people's car," was postponed because factories were needed for military production.

Yet sectors of the German economy remained weak. German industry depended on imports of iron ore, copper, oil, rubber, and bauxite. Many Germans found that their share in the "national community" was small. And although Hitler liked to identify the German people with what he considered rural virtues—"blood and soil"—the number of small farms continued to decline. There was no marked return to the soil as Germany continued to urbanize.

Like Mussolini, the Führer preached that a woman's place was in the kitchen or in the delivery room. A Nazi book for children announced, "The German resurrection is a male event." The state offered attractive financial benefits to families with children, and the German birthrate continued to rise, bolstered by an improving economy. Just months after becoming chancellor, Hitler forced women to give up industrial jobs and excluded them from public service and teaching. Fewer women went on to university. Certain occupations were classified as "women's work," primarily those involving traditional textile or handicraft production or farm work. But, despite the slogan "Women at home," the reality in Nazi Germany, as in Mussolini's Italy, was increasingly otherwise. The campaign to remove women from paid employment ended in the late 1930s, as women were needed to replace men conscripted into the army. The number of women working in German industry rose by a third between 1933 and 1939.

Hitler and the Nazis did not rule by sheer terror alone. Hitler also sought and won overwhelming popular approval. After defeat in the Great War, humiliation by the Treaty of Versailles, and years of Weimar instability in which the Nazis and other right-wing groups played a major part, Germans applauded as he dismantled the treaty piece by piece. But most ordinary Germans also approved of police action undertaken by the well-organized apparatus of the Nazi state. Regular police units drawn from every walk of German life assisted. The Nazi state won approval with a harsh campaign against crime, which had increased during the Depression. Most ordinary Germans approved of and indeed many collaborated in the arrest and imprisonment of common criminals. The Gestapo and the "Kripo," or criminal police, who became ever more aggressive, also arrested people considered "work shy," or others like gays who did not seem to them to fit in. Doctors used sterilization as a form of punishment and social control, part of Nazi "racial hygiene." Germans looked the other way or were indifferent to the rounding up of political dissidents and Jews. A contemporary described a Gestapo office:

> Grimy corridors, offices furnished with Spartan simplicity, threats, kicks, troops chasing chained men up and down the reaches of the building, shouting, rows of girls and women standing with their noses and toes against the walls, overflowing ashtrays, portraits of Hitler and his aides, the smell of coffee, smartly dressed girls working at high speed

> behind typewriters—girls seemingly indifferent to the squalor and agony about them . . . and Gestapo agents asleep on tables.

Moreover, thousands of Germans denounced neighbors to the Gestapo for being Jewish, Socialist, or Communist, and did so well aware of the consequences of their acts. Certainly by 1939, most Germans were fully aware of the existence of concentration camps. Indeed the Nazi government eagerly publicized the "trials" and sentences that sent people to them.

Some intellectuals and artists jumped on the Nazi bandwagon. Very few members—though the novelist Thomas Mann, who had moved from being an angry conservative to a supporter of the republic by 1922, was one—resigned from the prestigious Prussian Academy of Arts when called upon to pledge allegiance to Hitler. The philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) saluted the Führer as "guided by the inexorability of that spiritual mission that the destiny of the German people forcibly impresses upon its history." Hitler hauled out Heidegger on formal occasions to claim that Germany's finest scholars had become Nazis. In fact, some of the finest German minds were already leaving Germany.

The Nazis burned books that espoused ideas of which they disapproved. In May 1933 storm troopers coordinated the burning of books by Jews, Communists, Socialists, and other disapproved authors. In 1937, posters in the municipal library of Essen boasted that in the four years that had elapsed since the book burnings, there had been a "healthy" decline in books borrowed and in the use of the reading room.

Hitler railed against what he called "decadent" art and its new experimental forms, ordering many works removed from museums. During the Weimar period, Berlin, a city with 40 theaters and 120 newspapers, had become a center of daring and successful experimentation by artists, writers, and composers, as well as scholars. In 1919, the architect Walter Gropius (1883–1969) had begun a school that combined art and applied arts in the town of Weimar. The Bauhaus—"House of Building"—set the architectural and decorative style of Weimar, stressing simplicity and beauty, expressing function through form, combining art and craft. By using the most modern materials available in the quest for "total architecture," Gropius hoped to reconcile art and industry. The Bauhaus's modernism and the presence of foreign architects, artists, and designers made it suspect to Nazis. Hitler, the former aspiring artist, detested modernism. He closed the Bauhaus as a symbol of "cultural Bolshevism."

In 1937, the Nazis in Munich staged an "Exhibition of Degenerate Art," including expressionist and dadaist paintings, among other modernist works. A Great German Art Show opened at the same time, putting on view officially approved painting. While Stalin's preferred style of "socialist realism" emphasized work, Nazi art celebrated being German. Nazi artists offered sentimental portraits of German families tilling the land, blond

Adolf Hitler visiting the "Exhibition of Disgrace" in 1935, which anticipated the so-called "Exhibition of Degenerate Art" of 1937.

youths hiking in the Pomeranian forests, and square-jaw soldiers portrayed as medieval Teutonic knights.

In their attacks upon modernist composers, the Nazis reserved particular vehemence for the works of Jewish composers, while the late-nineteenth-century compositions of the anti-Semitic Richard Wagner delighted Hitler. The theater, too, suffered from censorship, as well as from the departure of a number of Germany's leading playwrights. Hitler himself preferred light plays, such as a rustic comedy that earned the Critic's Prize in Berlin in 1934, in which the leading character was a pig. Anti-modernism could be seen in Nazi attacks on the supposed hedonism of the "roaring twenties," which Nazis associated with licentiousness, homosexuality, neon lights, jazz, and modern dances. Nazis did not do the Charleston.

Joseph Goebbels (1897–1945), Hitler's minister of propaganda, orchestrated the cult of Hitler. The Führer commissioned the popular filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl (1902–2003) to produce *Triumph of the Will*. This imposing propaganda film, which depicts the carefully orchestrated Nuremberg rally of 1934 where 250,000 regimented, uniformed Germans with Nazi banners and flags saluted Hitler, contributed to the cult of the Führer. The Nazis encouraged the production of a number of virulently anti-Semitic films, above all *The Jew Suess* (1940), the story of an eighteenth-century

Jewish financier who betrays a German state and is executed, to the cheers of Nazi audiences.

Hitler's New Reich and the Jews

Hitler made anti-Semitism a cornerstone of Nazi ideology and state policy. In 1935, the Nuremberg Laws, which made the swastika the official symbol of Nazi Germany, deprived Jews (defined by having had at least one Jewish grandparent) of citizenship. Jews were forced to wear a yellow Star of David prominently on their clothing when they left their homes. In the quest for racial "purity," the laws also forbade marriage or sex between non-Jewish Germans and Jews. Signs in restaurants, movie houses, and parks warned that Jews were not allowed, such as one proclaiming "Jews enter this locality at their own peril!" Yet some Jewish businesses, including banks, at first continued to operate, if only because Hitler feared the economic consequences if they were closed. Some of these were "Aryanized" by removing Jewish owners and managers. By July 1938, only 9,000 of the 50,000 businesses owned by Jews were still open. Shortly thereafter, the German state forced Jewish families to list the value of what they owned and to turn over their assets to Gentile trustees, who could dispose of these estates as they wished. Decrees established a list of professions and occupations from which Jews were to be excluded.

When Hitler came to power, some Jews emigrated immediately, or made plans to do so. With Jews unable to teach in universities after early 1933 or to attend university as of 1937, many distinguished Jewish scholars and artists left for Britain or the United States, including the brilliant physicist Albert Einstein (1879–1955). More than 1,600 scholars and scientists had lost, resigned, or left their positions. Other intellectual exiles from Hitler's Germany were not Jewish, among them the poet Stefan George, the writer Thomas Mann, and the painter Max Beckmann. But one had to have some

Nazis post placards in a Jewish shop window. The notice reads "It is forbidden to buy from this Jewish shop."

place to go. The borders of Hungary and Yugoslavia were closed to refugees. One by one, countries that had accepted Jewish refugees refused to do so. In 1938, the French government greatly tightened restrictions on the admission of refugees. Britain made it harder for Jews to get in, or to go to Palestine, which Britain controlled. Switzerland, which had been known as a haven for political exiles, also in 1938 closed the door on Jews fleeing Germany or Austria. Moreover, the Swiss government suggested that German passport officials stamp "non-Aryan" on passports of Jews so that they could be easily identified and turned back at the frontier. The Swiss police hunted down refugees living in Switzerland whom they deemed illegal residents, putting them across the German border, or other frontiers.

On the evening of November 9, 1938, following the assassination of a German embassy official in Paris by a Polish Jew, S.S. and other Nazi activists launched planned attacks on specific Jewish businesses and homes throughout Germany. They destroyed stores, killed several hundred Jews, and beat up thousands of others. Thirty thousand Jews were imprisoned in camps. The terrifying night became known as *Kristallnacht,* because the sound of shattering glass windows resounded in German cities that night. Few Germans protested.

Hitler's Foreign Policy

Hitler had never concealed his goal of shattering the Treaty of Versailles. German foreign policy came to dominate European international affairs. Hitler planned to rearm Germany, and he demanded the return of the Saar Basin, whose rich mines the French held north of their border, and of German parts of Upper Silesia on the border of Poland, the demilitarization of the Rhineland, and the absorption of the Polish (or Danzig) Corridor, which divided Prussia from East Prussia. But Hitler's long-term goals, which were far greater, were inseparable from his megalomaniacal determination to expand Germany by armed conquest.

Hitler's foreign policy was predicated upon the German conquest of "living space" (*Lebensraum*) and his theory that the Aryan race was superior to any other and therefore had the right, indeed the obligation, to assert its will on the "inferior" Slav peoples. A week after becoming chancellor in January 1933, Hitler told German generals of his plans to rearm Germany, to conquer land for agricultural production, and to establish German settlements in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The Slavic peoples of the Soviet Union, Poland, and Czechoslovakia would serve the German "master race" as slaves.

Once Hitler came to power, he was less open about his previously stated goals because Germany was then vulnerable to invasion, but these goals did not change. Hitler had to move with particular caution to avoid confrontation with Britain and, particularly, France. For the moment, Poland and Czechoslovakia each had a stronger army than Germany. Hitler had to carry

Palmer, R. R., Joel Colton, and Lloyd S. Kramer. A history of the modern world. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2002.

Chapter 21

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

105. The Weakness of the Democracies: Again to War

106. The Years of Axis Triumph

107. The Western-Soviet Victory

108. The Foundations of the Peace

Peace in the abstract, the peace that is the mere absence of war, does not exist in international relations. Peace is never found apart from certain conditions; it means peaceable acceptance of given conditions, or peaceable and orderly transformation of conditions by negotiation and agreement. The conditions, in the 1930s, were basically those laid down by the Paris peace conference of 1919—the states recognized, the frontiers drawn, the terms agreed to, at the close of the First World War. In the 1930s neither Germany, Italy, Japan, nor the U.S.S.R. was content with these conditions; they were "revisionist" or dissatisfied powers; and the first three were willing to undertake war itself to make a change. Great Britain, France, and the United States were satisfied powers, expecting no benefit from change in the conditions; but on the other hand they had lost faith in the conditions and were unwilling to risk war for the sake of upholding them. They had made a treaty in 1919 which a dozen years later they were unwilling to enforce. They stood idly by, as long as they could, while the dissatisfied powers tore to pieces the states recognized, the frontiers drawn, and the terms agreed to at the Peace of Paris. From the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 to the outbreak of European war in 1939, force was used by those who wished to upset international order, but never by those who wished to maintain it. A new world war was therefore launched by nations that had never accepted the outcome of the last one.

The war that raged across the world from 1939 to 1945 was the most destructive conflict in human history. It was also the most widely dispersed, global war that has ever been fought. The Second World War affected nations on every continent; caused the deaths of almost 60 million people (at least two-thirds of whom were civilians); produced vast physical damage in cities, factories, and countrysides; generated new forms of genocidal mass murder as well as new military weapons of mass destruction; and contributed decisively to

Chapter emblem: German troops entering a destroyed Polish village in September 1939.

the new global influence of two superpower nations—the United States and the Soviet Union.

Historians often disagree about the social or political consequences of warfare, but the Second World War was unquestionably one of the definitive, shaping events in modern world history. Both the haunting memories and complex legacy of the Second World War still influence modern cultures and people everywhere at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

105. THE WEAKNESS OF THE DEMOCRACIES: AGAIN TO WAR

The Pacifism and Disunity of the West

While dictators stormed in the 1930s, the Western democracies were swayed by a profound pacifism, which may be defined as an insistence on peace regardless of consequences. Many people, especially in England and the United States, believed that the First World War had been a mistake, that little or nothing had been gained by it, that they had been deluded by wartime propaganda, that wars were really started by armaments manufacturers, that Germany had not really caused the war of 1914, that the Treaty of Versailles was too hard on the Germans, that vigorous peoples like the Germans or Italians needed room for expansion, that democracy was after all not suited to all nations, that it took two to make a quarrel, and that there need be no war if one side resolutely refused to be provoked—a whole system of pacific and tolerant ideas in which there was perhaps the usual mixture of truth and misunderstanding.

The pacifism of the West

The pacifism of the West had other roots, most evident in France. About 1.4 million Frenchmen had died in the First World War; half of all French males between the ages of 20 and 32 in 1914 had been killed. To the French it was inconceivable that such a holocaust should be repeated. French strategy was therefore defensive and sparing of manpower. If war came, the French expected to fight it mainly in the elaborate fortifications, called the Maginot Line, which they built on their eastern frontier facing Germany, from the Swiss to the Belgian border; to its north the Ardennes forest was to be a barrier to any invader. During the depression France was torn by internal class conflict and by fascist and quasi-fascist agitation. Many French on the Right, historically unsympathetic to the republic and seeing, or claiming to see, in such movements as the Popular Front the threat of social revolution, did not conceal their admiration for Mussolini or even for Hitler. Abandoning their traditional role as ardent nationalists, they would do nothing to oppose the dictators. On the other hand, many on the Left looked with sympathy upon the Soviet Union. France was ideologically too divided in the 1930s to possess any firm foreign policy, and all elements took false comfort from the supposed impregnability of the French Chinese Wall.

A similar situation, in lesser degree, prevailed in Great Britain and the United States. The loss and bloodshed of the First World War were remembered. It was well known that another world war would be even more horrible; there was an unspeakable dread of the bombing of cities. Typical of the time was a resolution adopted by students at Oxford in 1933 that they would never take up arms for their country under any conditions; peace movements appeared among American college students too. The pull between Left and Right was felt in England and America. In the 1930s, when any international action seemed to favor either the U.S.S.R. on the one hand, or Hitler and Mussolini on the other,

it was hard to establish any foreign policy on a firm basis of national unity. In Britain some members of the upper classes were overtly sympathetic to the fascist dictators, or saw in them a bulwark against communism. The government itself tried to be noncommittal; it believed that some means of satisfying or appeasing the more legitimate demands of the dictators might be found. Neville Chamberlain, prime minister after 1937, became the principal architect of the appeasement policy.

The United States government, despite President Roosevelt's repeated denunciation of the aggressors, followed in practice a policy of rigid isolation. Neutrality legislation, enacted by a strong isolationist bloc in Congress in the years 1935 to 1937, forbade loans, export of munitions, and use of American shipping facilities to any belligerent once the president had recognized a state of war in a given area. Many believed that the United States had been drawn into the First World War by such economic involvement. From this American neutrality legislation the aggressors of the 1930s derived great benefit, but not the victims of aggression.

Russian resentment

As for the rulers of the U.S.S.R., they were revisionist and dissatisfied in that they did not accept the new frontiers of eastern Europe nor the territorial losses incurred by Russia in the First World War. They resented the *cordon sanitaire* created in 1919 against the spread of Bolshevism, the ring of small states on their borders from Finland to Romania, which were almost without exception vehemently anti-Soviet. They had no fondness for the international status quo, nor had they abandoned their long-range revolutionary objectives. But, as Communists and as Russians, they were obsessed by fear of attack and invasion. Their Marxist doctrine taught the inherent hostility of the entire capitalist world; the intervention of the Western Allies in the revolution and civil wars confirmed their Marxist theory. And long before the Bolshevik Revolution, in the days of Napoleon and earlier, the fertile Russian plains had tempted ambitious conquerors. Resentful and suspicious of the outside world, in the 1930s the men in the Kremlin were alarmed primarily by Germany. Hitler, in *Mein Kampf* and elsewhere, had declared that he meant to obliterate Bolshevism and subordinate large stretches of eastern Europe to Germany.

The Soviets became interested in collective security, in international action against aggression. In 1934 they joined the League of Nations. They instructed Communist parties to work with socialists and liberals in popular fronts. They offered assistance in checking fascist aggressors, signing mutual assistance pacts with France and Czechoslovakia in 1935. But many people fled from the Soviet embrace with a shudder. They distrusted Soviet motives, or they were convinced that the purges and trials of the 1930s had left the Soviets weak and undependable as allies, or they felt that the fascist dictators might be diverted eastward against the Soviets and so spare the Western democracies. Here again, though the Soviet Union was ostensibly willing, no effective coalition against aggression could be formed.

The March of Nazi and Fascist Aggression

Adolf Hitler perceived these weaknesses with uncanny genius. Determined to wreck the whole treaty system, which most Germans, to be sure, found humiliating, he employed tactics of gradual encroachment that played on the hopes and fears of the democratic peoples. He inspired in them alternating tremors of apprehension and sighs of relief. He would rage and rant, arouse the fear of war, take just a little, declare that it was all he wanted, let the former Allies naïvely hope that he was now satisfied and that peace was secure; then rage again, take a little more, and proceed through the same cycle.

Each year he precipitated some kind of emergency, and each time the French and British saw no alternative except to let him have his way. In 1933, soon after seizing power, he took Germany out of the League and out of the Disarmament Conference then taking place. He successfully wooed Poland, long France's ally, and in 1934 the two countries signed a nonaggression treaty. That same year the Nazis of Austria attempted a *putsch,* assassinated the Austrian chancellor, Dollfuss, and demanded the union of Austria with Germany. The Western powers did nothing. It was Mussolini who acted. Not desiring to see Germany installed at the Brenner Pass, he mobilized large Italian forces on the frontier, discouraged Hitler from intervening openly in Austria, and so preserved the independence of Austria for four more years. In January 1935 a plebiscite was conducted in the Saar by the League of Nations as stipulated under the Versailles treaty. Amidst intense Nazi agitation, the Saar voted for reunion with the Reich. Two months later, in March 1935, Hitler dramatically repudiated those clauses in the Versailles treaty intended to keep Germany disarmed; he now openly built up the German armed forces. France, England, and Italy protested such arbitrary and one-sided denunciation of an international treaty but did nothing about it. Indeed, Great Britain entered into a naval agreement with Germany, to the consternation of the French.

Hitler's triumphs

On March 7, 1936, using as his justification the new Franco-Soviet pact, Hitler repudiated the Locarno agreements (which had confirmed post–World War I national borders) and reoccupied the Rhineland; that is, he sent German troops into the German territory west of the Rhine, which by the Treaty of Versailles was supposed to be a demilitarized zone. There was talk in the French government of action, and at this time Hitler might have been checked, for German military strength was still weak and the German army was prepared to withdraw, or at least consult, at signs of resistance. But the French government was divided and unwilling to act without Britain; and the British would not risk war to keep German troops from occupying German soil. The next year, 1937, was a quiet one, but Nazi agitation flared up in Danzig, which the Treaty of Versailles had set up as a free city. In March 1938 German forces moved into Austria, and the union of Austria and Germany, the *Anschluss,* was at last consummated. In September 1938 came the turn of Czechoslovakia and the Munich crisis. To understand it we must first pick up other threads in the story.

Mussolini's ambitions

Mussolini, too, had his ambitions and required sensational foreign triumphs to magnetize the Italian people. Since 1919 the Italians had been dissatisfied with the peace arrangements. They had received nothing of the former Turkish territories and German colonies that had been liberally parceled out, as mandates, to Great Britain, France, Belgium, Japan, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. They had never forgotten the humiliating defeat of Italian forces by Ethiopia at Adowa in 1896, which had blocked Italy's imperial ambitions in northeast Africa. Ethiopia remained the only part of black Africa (with the exception of Liberia) that was still independent.

In 1935 Italy invaded Ethiopia. The League of Nations, of which Ethiopia was a member, pronounced the Italian action an unwarranted aggression and imposed sanctions on Italy, by which members of the League were to refrain from selling Italy either arms or raw materials—oil was excepted. The British even gathered large naval forces in the Mediterranean in a show of strength. In France, however, there was considerable sympathy for Mussolini in important quarters, and in England there was the fear that if sanctions became too effective, by refusal of oil or by closure of the Suez Canal, Italy might be provoked into

a general war. Mussolini was thus able to defeat Ethiopia in 1936 and to combine it with Italian Somaliland and Eritrea in an Italian East African empire. Haile Selassie, the Ethiopian emperor, made futile pleas for further action at Geneva. The League of Nations again failed, as in the earlier occupation of Manchuria by Japan, to provide machinery for disciplinary action against a wayward Great Power.

The Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939

Hardly had the Ethiopian crisis been disposed of, to the entire satisfaction of the aggressor, when another serious crisis broke out in Spain. In 1931, after a decade of political disturbance, a rather mild revolution had driven out Alfonso XIII, of the Bourbon family, and brought about the establishment of a democratic Spanish Republic. Old hostilities within the country came to a head. The new republican government undertook a program of social and economic reform. To combat the old entrenched power of the church, anticlerical legislation was enacted: church and state were separated, the Jesuit order was dissolved and its property was confiscated, and the schools were removed from clerical control. The old movement for Catalan independence was somewhat mollified by the grant of considerable local autonomy. To placate the peasantry the government began to break up some of the larger landed estates and to redistribute the land. The government's program was never pushed vigorously enough to satisfy extremist elements, who manifested their dissatisfaction in strikes and uprisings, particularly in industrial Barcelona, the Catalan capital, and the mining areas of the Asturias, but it was radical enough to antagonize the great property owners and the church. After 1933 the government fell into the hands of rightist and conservative parties, who ruled through ineffective and unpopular ministries. An insurrection of the miners in the Asturias was put down with much brutality. Agitation for Catalan independence was repressed.

In February 1936 new elections were held. All groups of the Left—republicans, socialists, syndicalists, anarchists, communists—joined in a Popular Front against monarchists, clericals, army officers, other adherents of the old regime, and Falangists, or Spanish fascists. The Left won a victory at the polls, and pressed forward with a reform program. In July 1936, a group of military men led an insurrection against the Republican government; General Francisco Franco emerged as leader. The parties of the Left united in resistance and the whole country fell into civil war. It was the most devastating war in all Spanish history; over 600,000 human beings lost their lives, and it was accompanied by extreme cruelties on both sides. For nearly three years the republican or loyalist forces held their own before finally succumbing to the insurgents led by Franco, who in March 1939 established an authoritarian, fascist-type rule over the exhausted country.

Francisco Franco

Spain provided a rehearsal for the greater struggle soon to come. The republican government could legitimately have looked forward to the purchase of arms abroad to suppress the rebellion, but Britain and France were resolved not to let the war expand into a general conflict. They forbade the shipment of war materials to the republican government; even the French Popular Front government put obstacles in the way of aid to the hard-pressed Spanish Popular Front. The United States extended its neutrality legislation to cover civil wars and placed an embargo on the export of arms to Spain. At British and French instigation 27 nations, including all the major European powers, agreed not to intervene or take sides. But the nonintervention policy proved a fiasco. Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union

Spain splits the world

intervened anyway. The former two supported Franco and denounced the republicans as the tools of Bolshevism, while the U.S.S.R. supported the republic, reinforced the growing strength of the Spanish Communists, and stigmatized the rebels under Franco as the agents of international fascism. Germans, Italians, and Russians sent military equipment to Spain, testing their tanks and planes in battle. The fascist bombings of Guernica, Madrid, and Barcelona horrified the democratic world. The Germans and Italians sent troops (the Italians over 50,000); the Soviets if only for geographical reasons did not send troops but sent technicians and political advisers. Thousands of volunteers of leftist or liberal sympathy, from the United States and Europe, went to Spain to serve with the republican forces. Spain became the battlefield of contending ideologies. The Spanish Civil War split the world into fascist and antifascist camps.

As in the case of Ethiopia, the war in Spain helped bring Germany and Italy together. Mussolini had at first, like others, feared the revival of a militant Germany. He had outfaced Hitler when the latter threatened to absorb Austria in 1934. The Ethiopian war, Italian ambitions in Africa, and a clamorous Italian demand for ascendancy in the Mediterranean, the *mare nostrum* of the ancient Romans, estranged Italy from France and Britain. In 1936, soon after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Mussolini and Hitler came to an understanding, which they called the Rome-Berlin Axis—the diplomatic axis around which they hoped the world might turn. That year Japan signed with Germany an Anti-Comintern Pact, soon ratified by Italy too; ostensibly an agreement to oppose communism, it was actually the foundation for a diplomatic alliance. Each, thus furnished with allies, was able to push its demands with more success. In 1938 Mussolini accepted what he had denied to Hitler in 1934—the German absorption of Austria.

GUERNICA

by Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881–1973)

Picasso painted this famous picture shortly after the fascist bombing of the Spanish city of Guernica in 1937. Although it expressed Picasso's response to a specific event in the Spanish Civil War, its disjointed images of the death, suffering, and destruction in modern warfare quickly gave this work a haunting, universal, cultural and historical meaning.

(Art Resource, NY/© 2001 The Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York)

The "rape of Nanjing"

Meanwhile, in 1937, Japan, using as a pretext the firing upon Japanese troops at the Marco Polo Bridge near Beijing, launched a brutal full-scale invasion of eastern China and within a short time controlled most of the country. The Japanese occupation of Nanjing in 1937, then the Chinese capital, was accompanied by such violence and atrocities on the part of the Japanese military that it came to be known and long remembered as the "rape of Nanjing." The Chinese could fight on only from the hinterland. The League again ineffectually condemned Japan. The United States refrained from applying its neutrality legislation since no war was officially declared. This made possible the extension of loans to China, the victim of aggression, but also made possible the purchase by the Japanese of vitally needed scrap iron, steel, oil, and machinery from American industry. The Japanese were left free to pursue their expansionist ambitions in Asia, in part because the Western nations were distracted and divided by the mounting tensions in Europe.

The Munich Crisis: Climax of Appeasement

By annexing Austria in March 1938 Hitler added about 6 million Germans to the Reich. Another 3 million Germans lived in Czechoslovakia (see maps, pp. 448, 694–695). All those who were adults in 1938 had been born under the Habsburg empire.

Czechs divided

They had never, since 1918, been content with their new position as a minority in a Slavic state and had long complained about various forms of subtle discrimination. There were Polish, Ruthenian, and Hungarian minorities also, and since even the Slovaks had a strong sense of separate identity, there was in actuality no preponderant national majority of any kind. The fact that Czechoslovakia had one of the most enlightened minorities policies in Europe, enjoyed the highest living standard east of Germany, and was the only country in central Europe in 1938 that was still democratic only demonstrated the difficulty of maintaining a multinational state even under the most favorable of conditions.

Czechoslovakia was strategically the keystone of Europe. It had a firm alliance with France, which had repeatedly guaranteed to defend it against German attack, and an alliance with the Soviet Union, which was contingent on the functioning of the French alliance. With Romania and Yugoslavia it formed the Little Entente, upon which France relied to maintain the existing boundaries in that part of Europe. It had a well-trained army, important munitions industries, and strong fortifications against Germany, which, however, were located in precisely the Sudeten border area where the population was almost all German. When Hitler annexed Austria—since Vienna is further east than Prague—he enclosed Czechoslovakia in a vise. From the German point of view it could now be said that Bohemia-Moravia, which was almost a third German anyway, formed a bulge protruding into the German Reich.

The Sudeten Germans of Czechoslovakia, whether Nazis or not, fell under the influence of agitators whose aim was less to relieve their grievances than to promote National Socialism. Hitler fomented their demands for union with Germany. In May 1938 rumors of an imminent German invasion caused the Czechs to mobilize; Russia, France, and England issued warnings. Hitler issued assurances but was nevertheless determined to smash the Czechs in the autumn. France and England were appalled by their narrow escape from war. The nervous French acquiesced in the leadership of Britain, which in the following months strove to avoid any firm stand that might precipitate war. The Czechs, under pressure from Britain and France, accepted British mediation on the Sudeten issue and in the summer of 1938 offered wide concessions to the Sudeten Germans amounting to regional

autonomy, but this was not enough to satisfy Hitler, who loudly proclaimed that the plight of the Germans in Czechoslovakia was intolerable and must be corrected. The Soviets urged a firm stand, but the Western powers had little confidence in Soviet military strength and, given the Soviet geographical situation, their ability to render assistance to Czechoslovakia; moreover, they feared that firmness might mean war. They could not be sure whether Hitler was bluffing. He might, if opposed, back down; but it seemed equally likely, or indeed more so, that he was entirely willing to fight.

As the crisis grew in September 1938, the British prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, who had never flown in his life before, flew to Germany twice to sound out Hitler on his terms. The second time Hitler raised his demands so that even the British and French could not accept them. Mobilization began; war seemed imminent. Suddenly, in the midst of the unbearable tension, Hitler invited Chamberlain and Edouard Daladier, the French premier, to a four-power conference at Munich, to be attended by his ally, Mussolini. The Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia itself were excluded. At Munich Chamberlain and Daladier accepted Hitler's terms and then put enormous pressure on the Czech government to yield—to sign its own death warrant. France, urged on by England in an appeasement course that it was only too willing to follow, repudiated its treaty obligation to protect Czechoslovakia, ignored the Soviets who reaffirmed their willingness to aid the Czechs if the French acted, and abandoned its whole system of a Little Entente in the East. The Munich agreement permitted Germany to annex the adjoining fringe of Bohemia in which the majority of the people were Germans. This fringe contained the mountainous approaches and the fortifications, so that its loss left Czechoslovakia militarily defenseless. After promises to guarantee the integrity of what remained of Czechoslovakia, the conference disbanded. Chamberlain and Daladier were welcomed home with cheers. Chamberlain reported that he had brought "peace in our time." Again the democracies sighed with relief, hoped that Hitler had made his last demand, and told themselves that, with wise concessions, there need be no war.

Appeasement: the Munich agreement

The Munich crisis, with its death sentence to Czechoslovakia, revealed the helpless weakness into which the Western democracies had fallen by 1938. It may be that there was in fact little that the French and British could do at Munich to save Czechoslovakia. Their countries lagged behind Germany in military preparedness. They were impressed by the might of the German army and air force. Bolder leaders than Daladier and Chamberlain, knowing the state of their own armed forces, would have declined to risk a quarrel. They desperately wanted peace and would buy it at a high price, not daring to believe that they were dealing with a blackmailer whose price would always be raised.

Western democratic weakness

They suffered, too, from another moral uncertainty. By the very principle of national self-determination, accepted by the victors after the First World War, Germany could argue that it had a right to all that it had hitherto demanded. Hitler, in sending German troops into the German Rhineland, annexing Austria, stirring up Danzig, and incorporating the Bohemian Germans, had only asserted the right of the German people to have a sovereign German state. Moreover, if Hitler could be diverted eastward, enmeshed in a war with Russia, then communism and fascism might destroy each other—so one might hope. Possibly it was one of Hitler's motives, in the Munich crisis, to isolate Russia from the West and the West from Russia. If so, he succeeded well enough.

In the weeks following Munich the international commission set up to arrange the new boundaries worked further injustices on Czechoslovakia, dispensing even with the plebiscites which had been agreed to for disputed areas. Meanwhile the Poles and Hungarians brought forth their demands on the hapless Czechs. The Poles seized the Teschen

district; and Hungary, under a German and Italian award, took 7,500 square miles of Slovakia. France and Britain were not consulted and did not seriously protest.

End of Appeasement

The final disillusionment came in March 1939. Hitler marched into Bohemia-Moravia, the really Czech part of Czechoslovakia, which he transformed into a German protectorate. Exploiting Slovak nationalism, he declared Slovakia "independent." Czechoslovakia, merely trimmed down at Munich, now disappeared from the map. Having promised to take only a bite, Hitler swallowed the whole. He then seized Memel from Lithuania and raised demands for Danzig and the Polish Corridor. A horrible realization now spread in France and Britain. It was clear that Hitler's most solemn guarantees were worthless, that his designs were not limited to Germans, but reached out to all eastern Europe and beyond, that he was essentially insatiable, that he could not be appeased. In April 1939 his partner in aggression, Mussolini, took over Albania.

The Western powers belatedly began to make preparations for a military stand. Britain, changing its East European policy at the eleventh hour, gave a guarantee to Poland and followed that with guarantees to Romania and Greece. That spring and summer the British tried to form an anti-German alliance with the U.S.S.R. But Poland and the Baltic states were unwilling to allow Soviet armies within their borders, even for the purpose of defending themselves against the Germans. The Anglo-French negotiators refused to put pressure on them. Since the Poles, in 1920, had conquered more territory than the Allies had meant them to have, pushing their eastern border well into Byelorussia, almost to Minsk, the Anglo-French scruples seemed to the Soviets unnecessarily delicate. They did not wish the Germans to launch an attack on them from a point as far east as Minsk. They may have thought also that what the French and British really wanted was for the Soviet Union to take the brunt of the Nazi attack. They considered it an affront that the British sent lesser officials as negotiators to Moscow when the prime minister himself had three times flown personally to deal with Hitler.

The Nazi-Soviet Pact

The Soviets, having quietly undertaken negotiations earlier that spring, on August 23, 1939, openly signed a treaty of nonaggression and friendship with Nazi Germany. In a provision kept secret at the time, it was agreed that in any future territorial rearrangement the Soviet Union and Germany would divide Poland between them, that the Soviet Union would enjoy a preponderant influence in the Baltic states and have its claim to Bessarabia, lost to Romania in 1918, recognized. In return the Soviets pledged to stay out of any war between Germany and Poland or between Germany and the Western democracies.

The Nazi-Soviet Pact stupefied the world. Communism and Nazism, supposed to be ideological opposites, had come together. A generation more versed in ideology than in power politics was dumbfounded. The pact was recognized as the signal for war; all last-minute negotiations failed. The Germans invaded Poland on September 1. On September 3 Great Britain and France declared war on Germany. The second European war in a generation, soon to be the Second World War, began.

106. THE YEARS OF AXIS TRIUMPH

Nazi Europe, 1939–1940: Poland and the Fall of France

The Second World War opened with an assault on Poland. German forces totaling over 1 million men, spearheaded by armored divisions and supported by the massed air power of the *Luftwaffe,* rapidly overran western Poland and subdued the ill-equipped Polish armies.

German **Blitzkrieg**

The outcome of the campaign, a spectacular example of *Blitzkrieg,* or lightning warfare, was clear within the first few days; organized resistance ended within a month. The Germans set about to integrate their Polish conquest into the Reich.

Simultaneously, the Soviet Union, acting under the secret clauses of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, moved into the eastern half of Poland two weeks after the German invasion; the territory occupied was roughly equivalent to that lost to Poland in 1920. The Soviets proceeded also to establish fortified bases in the Baltic states—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Finland resisted Soviet demands. It refused to cede border territories sought by the Russians or to yield military rights within their country. The Soviets insisted; Leningrad, the second major city of the U.S.S.R., lay only 20 miles from the Finnish frontier. When negotiations foundered, the Soviets attacked in November 1939. Finnish resistance was valiant and at first effective, but the small country was no match for the U.S.S.R. Western democratic sympathies were with the Finns; the British and French sent equipment and supplies and planned an expeditionary force. The Soviet Union was expelled from the League of Nations for the act of aggression—the only power ever to be expelled. By March 1940 the fighting was over. Finland had to yield somewhat more territory to the U.S.S.R. than originally demanded but retained its independence.

The German army launched the brutal violence of the Second World War with its motorized assault on Poland. The new term *Blitzkrieg* was used to describe this kind of rapid military advance, which is represented here by the arrival of German troops in a bombed-out Polish village. Closely supported by air power and moving quickly on motorcycles, trucks, and armored vehicles, the Germans showed how the new tactics of offensive warfare could overwhelm the defensive strategies that had stopped advancing armies in the First World War.

(AKG London)

The "phony war"

Meanwhile all was deceptively quiet in the West. The pattern of 1914, when the Germans reached the Marne in the first month of hostilities, failed to repeat itself. The French sat behind their Maginot Line; the British had few troops; the Germans did not stir from behind their Siegfried Line, or West Wall, in the Rhineland. Hardly any air action took place. It was called the "phony war." The Western democracies rejected Hitler's peace overtures after the conquest of Poland but clung to their peacetime outlook. The hope still lingered that somehow a real clash might even yet be averted. During this same strange winter, a cold and bitter one, the Germans put their forces through special training, whose purpose became apparent in the spring.

On April 9, 1940, the Germans suddenly attacked and overran Norway, ostensibly because the British were laying mines in Norwegian waters in an endeavor to cut off German sources of Swedish iron ore. Denmark, too, was overrun, and an Allied expeditionary force with inadequate air strength had to withdraw. Then on May 10, the Germans delivered their main blow, striking at the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France itself. Nothing could stand against the German armored divisions and dive bombers. The Nazi use of massed tanks, though already demonstrated in Poland, took the French and British by surprise. Strategically, the Allies expected the main advance to be in central Belgium, as in 1914, and indeed as in the original German plan, which had been altered only a few months earlier. Hence the French and British sent into Belgium the best-equipped troops they had.

But the Germans delivered their main armored thrust, seven divisions, through Luxembourg and the Ardennes forest, long considered by the French General Staff impassable to tanks. In France, skirting the northwestern end of the Maginot Line, which had never been extended to the sea, the German armored divisions crossed the Meuse, drove deep into northern France against confused and ineffective resistance and, racing westward toward the Channel ports, cut off the Allied armies in Belgium. The Dutch, fearful of further air attack on their crowded cities, capitulated. The Belgian king sued for an armistice, and a large part of the French armies surrendered. The British fell back upon Dunkirk and could hope only to salvage their broken forces before the trap closed completely. Fortunately Hitler had halted the advance of his overextended armored divisions. In the week ending June 4 an epic evacuation of over 330,000 British and French troops was successfully executed from the beaches of Dunkirk, under air cover, with the help of all kinds of British vessels, manned in part by civilian volunteers, even though the precious equipment of the shattered army was almost totally abandoned.

Fall of France

In June the German forces drove relentlessly southward. Paris itself was occupied on June 13, and Verdun was occupied two days later; by June 22 France sued for peace and an armistice was signed. Hitler danced with glee.

France, obsessed by a defensive military psychology at the outset of the war, its armies unprepared for mechanized warfare, its government divided, its people split into hostile and suspicious factions, had fallen into the hands of an openly defeatist group of leaders. The fall of France left the world aghast. Everyone knew that France was no longer its former self, but it had still been considered a Great Power, and its collapse in one month seemed inconceivable. Some French, fleeing to England, established a Free French movement under General Charles de Gaulle; others formed a resistance movement in France. The British made the bitter decision to destroy a part of the French fleet anchored in the Algerian harbor of Oran to prevent its falling into enemy hands.

Vichy France

France itself under the terms of the armistice was occupied in its northern two-thirds by the Germans. The Third Republic, its capital now at Vichy

in the unoccupied southern third, was transformed by vote of a confused and stunned parliament into an authoritarian regime headed by the 84-year-old Marshal Pétain and the cynical and unscrupulous Pierre Laval. The republic was dead; the very slogan "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity" was banned from official use. French fascist groups, long frustrated in their campaigns to destabilize or destroy the Third Republic, now saw their opportunity to undermine republican traditions in French politics and society. Pétain, Laval, and others, claiming that they were acting to shield France from further suffering, proceeded to collaborate with the Nazis and to integrate Vichy France into the "new order" in Europe (see map, p. 818). The Vichy government cooperated in sending hundreds of thousands of French workers as slave laborers to Germany and even took the initiative in identifying and deporting thousands of French Jews to what were eventually Nazi death camps. The French people themselves had hard choices to make. Some chose to cooperate with the collaborators and the victorious Germans; others chose in a variety of ways to resist, some even joining the underground Resistance; most went about their daily lives waiting out the trying times until the fortunes of war might change. Not for many years after the war did the French admit responsibility as a nation for the misdeeds of the Vichy era.

Mussolini attacked France in June 1940, as soon as it was clear that Hitler had defeated it. Shortly thereafter, he invaded Greece and moved against the British in Africa. The *Duce* tied his own destinies, for good or ill, to those of the *Führer.* Since the Germans were emphatically the senior partner in this combination, since they were on good terms with Franco in Spain, and since the U.S.S.R. was benevolently neutral, they now dominated the European continent.

History seemed to repeat itself, in the distant and unreal way in which it ever repeats. The Germans controlled almost exactly the same geographical area as Napoleon. Organizing a new "continental system," they made plans to govern, exploit, and coordinate the resources, industry, and labor of Europe. Not having planned for a long war, and only belatedly mobilizing their resources for a sustained military effort, they intensified the exploitation of their conquered subjects. They impressed millions, prisoners of war or civilians, as slave labor, to work under close control in the German war industries. They garrisoned Europe with their soldiers, creating what they called *Festung Europa,* the Fortress of Europe. In every country they found sympathizers, collaborators, or "quislings"—the prototype was Vidkun Quisling, who had organized a Norwegian Fascist party in 1933 and was Norwegian premier from 1942 to 1945. Once Hitler was at war with the Soviet Union, some Europeans joined Hitler in the crusade against Bolshevism; 500,000 non-Germans fought in the divisions of the Waffen SS.

Festung Europa

The Battle of Britain and American Aid

In 1940, as in 1807, only Great Britain remained at war with the conqueror of Europe. After Dunkirk the British awaited the worst, momentarily expecting invasion. Winston Churchill, who replaced Chamberlain as prime minister in May 1940 during the military debacle, rose to the summit of leadership in adversity. To Parliament and the British people he promised nothing but "blood, toil, tears, and sweat." He pledged implacable war against "a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime." To the American democracy across the Atlantic he appealed "Give us the tools, and we will finish the job." The United States began to respond.

American "neutrality"

Since 1939, and even before, the American government had been anything but neutral. Opinion was excitedly divided. One group, called isola-

The rapid, complete military collapse of France in 1940 stunned the French people and indeed the entire world. Parisians faced this humiliating sight of German troops marching through the great symbol of French nationalism, the Arc de Triomphe, as they began to cope with an oppressive German military occupation that would last more than four years.
(Corbis)

tionist, opposed involvement in the European war, believing that Europe was hopeless, or that the United States could not save it, or that the Germans would win anyway before America could act, or that Hitler, even if victorious in Europe, constituted no danger to the United States. Another group, the interventionists, urged immediate aid to the Allies, believing that Hitler was a menace, that fascism must be destroyed, or that the Nazis, if they subjugated all Europe, would soon tamper with the Latin American republics. President Roosevelt was an interventionist, convinced that American security was endangered; he

tried to unite national opinion by declaring that the United States might openly assist the Allies without itself fighting, by using "measures short of war."

The neutrality legislation of the mid-1930s was amended in November 1939, when the ban on the sale of arms was repealed. Roosevelt described Britain as "the spearhead of resistance to world conquest"; the United States was to be "the great arsenal of democracy." Both were fighting for a world, he said, in which the Four Freedoms were to be secure—freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. In June 1940, immediately after Dunkirk, the United States sent a small initial shipment of arms to Britain. A few months later the United States gave the British 50 overage destroyers in return for the right to maintain American bases in Newfoundland, the Bermudas, and the British Caribbean islands. In 1941 it adopted Lend-Lease, a policy of providing arms, raw materials, and food to powers at war with the Axis. At the same time, in 1940 and 1941, the United States introduced conscription, built up its army and air force, and projected a two-ocean navy. Plans for joint hemisphere defense were developed with the Latin American republics. To protect its shipping it secured bases in Greenland and Iceland and convoyed Allied shipping as far as Iceland.

"The great arsenal of democracy"

After the fall of France, the Germans stood poised for an invasion of Britain. But they had not calculated on such rapid and easy successes in Europe, they had no immediately practical plan for an invasion, and they needed to win control of the air before a sea invasion could take place. Moreover, there was always the hope, in Hitler's mind at least, that the British might sue for peace, or even become an ally of Germany. The air assault on Britain began that summer and reached its climax in the autumn of 1940. Never until then had any bombing been so severe. But the Germans were unable to win control over the air in the battle of Britain. Gradually the British Royal Air Force fought off the bombers with more success; new radar devices helped detect the approach of enemy planes, as did a remarkable British intelligence operation called Ultra, by which the British (with the help of the Poles) early in the war broke the code of an important German communications device, called Enigma, used for military conversations at the highest level. This crucial intelligence operation was not revealed until many years after the war's end. Although Coventry was wiped out, the life and industry of other cities were badly disrupted, and thousands of people were killed, 20,000 in London alone, still the productive activity of the country carried on. Nor, contrary to the predictions of air power theorists, did the bombings break the morale of the civilian population.

Air war over Britain

In the winter of 1940–1941 the Germans began to shift their weight to the east. Hitler set aside the planned invasion of Britain, for which he seems never to have had much enthusiasm anyway. He had already decided, like Napoleon before him, that before committing his resources to an invasion of England he must dispose of the U.S.S.R., a project much closer to his ideology and his illusions.

The Nazi Invasion of Russia: The Russian Front, 1941–1942

The Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 which had precipitated the war, like the alliance between Napoleon and Alexander I, was never a warm or harmonious understanding. Both parties probably entered it mainly to gain time. The Soviets gained space as well, pushing their borders westward. Stalin, incredibly, seems to have convinced himself that he could remain uninvolved in the war going on. But he and the Nazis soon began to dispute over eastern Europe. The Soviets, with the Nazis preoccupied by the war, hoped to win complete

control over the Baltic and to gain influence in the Balkans as well. They had already occupied eastern Poland and the three Baltic states and won territory from Finland. In June 1940, to the chagrin of the Germans, they quietly sovietized and converted the three Baltic states into member republics of the U.S.S.R. The old German landowning class, the famous "Baltic barons," who had lived there for centuries, were uprooted and were returned to German soil. At the same time, the Soviets seized from Romania the Bessarabian province that they had lost in the First World War and incorporated it, too, as a Soviet republic. The Russians were expanding toward the Balkans, another area of historic Russian interest, and seemed bent on winning control over eastern Europe.

Hitler takes the Balkans

This the Germans viewed with dismay. They wished to reserve eastern Europe for themselves as a counterpart to industrial Germany. Hitler moved to bring the Balkans under German control. By early 1941 he blackmailed or, by territorial concessions, cajoled Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary into joining the Axis; they became Axis lesser partners and were occupied by German troops; Yugoslavia also was occupied despite resistance by the army and population. Greece, too, was subjugated, the Germans coming to the rescue of Mussolini's hard-pressed troops. Hitler thus barred Soviet expansion in the Balkans and made the Balkan states part of the Nazi new order. The Balkan campaigns delayed his plans, but now, to crush the Soviets, and to gain the wheat harvests of the Ukraine and the oil wells of the Caucasus, the core of the Eurasian "heartland," Hitler struck, and on June 22, 1941, invaded the U.S.S.R. Stalin, ignoring warnings he had received, was caught completely by surprise and momentarily seemed incapable of mounting any kind of defense.

The Nazi invasion of Russia

The German army threw 3 million men into Russia along a vast 2,000-mile front. The Russians gave way. One swift moving battle melted into another. By the autumn of 1941 the Germans had overrun Byelorussia and most of the Ukraine. In the north, Leningrad was in a state of siege; in the south, the Germans had entered the Crimean peninsula and were besieging Sebastopol. And toward the center of the vast front, the Germans stood, exhausted, but apparently victorious, within 25 miles of Moscow. But the overconfident German forces had not calculated on the stubbornness of Soviet resistance as Stalin recovered from his initial shock, replaced some of his military commanders, and rallied the country to the defense of the Russian motherland. Nor were the Germans prepared to fight in an early and extraordinarily bitter Russian winter, which suddenly descended upon them. A counteroffensive, launched by the Red Army that winter, saved Moscow.

Hitler, disgusted and impatient with his subordinates, took over direct command of military operations; he shifted the main attack to the south and began a great offensive in the summer of 1942 directed toward the oil fields of the Caucasus. Sebastopol soon fell; the siege of Stalingrad began. After the failure to take Moscow, Hitler, aware now that the war would not be brief, took steps to mobilize the German economy on a full wartime basis. Germany had been ready for war in 1939 as no other major power had been, but lacked preparation in depth for a protracted conflict. In the early months of 1942 Hitler found in Albert Speer an organizing genius who, despite all kinds of obstacles from party leaders and government functionaries, coordinated labor and resources in the next two years and tripled armaments production.

1942, the Year of Dismay: Russia, North Africa, the Pacific

A year after the invasion, in the fateful summer of 1942, the German line reached from beleaguered Leningrad in the north, past the western outskirts of Moscow, past Stalingrad on the Volga southward to the Caucasus Mountains; the Germans were within a hundred miles

of the Caspian Sea. But the Russians had traded space for time. Though the industrial Don basin and the food-producing Ukraine were overrun, the deliveries of Caucasus oil rendered hazardous and uncertain, the Russians continued to fight; industries were shifted to the new Ural and Siberian cities; and neither the Soviet economy nor the Soviet government was yet struck in a vital spot. A "scorched earth" policy, in which the retreating Russians destroyed crops and livestock, and guerrilla units wrecked industrial and transportation facilities, guaranteed that Russian resources would not fall into the hands of the advancing conqueror.

The desert campaigns

Simultaneously, late in 1942 the Axis also moved forward in North Africa. Here the desert campaigns started in September 1940 with an Italian eastward offensive from Libya, which succeeded in crossing over into Egypt. The stakes were high—control over Suez and the Mediterranean. At the height of the battle of Britain, Churchill made the decision to send troops and supplies, much needed at home, to North Africa. A British counteroffensive against vastly superior numbers swept the Italians out of Egypt and by early 1941 the British moved deep into Libya. Shortly thereafter the British overran Ethiopia and ended Mussolini's short-lived East African empire. But in North Africa fortunes were fickle. A German elite force, the Afrika Korps under General Rommel, in the spring of 1941 attacked in Libya and drove the British back to the Egyptian frontier. A few months later, once more on the offensive, the British advanced into Libya. Again fortunes shifted. By mid-1942 Rommel had repulsed the British and penetrated Egypt. The British took up a stand at El Alamein, 70 miles from Alexandria, their backs to the Suez Canal. Here they held the Germans.

But it seemed in 1942 that the Axis armies, breaking through the Soviet Caucasus and across the isthmus of Suez in North Africa, might enclose the whole Mediterranean and Middle East in a gigantic vise, and even, moving farther east, make contact with their allies the Japanese, who were at this time penetrating into the Indian Ocean. For the Pacific situation in the latter half of 1941 had also exploded. It was Japan that finally drew the United States into war.

Japan and the Pacific

The Japanese, in 1941, had conducted a war against China for ten years. With the war raging in Europe, Japanese expansionists saw a propitious moment to assert themselves throughout east Asia. In 1940 they cemented their alliance with Germany and Italy in a new three-power pact; the following year they concluded a neutrality treaty with the Soviet Union. From the Vichy French the Japanese obtained a number of military bases and other concessions in Indochina. The United States belatedly placed an embargo on the export of such materials as scrap iron and steel to Japan. Hesitating to precipitate any all-out drive of the Japanese toward the Dutch East Indies and elsewhere, the United States still sought some definition of Japanese ambitions in southeast Asia. The new Japanese prime minister, General Hideki Tojo, a staunch champion of the Axis, publicly proclaimed that the influence of Britain and the United States was to be totally eliminated from Asia, but he agreed to send representatives to Washington for negotiations.

Pearl Harbor

At the very time that the Japanese representatives in Washington were carrying on conversations with the Americans, on December 7, 1941, without warning, the Japanese launched a heavy air raid on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii and began to invade the Philippines. Simultaneously, they launched attacks on Guam, Midway, Hong Kong, and Malaya. The Americans were caught off guard at Pearl Harbor; close to 2,500 were killed, the fleet was crip-

pled, and the temporary disablement of the American naval forces allowed the Japanese to roam at will in the western Pacific. The United States and Great Britain declared war on Japan on December 8. Three days later Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, as did the Axis puppet states; the war had become a global struggle.

The Japanese, working overland through Malaya, two months later captured Singapore, a British naval base long famous for its supposed impregnability, the veritable Gibraltar of the East. The sinking by air of the British battleship *Prince of Wales,* a feat often pronounced by naval experts to be impossible, added to the general consternation. In 1942 the Japanese conquered the Philippines, Malaya, and the Netherlands Indies. They invaded New Guinea and threatened Australia; they moved into the Aleutians. They streamed into the Indian Ocean, occupied Burma, and seemed about to invade India. Everywhere they found ready collaborators among enemies of European imperialism. They held up the idea of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere under Japanese leadership, in which the one clear element was that the Europeans should be ejected.

Meanwhile, as noted, the Germans stood at the Caucasus and almost at the Nile. And in the Atlantic, even to the shores of the United States and the American republics, German submarines were sinking Allied ships at a disastrous rate. The Mediterranean was unusable. For the Soviet-Western alliance, 1942 was the year of dismay. Despite Allied naval and air victories in the Pacific, the late summer and autumn of 1942 was the worst period of the war. Few realized, wrote the United States Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall some years later, how "close to complete domination of the world" were Germany and Japan and "how thin the thread of Allied survival had been stretched." That Germany and Japan had no plans to concert their strategy and operations was no small factor in the eventual Allied victory.

The year of dismay

107. THE WESTERN-SOVIET VICTORY

Plans and Preparations, 1942–1943

By January 1942 twenty-six nations, including the three Great Powers—Britain, the United States, and the U.S.S.R.—and representing every continent, were aligned against the Axis, a combination to which President Roosevelt gave the name the United Nations. Each pledged to use all its resources to defeat the Axis and never to make a separate peace. The Grand Alliance against the Axis aggressors, which could not be created in the 1930s, had at last been consummated.

The two Atlantic democracies, the United States and Great Britain, pooled their resources under a Combined Chiefs of Staff. Never had any two sovereign states formed so close a coalition. In contrast with the First World War an overall strategy was in effect from an early date. It was decided that Germany was the main enemy, against which it was necessary to concentrate first. For the time being the Pacific war was relegated to the background. Australia became the chief base for operations against the Japanese. The American navy and air force soon brought Japanese southward expansion to a halt and frustrated Japanese efforts to cut off supply lines to Australia; naval and air victories were won in the spring of 1942 in the battle of the Coral Sea and at Midway, the only relief to the overall gloom of that period. In the summer American forces landed at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. A long ordeal of "island hopping" began.

A unified strategy

EUROPE 1942

The map shows Europe at the height of Axis military success during the Second World War. Austria, the Sudetenland, Bohemia-Moravia, Poland, and Alsace-Lorraine were all joined to Hitler's Reich. The Atlantic coast from southern France to northern Norway was under German military occupation, as was much of Russia. Southern Europe from Vichy France to Romania was also occupied or allied with Germany.

In Europe the first point of concentration was an air bombardment of Germany. The Soviet Union, dissatisfied, called for a true "second front," an immediate invasion by ground forces that would relieve the pressure of the German divisions that were devastating their country. Suspicious of the West as ever, they regarded the failure to establish a second front as new evidence of anti-Soviet feeling.

But neither the United States nor Britain, in 1942, was ready to undertake land action by a direct assault on *Festung Europa.* Although in the Second World War, as in the First, more than two years elapsed between the outbreak of war in Europe and the intervention of the United States, and although in the second war American military preparations be-

War preparations

gan much sooner, the United States in 1942 was still involved in the cumbersome processes of mobilization, converting industry to the production of war materials for itself and its Allies, imposing controls on its economy to prevent a runaway inflation, and giving military training to its profoundly civilian-minded people, of whom over 12 million men and women eventually served in the armed forces—over three times as many as in the First World War. Large numbers of women, as in Britain, and more so than in the First World War, took wartime jobs in defense and other industries. In contrast, almost to the end, Nazi ideology placed obstacles in the way of utilizing women in German factories. In any case, for a year after the United States entered the war, German submarines enjoyed enough control of the Atlantic to make large shipments of troops too risky. In effect, they blockaded the American army in the United States.

The American and British navies, however, gradually won the battle of the Atlantic; the submarine menace was reduced to tolerable proportions by the first part of 1943. The Americans and British decided to begin the assault upon Germany, from Great Britain as a base, with a massive and prolonged air bombardment. Because precision bombardment of factories and other military targets proved difficult either by day or by night, the air assaults became area bombings; German cities were bombed mercilessly and civilians were the largest casualties. In Hamburg in 1943 fires raged on and destroyed most of the city after several days of incessant bombing. Since not everything could be shipped across the Atlantic at the same time, and since the United States and Britain were engaged in war with Japan as well, land invasion had to be deferred until 1944. The embattled Russians questioned whether the Western Allies ever really meant to face the German army at all.

The Turning of the Tide, 1942–1943: Stalingrad, North Africa, Sicily

Meanwhile, at the end of 1942 the tide had begun to turn. In November an Anglo-American force under the command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower effected a surprise invasion of Algeria and Morocco in an amphibious operation of unprecedented proportions. The Allies, failing to win the cooperation of the French in North Africa as they had hoped to do, turned to the Vichy French political leader Admiral Darlan in a calculated act of expediency that brought protest in many quarters. Darlan assisted the Allies in assuming control but was soon assassinated. In the competition that developed in the succeeding months for leadership of the French liberation committee, newly established in Algiers, General de Gaulle, though virtually ignored by President Roosevelt, easily pushed aside all rivals and moved forward with plans for France's revival.

On the Continent, after the North African landings, the Germans took over control of unoccupied France as well; they were frustrated, however, in the effort to seize the remainder of the French fleet when French crews scuttled their ships at Toulon. In North Africa the invading forces fought their way eastward into Tunisia. Meanwhile British forces under General Montgomery, having held the Germans at El Alamein in June 1942, had already launched their third (and final) counteroffensive in October, even before the invasion; they now pushed the Germans westward from Egypt until a large German force was crushed between the two Allied armies and destroyed in Tunisia. By May 1943 Africa was cleared of Axis forces. Mussolini's dream of an African empire had been thwarted; the Mediterranean was open; the threat to Egypt and the Suez Canal was ended.

Africa cleared of Axis forces

Stalingrad

At the same time it became clear, in the winter of 1942–1943, that the Germans had suffered a catastrophic reversal in the Soviet Union in the titanic

The destruction of cities and loss of life on the eastern front during the Second World War went far beyond the destruction and losses in all other theaters of the war. This photograph of Stalingrad at the time of the huge, extended battle for that city suggests the incredible desolation and losses that resulted from the fighting and the vast movement of armies across the Soviet Union and all of eastern Europe.

(AKG London)

battle of Stalingrad. In August 1942 massive German forces, an army of over a quarter million, began an all-out assault on Stalingrad, the vital key to all transport on the lower Volga; by September they had penetrated the city itself. Stalin ordered his namesake city held at all costs; Russian soldiery and the civilian population took a desperate stand. Hitler, still gambling on one big victory, was as obstinate in ordering the city taken. After weeks of fighting, the Germans occupied most of the city when suddenly a great Red Army counterattack, led by General Zhukov, trapped the German army and took a terrible toll; fewer than 100,000 were left to surrender in February 1943. The Soviets followed up their victory with a new counteroffensive, a great westward drive that regained for them what they had initially lost in the first year of the war. After Stalingrad, despite some setbacks, the Soviet Union was on the offensive for the remainder of the war. Stalingrad (or Volgograd as it was later renamed) was a turning point not only in the history of the war but in the history of central and eastern Europe as well.

American equipment meanwhile all through 1943 arrived in the Soviet Union in prodigious quantities. The terms of Lend-Lease were liberally extended to the Soviets; a stream of American vehicles, clothing, food, and supplies of all kinds made its way laboriously to the U.S.S.R. through the Arctic Ocean and through the Persian Gulf. Machinery and equipment were sent for the Soviet arms plants, which were themselves tremendously increasing their output. Anglo-American bombing meanwhile was cutting into German airplane production at home. The Allied contribution to the Soviet war effort was indispensable, but Russian human losses were tremendous. Between 20 and 25 million people in the Soviet Union died from war-related causes. More than two-thirds of these casualties were civilians; many had been killed early in the war by Nazi murder squads whose assignment was to eliminate all so-called "undesirable" persons from territories occupied by the German army. But the number of battle deaths alone went far beyond Allied losses in other military theaters of the war. The Soviet Union lost more men in the battle of Stalingrad, for example, than the United States lost in combat during the entire war in all theaters combined.

New hope for the Allies

With contemporary American successes in the Solomon Islands at the end of 1942 and the slow throttling of German submarines in the Atlantic, the beginning of the year 1943 brought new hope for the Allies in all quarters. In a spectacular campaign in July–August 1943, the British, Canadians, and Americans conquered the island of Sicily. Mussolini fell; the 21-year-old Fascist regime came to an end. Mussolini set up an "Italian Social Republic" in the north, but it was no more than a German puppet government. Some months later, in April 1945, the Duce, as he attempted to flee the country, was seized and shot by anti-Fascist Italians. When the new Italian government under Marshal Badoglio, in August 1943, tried to make peace, the German army occupied Italy. The Allies, having crossed to the Italian mainland from Sicily, attacked from the south. In October the Badoglio government declared war on Germany, and Italy was recognized by the Allies as a "cobelligerent." But the Germans stubbornly blocked the advance of the Allies to Rome despite new Allied landings and beachheads. The Italian campaign turned into a long and disheartening stalemate because the Western Allies, concentrating troops in Britain for the approaching cross-Channel invasion, could never spare enough for the Italian front.

The Allied Offensive, 1944–1945: Europe and the Pacific

Festung Europa, especially along its western approaches, the coasts of Holland, Belgium, and France, bristled with every kind of fortification that German scientific and military ingenuity could devise. A seaborne attack upon Europe was an operation of wholly unprecedented kind. It differed from the earlier amphibious attacks on Algeria, Sicily, or the Pacific islands in that the defender in Europe, in the very part of Europe where the road and railway network was thickest, could immediately rush overwhelming reserves to the spot attacked—except insofar as feinting tactics kept him uncertain, air power destroyed his transport, or the Russians held the bulk of his forces in the East. Precise and elaborate plans had been worked out. Ten thousand aircraft were to provide aerial protection, scores of warships were to bombard the coast, 4,000 ships were to carry the invading troops and their supplies across the Channel, artificial harbors were to be created where none existed.

The invasion of Europe

The invasion of Europe began before dawn on June 6, 1944. The spot selected was the coast of Normandy directly across the Channel from England; false intelligence reports, planted by the Allies, led the Germans to expect the main thrust at Calais. An unparalleled combination of forces, British, Canadian, and American, land, sea, and air, backed up by huge accumulations of supplies and troops assembled in Great Britain, and the whole under the unified command of General Eisenhower, assaulted the French coast, established a beachhead, and maintained a front. The Allies poured in their strength, over 130,000 men the first day, 1 million within a month. The Germans were at first thrown back more easily than had been expected. By August Paris was liberated, by September the Allies crossed the frontier of Germany itself. In France, Italy, and Belgium the Resistance movements, which had grown up in secret during the years of German occupation, came into the open and drove out Germans and pro-German collaborators. In Germany itself no widespread or deeply rooted Resistance movement ever developed, but a small group of Germans, military and civilian, formed an underground. On July 20, 1944, after the failure of earlier efforts, it attempted to assassinate Hitler by exploding a bomb at his military headquarters in East Prussia; Hitler was only injured and took a fearsome revenge on the conspirators.

In August, in another amphibious operation, the Allies landed on the French Mediterranean coast and swept up from southern France to join the Allied forces advancing against stiffening resistance. At one point, momentarily, the Allied offensive suffered a serious reversal. A sudden German drive under Hitler's direct personal orders in December 1944, unleashed under radio silence to thwart Allied intelligence, was launched against thinly held American lines on the Belgian sector in the Ardennes, created a "bulge" in the advancing armies, and caused heavy losses and confusion. But the Allies rallied, and Hitler used up his armored reserves in the effort. Neither the Ardennes counteroffensive nor the new destructive weapons rained on Britain, jet-propelled flying bombs and rockets, opening up the missile age, availed the Germans. All this time the Americans and British kept up their massive air bombardments, killing over 50,000 civilians in the fire-bombing of Dresden in February 1945. On the ground they pushed on and smashed through the heavily fortified Siegfried Line. The last natural obstacle, the Rhine, was crossed when in March 1945 American forces by a stroke of luck discovered an undestroyed bridge at Remagen; they poured troops over it and established a bridgehead—the first troops to cross the Rhine in combat since the armies of Napoleon. The main crossing, under the British, subsequently took place farther to the north. Soon the Allies were accepting wholesale surrenders in the Ruhr valley.

The eastern front

Meanwhile in 1944 the Russian armies swept the Germans from the Ukraine, Byelorussia, the Baltic states, and eastern Poland. By August they reached the suburbs of Warsaw. The Polish underground rose against the Germans but the Soviets, determined that Poland not be liberated by non-Communist Polish leadership, refused to permit aid to the rising, and it was crushed, with a heavy loss of Polish lives. Earlier, in 1943, the mass graves of thousands of Polish prisoners of war, mainly officers, had been found by the Germans in the Katyn Forest. Despite continuing Soviet denials at the time, the Russian archives years later revealed that they had been shot by the Red Army on Stalin's orders in 1940, after the Soviet Union had joined with Germany in partitioning Poland. The Russians, their lines now overextended, and checked for several months by German strength in Poland, pushed southward into Romania and Bulgaria; both countries changed sides and declared war against Germany. Early in 1945 the Soviets, reopening their offensive, forced their way into East Prussia and Silesia and by February reached the Oder, 40 miles from Berlin, where Zhukov paused to regroup his forces. In March and April Russian forces occupied Budapest and Vienna.

The final drive on Germany

The final drive on Germany began. Hitler moved troops from the collapsing western front to reinforce the stand on the Oder and to protect his capital. In April the Americans reached the Elbe, about 60 miles from Berlin, with hardly any obstacles before them; but here they halted, by decision of General Eisenhower. The Americans, whose supply lines were already overextended, wanted a clear line of demarcation from the Russians; they also believed it necessary to divert forces southward against a possible German last stand in the Alps. But mainly the decision was made as a gesture of goodwill toward the Russians, who were to be permitted to take Berlin as compensation for their heavy sacrifices in the common cause, and to preserve the Western-Soviet coalition until final victory. Similarly, the American troops that moved southward were held back from taking Prague and the Soviets were permitted to take the Czech capital too. At the end of the war the Soviets were in control of all the major capitals of central and eastern Europe.

The Western Allies and the Soviets offered no terms to Hitler, nor to any Germans. They demanded unconditional surrender, and the Germans fought on in the very streets of Berlin. On the last day of April Hitler perished by his own hand in the ruins of his capital after denouncing some of his closest party subordinates as traitors. Admiral Doenitz, designated by Hitler as his successor, went through the formalities of surrender on May 8, 1945. Since fighting had already ceased on the Italian front a few days earlier, the war in Europe was over.

Meanwhile a generation reared to mistrust the fabricated atrocity tales of the First World War painfully, and belatedly, became aware of the real German horrors of the Second—hostages rounded up and shot in reprisal for resistance; whole villages like Lidice in Czechoslovakia or Oradour-sur-Glane in France razed to the ground and their inhabitants slain or deported; concentration camps like Dachau and Buchenwald, where the prisoners were given minimal rations and worked to death, and where Allied troops found only pitifully emaciated survivors; above all, the mass death camps with gas chambers and crematory ovens at Auschwitz (where at its peak 12,000 victims a day were gassed to death), Treblinka, Belzéc, Sobibor, and others, where peoples whom the Nazis deemed "inferior" could be systematically liquidated. In the areas of Nazi domination in eastern Europe, the Nazis first used special firing squads and mobile gas units to kill "undesirables," but as the war went on they transported millions of men, women, and children in railroad cattle cars to the mass death camps where some were worked to death and others were put to death at once. By far the largest proportion killed were some 6 million Jews, but Poles, Russians, other Slavic peoples, Gypsies, and others were slain as well.

The "final solution"

For the Jews in what came to be known as the Holocaust, the annihilation policy, decided upon at a high-level Nazi meeting at Wannsee in January 1942, was to be the "Final Solution" to the "Jewish problem" which Hitler had agitated, with maniacal fury, for so many years. Genocide, the planned, systematic effort to destroy a whole people, was the greatest of the Nazi sins against humanity. Although there have been mass murders in many other places and eras of human history, the genocidal attack on European Jews had a uniquely modern scale and scientific organization, which explains in part why it has produced such painful memories and questions for later generations. How could such murderous events occur in the heart of modern European civilization? The fact that the Holocaust was carried out by ordinary people and bureaucrats raises pointed questions about individual and collective responsibilities for deadly government policies, about the danger of misused, modern technologies, and about the destructive consequences of racist ideologies. Survivors have described extraordinary acts of courage and human will among the prisoners in Nazi death camps, but the Holocaust has become the modern world's most terrifying example and memory of systematic murder and human brutality.

In the Pacific, American operations against Japan had dragged on for three years, hampered by the strategic decision to concentrate against Germany first. Slowly, from points in the Solomon Islands, the easternmost fringe of the Indonesian archipelago, American forces, at first very small, worked their way in a northwesterly direction toward faraway Japan. They had to fight in turn for Guadalcanal, for New Guinea, for the reconquest of the Philippines, all against stubborn entrenched Japanese resistance and at heavy cost. They had to fight for the Japanese islands in the mid-Pacific taken by Japan from the Germans after the First World War and converted into powerful naval bases—the Gilbert Islands, the Marshalls, the Carolines, the Marianas. In October 1944 they won an impressive naval

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

These two maps show the global character of the war and the central position of the United States with respect to the European and Pacific theaters. The numbered legends summarize the successive stages of the war in both the Eastern and Western hemispheres. In 1942, with the Germans reaching as far east as Egypt and Stalingrad, and the Japanese as far west as Burma, the great danger to the Soviet-Western alliance was that these two might join forces, dominate southern Asia, control the oil resources of the Persian Gulf, and stop the flow of Western supplies to the Soviet Union from this direction. The almost simultaneous Soviet-Western successes, late in 1942, at Stalingrad and El Alamein, and in the invasion of Morocco-Algeria and of Guadalcanal, proved to be the turning point of the war. In 1943 the German submarine campaign in the Atlantic was defeated, so that American troops and supplies could move more

freely to Europe. The invasion of Normandy in June 1944, with continuing pressure from the east, brought about the German surrender in May 1945. Meanwhile, in the Pacific, American occupation of the islands and reoccupation of the Philippines prepared the way for the surrender of Japan, which followed the dropping of two atomic bombs in August 1945.

victory over the Japanese in the battle of Leyte Gulf. In March 1945 they fought with heavy casualties to take the eight-square-mile strategic island of Iwo Jima. Finally, in a protracted and bloody battle lasting over 2 1/2 months, in the spring of 1945 they won the island of Okinawa, only 300 miles from Japan itself. Okinawa was captured just as the Germans collapsed in Europe. From the new Allied bases that had been won, from Saipan in the Marianas, from Iwo Jima, from Okinawa, and from aircraft carriers at sea, a crushing air offensive was launched against Japan, shattering Japanese industry, destroying the

THE HOLOCAUST

This map shows the loss of life that resulted from what the Nazis called their "Final Solution"—that is, their systematic program of destroying the Jews and Judaism. Before the Second World War most European Jews lived in Poland and the adjoining parts of the Soviet Union. The Germans occupied all of these areas during the war, so that most deaths occurred in these territories. The map shows both the number killed in each country and the percentage of its Jewish population that were victims of this deliberate genocide. The numbers add up to about 6 million men, women, and children, or an estimated two-thirds of the Jewish population of Europe as a whole. Although word of this annihilation policy reached the outside world through the Vatican and other sources, the Allied leaders at first disbelieved the reports, and then, giving priority to their military objectives, did nothing to stop the systematic slaughter.

remnants of the Japanese navy, and compelling the Japanese government to give serious thought to suing for peace. The Allied leaders refused to believe that Japanese defenses were ready to crumble or that the Japanese were ready to negotiate. The American army prepared to shift combat troops from the European theater to Asia. The stage was being set for a full-scale invasion of Japan itself.

The atomic bomb

Then, on August 6, 1945, an American aircraft dropped an atomic bomb, built in the United States in utmost secrecy by European refugee and American scientists, on the city of Hiroshima, with a population of 200,000 people. The city was destroyed in this single explosion, and 78,000 lives

The human consequences of Nazi brutalities appear in this picture of a Nazi concentration camp near the German city of Ohrdruf in early May 1945. American soldiers were making their way through the camp, where the Nazis had subjected Poles, Czechs, German Jews, and German political prisoners to forced labor and then shot or flogged to death the internees who could no longer work.

(Corbis)

were lost; thousands of others were injured or suffered the long-term effects of radiation. Two days later, the Soviet Union, which had pledged to enter the conflict in the East within three months after the surrender of Germany, declared war on Japan and invaded Manchuria. On August 9 a second American atomic bomb struck Nagasaki and killed tens of thousands more. The Japanese made peace at once. On September 2, 1945, the formal surrender was signed. The emperor was permitted to remain as head of state, but Japan was placed under a United States army of occupation. Meanwhile, the atomic bomb, like the death camps of the Holocaust, soon became another haunting memory and symbol of the new forms of violence and mass destruction that a staggeringly costly global war had bequeathed to humanity.

The Second World War of the twentieth century was over, the greatest conflict in human history. The same cold impersonal statistics that had recorded 10 million killed in the First World War reported 15 million military deaths and (unlike the First World War) more than twice as many civilian fatalities. Soviet military deaths were estimated at over 6 million, German at 3.5 million, Chinese at 2.2 million, Japanese at 1.3 million, Polish at 700,000. British and Commonwealth losses were over 400,000, American about 300,000, French about 200,000. Over 25 million suffered battle wounds. The military death figures would have been higher except that one of every two of those wounded was saved by new sulfa and penicillin drugs and blood plasma transfusions. None of these statistics could be more than approximate, and no one could estimate the complete toll of human lives lost from Allied and Axis bombings, Nazi mass slayings of Jews in the Holocaust and of other people in all the German-occupied nations, Nazi and Soviet deportation policies, and postwar famines and epidemics. Some estimates place the total at 60 million men, women, and children, but at such figures the human mind retreats and human sensitivities are dulled.

108. THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE PEACE

Whereas the First World War had been concluded by a peace conference a few months after the close of hostilities, the Second World War ended in no such clear-cut settlement. Nothing like the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 followed the defeat of Germany in 1945. The terms of peace, as they gradually developed, left no such single symbol of humiliation as the Versailles treaty had represented. The peace terms emerged episodically, at first during a series of conferences among the Allied nations during the war, and then in a series of de facto arrangements in the years after 1945.

The foundations of a peaceable postwar world were being laid, it was thought, at a number of meetings where the strategy of the war itself was being planned. As early as August 1941 Roosevelt and Churchill met at sea off the coast of Newfoundland and drew up the Atlantic Charter. There were meetings in 1943 at Casablanca, at Cairo, and at Teheran (which was close enough to the Soviet Union for Stalin to participate); and in the final phase of the war, in February 1945, at Yalta (a Crimean resort city in the Soviet Union), and in July 1945 at Potsdam, in the environs of shattered Berlin.

The Atlantic Charter, issued jointly by Roosevelt and Churchill at their first meeting, resembled in spirit the Fourteen Points of Woodrow Wilson. It pledged that sovereign rights and self-government would be restored to all who had been forcibly deprived of them, that all nations would have equal access to world trade and world resources, that all peoples would work together to achieve improved living standards and economic security. The postwar peace, it promised, would assure people of all lands freedom from fear and want, and end force and aggression in international affairs. Here, and in the Four Freedoms enunciated by President Roosevelt, the ideological basis of the peace was proclaimed. At

the 1943 conferences, and through other consultations, the Allies endeavored to concert their military plans. At Casablanca, in January 1943, they resolved to accept nothing less than the "unconditional surrender" of the Axis powers. This vague formula, adopted somewhat cavalierly at American initiative, and without much thought to possible political implications, was intended mainly to prevent a recurrence of anything like the ambiguity surrounding the armistice of 1918.

"Unconditional surrender"

At Teheran, in December 1943, Roosevelt and Churchill met with Stalin for the first of two wartime meetings. They discussed the postwar occupation and demilitarization of Germany, laid plans for a postwar international organization, and debated strategy for winning the war. Throughout the war Roosevelt, unwilling to disturb the unity of the Western-Soviet coalition in the global struggle in which America was engaged, followed a policy of postponing controversial territorial and political decisions until victory was assured. Churchill was more apprehensive. Steeped in traditional balance-of-power politics, he sensed that without prior diplomatic bargaining and political arrangements, the victory over the Nazis would leave Russia dominant over all central and eastern Europe. At Teheran he proposed operations in the Mediterranean and an invasion through the Balkans, for political reasons but mainly out of concern for the casualties that a cross-Channel invasion would involve. But Roosevelt persuaded him otherwise. It was agreed that a landing in France would take place in the spring of 1944; thus the major second front that Stalin had been promised would finally be opened. Stalin pledged that he would launch a simultaneous offensive on the eastern front.

The strategy that would win the war in the next 18 months was decided upon at Teheran, but that strategy, without political agreements, all but guaranteed the Soviet domination of eastern Europe. Later, in October 1944, as the Russian armies advanced westward, Churchill visited Stalin and sketched out a demarcation of spheres of influence for the Western powers and the Soviets in the Balkan states (a Soviet preponderance in Romania and Bulgaria, a Western preponderance in Greece, and an even division of influence in Hungary and Yugoslavia). Soviet control over the Baltic states had virtually been conceded by the British earlier. But Roosevelt would not agree to any such arrangement, which he considered old-fashioned and a dangerous revival of the worst features of pre-1914 diplomacy.

Soon, however, political decisions had to be made. The two conferences that arrived at the most important political decisions were the meetings at Yalta and at Potsdam in 1945. The Yalta meeting in February 1945 took place when the Allies were close to final victory—closer, events disclosed, than anyone at the time realized. The three Allied statesmen met at an old tsarist Crimean summer resort on the Black Sea, toasted their common triumphs, and, as at Teheran, took the measure of each other. Roosevelt thought of himself as a mediator between Churchill and Stalin where European issues were involved. He took pains to avoid giving Stalin the impression that he and Churchill were in any sense united against him; in point of fact, Roosevelt was suspicious of Churchill's devotion to empire and colonial ties, which he considered anachronistic for the postwar world. Despite differences, the Big Three reached agreements, at least formally, on Poland and eastern Europe, the future of Germany, the war in Asia, and the projected postwar international organization—the United Nations.

The agreements at Yalta

Poland and eastern Europe

The discussion of Poland and eastern Europe raised the most serious difficulties. Stalin's armies, having driven the Nazi forces to within 40

miles of Berlin, were in control of Poland and almost all eastern and central Europe. The Russians remembered these areas as anti-Soviet, and Poland particularly as the perpetrator of aggression against Soviet territory in 1920 and as the ancient corridor of attack upon Russia. Stalin had already taken steps to establish a "friendly" government in Poland, that is, a government subservient to the Soviets. Neither Roosevelt nor Churchill had fought the war against the Nazis to leave the Soviet Union the undisputed master of central and eastern Europe and in a position to impose a totalitarian political system on all this vast area. At Yalta, Roosevelt and Churchill extracted from Stalin a number of promises for the areas he controlled. In accordance with the Atlantic Charter, the liberated states were to be permitted provisional governments "broadly representative of all democratic elements in the population," that is, not consisting merely, as in the case of the provisional government of Poland already established, of authorities subservient to the Soviets. They pressed Stalin to pledge also the "earliest possible establishment through free elections of governments responsive to the will of the people." The pledge was a verbal concession that cost the Soviet leader little; he rejected the suggestion of international supervision over the elections. The Declaration on Liberated Europe, promising sovereign rights of democratic self-determination, provided a false sense of agreement; there were to be no free elections in Soviet-controlled eastern Europe.

A number of territorial changes were also accepted, pending final settlement at a postwar peace conference. The Russian-Polish, or eastern, boundary of Poland would be set roughly at the so-called Curzon line, the frontier contemplated by the Allies in 1919 before the Poles conquered territory to their east. The Poles would be compensated, in the north and west, at the expense of Germany (see map, p. 859). On this and on other matters relating to Germany there was a large area of accord; the three were united in their hatred of German Nazism and militarism. Germany was to be disarmed and divided into four occupation zones under the administration of the Big Three powers and France—the latter at the insistence of Churchill. There was vague talk, at Yalta and earlier, of dismembering Germany, of undoing the work of Bismarck, but the difficulties of such an undertaking were understood and the proposal was eventually discarded. The Americans and British rejected as excessive the Soviet proposals for reparations, a sum of $20 billion to be paid in kind, half to the Soviets. It was agreed, however, that reparations would go to those countries that had borne the main burdens of the war and suffered the heaviest losses. The Soviet Union was to receive half of whatever total sum was set.

The United Nations

To the satisfaction of everyone, the participants agreed on plans for a postwar international organization, to be called the United Nations. Roosevelt believed it essential to win the Soviets over to the idea of an international organization. He was convinced that the Great Powers, cooperating within the framework of the United Nations and acting as international police, could preserve the future peace and security of the world. No less than Stalin or Churchill, he emphasized the importance of the Great Powers in the new organization, although he accepted a dignified role for the smaller nations as well. All agreed that each of the Great Powers, the permanent members of the new organization's Security Council, would have a veto power on important decisions. The Soviets pressed for 16 votes in the General Assembly of the new organization, arguing that their constitution gave sovereign rights to each of their then 16 constituent republics and that the British dominions would each have a seat. In the interests of harmony, at Churchill's behest, they were given three.

Critical agreements were reached on East Asia. Here political and military decisions were inextricably linked. The Soviets had remained neutral in the Pacific war despite their

The final meeting of Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin took place in the Crimean resort city of Yalta in February 1945. Roosevelt's position here between the other two leaders suggests his mediating position at the conference. The agreements reached at Yalta shaped the postwar organization of eastern Europe, laid the foundation for the United Nations, and eventually brought the Soviet Union into the war against Japan, but some critics in the West later complained that the Yalta accords made too many concessions to Stalin and opened the way for Soviet expansion into central Europe.

(Courtesy Franklin D. Roosevelt Library)

historic interests in that part of Asia. Given the magnitude of the war effort on the European front, no one had pressed them to enter the Pacific war earlier. It was agreed to wait at least until the Germans were on the verge of defeat. At Yalta, Stalin agreed to enter the war against Japan, but Soviet "public opinion," he averred, would demand compensation. The U.S.S.R. would enter the war against Japan "two to three months" after Germany had surrendered. In return, the Soviets would receive territories and rights that tsarist Russia had lost to Japan 40 years before in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–1905 (see map, p. 652), with the addition of the Kurile Islands, which had never been Russian before.

Roosevelt made concessions at Yalta because he believed he needed Soviet support in the last phase of the war against Japan and because he wished to preserve the Western-Soviet coalition until final victory was guaranteed. He believed also that wartime cooperation would produce postwar harmony. Churchill, less sanguine about the future and about "diplomacy by friendship," would have preferred a franker definition of spheres of influence. Such ideas were ruled out as the thinking of a bygone era. Yet the spirit of the Atlantic Charter, so closely identified with the American president, the pledge of sovereign self-determination for all peoples, was already being contravened.

The Potsdam Conference

At Potsdam, in July 1945, after the German collapse, the Big Three met again. A new American president, Harry S Truman, represented the United States; President Roosevelt had died in April, on the eve of final victory. Churchill, in the midst of the conference, was replaced by a new British prime minister, Clement Attlee, after the Labour party's victory at the polls. Stalin still represented the Soviet Union. By now, disagreements between the Western Allies and

the Soviets had deepened, not only over Soviet control in Poland, eastern Europe, and the Balkans, but over German reparations and other matters. Yet the Western leaders were still prepared to make concessions in the hope of establishing harmonious relations. Agreements were announced on the postwar treatment of Germany, on German disarmament, demilitarization, "denazification," and the punishment of war criminals. Each power could take reparations in kind from its occupation zone and the Russians would get substantial additional deliveries from the Western zones so that the original $10 billion Soviet demand was virtually met.

Pending the final peace treaty, German territory east of the Oder-Neisse rivers was committed to Polish administration. The details of this decision had earlier been postponed; the Polish-German boundary was now set at the western Neisse, even further west than originally envisaged. Poland thus extended its territorial boundaries about a hundred miles westward as compensation for Russian westward expansion at Polish expense. German East Prussia was divided between the Soviet Union in the north and Poland in the south. Königsberg, founded by the Teutonic Knights, for centuries the ducal seat of Prussian dukes and the coronation city of Prussian kings, became the Russian city of Kaliningrad. The ancient German cities of Stettin and Breslau became the Polish cities of Szczecin and Wroclaw. Danzig became Gdansk. The de facto administration of these areas hardened into permanent rule. The transfer of the German population in these eastern areas was supposed to be effected in an orderly and humane fashion; but millions of Germans were driven from their homes or fled within a few months. For them (and for the Germans who were expelled from Czechoslovakia) it was the final consummation of the war that Hitler had unleashed.

Germany divided

The Potsdam participants agreed that peace treaties would be signed as soon as possible with the former German satellite states; the task of preparing them was entrusted to a council of foreign ministers representing the United States, Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and China. In the months that followed, the widening chasm between the Soviets and the West manifested itself in stormy meetings in London, Paris, and New York, as well as in a peace conference held in Paris in 1946, at which were represented the 21 states that had contributed substantial military forces to the defeat of the Axis powers. In February 1947 treaties were signed with Italy, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Finland, all of which paid reparations and agreed to certain territorial adjustments. In 1951 a peace treaty was signed with Japan, but not by the Soviets, who signed their own treaty in 1956. The years went by, but no final treaty was signed with Germany, a Germany that long remained divided. For the wartime Western-Soviet coalition had fallen apart, shattering the dreams and aspirations for a lasting peace of those who had fought the Second World War to a triumph over one kind of aggression and totalitarianism, and now found themselves confronted with a new age of crisis.

Merriman, John M. A history of modern Europe : from the Renaissance to the present. New York: W.W. Norton, 2004.

that Japanese citizens and Japanese Americans were preparing to carry out acts of sabotage in the United States, the U.S. government interned in "relocation centers" about 40,000 Japanese citizens residing in the United States and 70,000 Japanese Americans, most living on the West Coast. American citizens of German descent, in contrast, were not interned.

The first of several meetings between the British and American military chiefs of staff took place in Washington, D.C., in January 1942. The Allied commanders decided to give the European theater of war the highest priority. An immediate concentration of attacks against Japanese forces seemed less urgent. In any case, it would take considerable time to dislodge the Japanese from the Southeast Asian countries and Pacific islands they had conquered.

Hitler's Europe

Whether or not each conquered state retained some autonomy, German policies were first directed at extracting useful raw materials needed to wage an extended war. The exact nature of the relationship between Germany and each occupied state varied from country to country. Yet in all of these states the Nazis carried out Hitler's policy of genocide against Jews and others belonging to what he considered to be inferior races, often aided by local collaborators.

In every country overrun by German troops, people could be found who were eager or willing to collaborate with the Nazis. These ranged from leaders willing to serve German interests to ordinary people whose political biases or hope for gain or even just survival led them to help the Nazis. Yet, in many countries, resistance movements bravely opposed the rule of the Nazis or their allies. The largest and most successful resistance was in mountainous Yugoslavia, where resisters were able to take on entire German divisions, and, to a lesser extent, in France, where groups of guerrilla fighters undertook hit-and-run attacks against the Germans and the collaborationist government. In Germany, resistance to Hitler and the Nazis barely existed, notwithstanding a courageous attempt by disenchanted army officers to assassinate Hitler in July 1944. To the end, most Germans remained loyal to the Führer, or at least could not or did not resist.

The Nazi "New European Order"

Hitler sought to exploit the economic resources of the countries his armies had conquered and to assure that no effective opposition could emerge in any of them. Germany annexed the disputed Polish territories it had claimed, including Poznan, Upper Silesia, and the Polish Corridor; Hitler considered them German in the first place. Direct German administration was extended to Ukraine and Belarus. Germans who lived in Poland,

Map 26.4 Hitler's Europe, 1942 Hitler's expansion to the east and west, showing the greatest extent of the German occupation of Europe.

Lithuania, or those parts of the Soviet Union that were behind German lines were "repatriated" to Germany, or settled in the newly conquered territories (see Map 26.4).

German policies were different in Poland and Russia, whose peoples Hitler considered to be racially inferior. Following the fall of Warsaw, Hitler had sent five special "action" squads to Poland with orders to wipe out the Polish upper class. All over the country, businessmen, political leaders, intellectuals, and teachers were executed or sent to extermination camps.

Norway and Denmark, deemed by Hitler to be sufficiently "Nordic" or "Aryan" to be "Germanized," were allowed relative autonomy. In Denmark, where the only elections in any country under a Nazi regime took place, the Danish Nazi Party won a paltry 2 percent of the vote. Hitler left Germany's central and southern European "independent" allies with some autonomy, depending on the extent to which they followed his wishes. Admiral Miklós Horthy ruled Hungary under increasingly close German supervision, particularly after Hitler learned that he tried to play both sides by getting in touch with the Allies in 1942. Slovakia, which had been denied independence by the Versailles settlements, had become autonomous when Germany marched into Czechoslovakia in 1938, splitting the country into two parts. Pro-German nationalist fascists held power in Slovakia. In wartime Romania, the fascist Ion Antonescu ruled. Hitler divided Yugoslavia into the states of Serbia, Montenegro, and Croatia. Placing Serbia under direct German administration, he put Croatia and Montenegro under the rule of an authoritarian leader informally responsible to Mussolini.

The Germans imposed crushing obligations on conquered lands, including enormous financial indemnities and exchange rates that strongly favored the German currency. Germans operated factories and shipping companies in occupied countries. In France, the Germans first took movable raw materials and equipment useful for war production. As the war went on, German demands became greater; the occupation authorities closely regulated the armament, aircraft, mining, and metal industries. Some French businesses made the best of the situation, eagerly working with German firms. A few quietly subverted German demands and expectations for cooperation.

The "Final Solution"

Hitler's obsessive racial theories had become official policy in Nazi Germany before the war (see Chapter 25). For the Nazis, the process of forging the "national community" meant the elimination of groups they considered to be "outsiders." They made a temporary exception of foreign laborers, upon whom the economy depended during the war. In 1939, Hitler had ordered the killing, often by injection, of Germans who were mentally deficient and handicapped. At least 70,000 mentally retarded people perished, including children, before public objections that the victims were German halted this practice in August 1941. In addition, the Nazis sterilized between

320,000 and 350,000 German "outcasts" between 1934 and 1945; these included people determined by Nazi doctors to manifest "hereditary simple-mindedness," alcoholism, homosexuality, chronic depression, schizophrenia, or those who were deemed "work shy." Hitler mandated experiments to determine how thousands of people could be killed "efficiently" in assembly-line fashion.

In 1939, Hitler told Heinrich Himmler (1900–1945), the leader of the S.S., to plan for the occupation of Poland and the Soviet Union. The short, stout Himmler was obsessed with the pagan Germans of prehistory, establishing several spurious academic institutes to study his crackpot theories. Himmler welcomed Hitler's order to "eliminate the harmful influence of such alien parts of the population." Hitler announced to the Reichstag on January 30, 1939, that the result of the anticipated war would be "the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe," the "final solution."

Nazi plans to exterminate Jews took shape as German military defeats mounted in Russia. There the massacre of Russians had already begun. In January 1941, Himmler announced to S.S. leaders a change in policy. Hitler no longer wanted to transform Slavs into a slave labor force, but rather wanted to destroy at least 30 million of them. Germans eventually would occupy their lands. German troops and death squads executed Russian prisoners and civilians. Before the war ended, at least 3.3 million Soviet prisoners of war—of 5.7 million captured—were executed or died in German prisoner-of-war camps.

A Gestapo directive on July 17, 1941, ordered commanders of prison camps in the east to liquidate "all the Jews." In October 1941, the Nazis began to prepare for the Holocaust, the genocide of European Jews. Hermann Göring ordered Reinhard Heydrich (1904–1942), the chief of the secret police, to prepare "a total solution of the Jewish question." By the end of 1941, 1 million Jews had been massacred. Heydrich and other Nazi officials met in Wannsee, a Berlin suburb, in January 1942. There they drew up even more systematic plans for genocide.

The assembly-line-like murders of Jews began, first in mobile vans, using carbon monoxide gas, then in the extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau near Krakow in southern Poland. By 1942, the Nazis had built other extermination camps, surrounded by barbed-wire, electrified fences, and watchtowers (see Map 26.5). Gallows stood in an open space near the prisoners' wooden huts. But most victims were exterminated in airtight gas chambers with Zyklon B gas, chosen because it killed with efficiency. The victims' eyeglasses, gold from their teeth, and all other valuables became the property of the Reich.

Inmates of the camps wore tattered striped uniforms, and they were identified by numbers tattooed on their arms. They were ordered to file past an officer, who selected those deemed "unfit" for hard labor, which at Auschwitz was about 70 to 75 percent. He sent them toward a building marked "shower" or "bath," and some were given, in the ultimate cynical

MAP 26.5 NAZI DEATH CAMPS Sites of the death camps in Europe.

gesture, a small piece of soap. A recent, unknowing arrival at Auschwitz inquired of another prisoner as to the whereabouts of his friend. "'Was he sent to the left side?' . . . 'Yes,' I replied. 'Then you can see him there,' I was told. 'Where?' A hand pointed to the chimney a few hundred yards off, which was sending a column of flame up into the gray sky of Poland. It dissolved into a sinister cloud of smoke." Those people sent to the right—mostly the young in relatively good health—would continue to live until they dropped dead of fatigue or were subsequently sent to the left side in another "selection." Almost all children were killed right away, because they were too young to work as slave laborers in the I.G. Farben chemical factory near the camp. At Auschwitz, the daily death count reached as high as 15,000 victims. Overall, Hungarian Jews perished in the largest numbers, followed closely by Poles. One of the granddaughters of Alfred Dreyfus, the Jewish French army officer falsely accused of treason in the 1890s (see Chapter 18), perished there in 1944.

Jews being massacred in Lithuania, 1942.

The fascist states of Croatia and Romania, both Germany's allies, carried out the mass murder of Jews themselves. The Romanian government killed 300,000 Jews in the provinces that the Soviets had occupied in 1940, but few in what the Romanians considered the heartland of the country. In Lithuania, Ukraine, and, to a lesser extent, Poland, there were many cases of local populations massacring Jews.

Some people protected the Jews. A small French town took in Jewish children, producing identity cards for them that made them family members. In Marseille, Varian Fry, an American editor, journalist, and member of the American Refugee Committee, relentlessly planned escape routes, purchased tickets, and, where possible, obtained transit and other visas and found sponsors for about 1,000 Jews early in the war, including the painter Marc Chagall and the poet André Breton. A Warsaw woman rescued 2,500 children from the city's Jewish ghetto. In Amsterdam, Christians brought food and other supplies to a German Jewish family, hidden in a secret annex apartment in the father's office building for several years. In her resolutely cheerful diary, the young Anne Frank described her family's hiding place as "a paradise compared with how other Jews who are not in hiding must be living." It frightened her to think of her friends who had fallen into the clutches of "the cruelest brutes that walk the earth." Several months after her fourteenth birthday, Nazi soldiers discovered Frank's family. She and her family were deported to Auschwitz. Frank died in the death camp of Bergen-Belsen in the spring of 1945.

In Denmark, most of the Jewish population was saved in October 1943. When word came that the German occupying forces were preparing to

Dutch Jews on their way to the trains for transport from Amsterdam to a concentration camp.

deport Danish Jews, Danes ferried Jews across the straits to nearby neutral Sweden. There a courageous German cultural attaché had helped prepare the way. Perhaps fearing that mass deportations might spark Danish resistance, in this case the German authorities looked the other way. In Bulgaria, King Boris and his government, although allied with Nazi Germany, simply abandoned plans to deport the country's 50,000 Bulgarian Jews. (yet Bulgaria willingly handed over to the Nazis and thus to certain death Greek and Yugoslav Jews). In Hungary, Horthy resisted for three years German demands that the Jews of Hungary be sent to death camps. After German occupation in 1944, he ordered the deportations of Jews that had begun to be stopped. Yet Hungarian police killed tens of thousands of Jews in Hungary. In Croatia, where Italy had established an occupation zone, some Italian army officers protected Jews (and Serbs as well) from Croatian death squads. But when, in August 1942, Germany requested that the Italians turn the Croatian Jews over to the Nazis, Mussolini wrote "No objection" across the letter. Italian authorities had little interest in rounding up Italian Jews. They ignored German directives, or they could be bribed to look the other way. Some non-Jewish Romans contributed their jewelry to help raise a ransom demanded by the Germans from Jews under threat of deportation. Others helped Jews hide. They did so at great risk; German troops executed entire families of those who hid or even gave food to Jews.

Nazi doctors performed barbaric experiments on prisoners. These included experiments in the sterilization of Slavic women; measuring the pain a patient could survive when being operated on without anesthesia;

how long one could live in subfreezing temperatures; or whether prisoners would allow themselves to be killed if they thought their children might be spared. Gypsies were also Nazi targets, viewed as "biological outsiders" who were both "alien" by virtue of not being "Aryan" and "asocial," because they were nomadic. A half million gypsies perished. Communists, socialists, and repeat criminal offenders were also considered "asocial." Many of them perished as well. The Nazis persecuted homosexuals ruthlessly, identifying them in the death camps with pink stars.

One of the most haunting questions of World War II is at what point the leaders of the Allies and of neutral states actually learned that the Nazis were undertaking the extermination of an entire people. Rumors of mass exterminations had begun to reach Britain and the United States in 1942, although the details were not known. Even after confirmation provided by four young Jews who escaped from Auschwitz in the summer of 1942, and by information arriving via the Polish underground and diffused by the Polish government in London, many people—including even some leaders of the Jewish communities in Britain, Palestine, and the United States—refused to believe "the terrible secret." ("Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians [by the Turks in 1915]?" Hitler exclaimed just before the war.) Articles in British, Swiss, and U.S. newspapers began to relate the mass killings of Jews. Pope Pius XII (pope 1939–1958), who had served as the Vatican's representative in Berlin before his election as pope and who issued no papal encyclicals condemning anti-Semitism, knew of the death camps by the end of 1943. Yet the pope did no more than offer reminders of the necessity of "justice and charity" in the world.

The U.S. and British governments had no official reactions to the terrifying news. A head of the British intelligence service claimed that Poles and Jews were exaggerating "in order to stoke us up." President Roosevelt certainly knew by the summer of 1942, but he rejected the idea of retaliatory bombing of German civilians. He believed that only a sustained military effort could defeat the Nazis. With Hitler's invasion of Russia having gone awry, it looked as though the tide was beginning to turn against Germany. The Allied governments feared that if too much publicity was given to the disappearance of hundreds of thousands of Jews—millions seemed simply too many to believe—it might generate calls to aid them directly. This, they worried, might undercut the united war effort. The Holocaust continued until the very end of the war; by then 6.2 million Jews had been murdered.

Collaboration

In Western Europe, the Nazis found leaders willing to follow German directives obediently and often enthusiastically. In Norway, Vidkun Quisling (1887–1945), organizer of a fascist party in the 1930s, became the puppet head of state in Norway, his name entering the dictionary as synonymous with traitor. In Belgium, principally Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of

Palmer, R. R., Joel Colton, and Lloyd S. Kramer. A history of the modern world. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2002.

Chapter 22

THE POSTWAR ERA: COLD WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

109. The Cold War: The Opening Decade, 1945–1955

110. Western Europe: Economic Reconstruction

111. Western Europe: Political Reconstruction

112. Reshaping the Global Economy

113. The Communist World: The U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe

114. The Communist World: Mao Zedong and the People's Republic of China

A cataclysm, according to Webster's dictionary, is "any violent change involving sudden and extensive alterations of the earth's surface; hence, any upheaval, especially a social or political one." The human world witnessed such a cataclysm in the twentieth century. The First World War, the collapse of the old European dynasties, the Russian Revolution, the Fascist and Nazi dictatorships, the Second World War, the nuclear bomb, the end of the European colonial empires, the rise of Communist China—all are part of the changes that have altered the coastlines of modern human society, and for which cataclysm is not too strong a word.

It is difficult to do justice to the complexities of contemporary history and to keep current with the onrushing events of our own times. The chapters that follow can only sketch the most memorable developments of the postwar era and the years that have followed.

109. THE COLD WAR: THE OPENING DECADE, 1945–1955

Certain issues that had confronted humankind for over a century became even more complex and more urgent in the second half of the twentieth century. Three can be singled out: science, the organization of industrial society, and national sovereignty.

Chapter emblem: Hungarian protestors burning a picture of Joseph Stalin in 1956.

The atomic bomb

The atomic bomb dramatized the problem of science. The world shuddered at the instantaneous destruction of Hiroshima. The postwar contest to produce more sophisticated nuclear weapons spurred the realization that a third world war would be unthinkable. Human beings possessed the means to annihilate not only civilization but even human existence on the planet, a thought especially shocking to a world that set one of its highest values on scientific progress.

Science, and its partner, invention, had for a long time transformed both industry and war. It had conquered many of the dreaded plagues and diseases of the world. Everyone had long known that science could be applied either constructively or destructively. It was the magnitude of destructive possibilities that now made thoughtful people worry. Scientists themselves, after the first atomic explosion, affirmed the need for a moral regeneration. They insisted that science was neutral, free from blame for the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, that the trouble lay not with science but with the uses to which scientific knowledge was put.

Organizing industrial society

The problem of organizing industrial society was also unresolved after 1945. There were in theory two opposite social poles. At one, best represented by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (until its demise in 1991), all capital was owned by the state and supplied to managers and workers as needed, and all production and interchange were planned in advance by public authorities. In the Soviet form of socialism (as well as in the People's Republic of China after 1949), which the outside world called communism because it had come about through revolution and been maintained through dictatorship, the government's role was all-encompassing. At the other pole, best exemplified by the United States, capital was owned by private persons, who chose the channels of investment and hence determined the availability of jobs, and interchange took place through the mechanism of the market. Neither the socialist nor the capitalist system was pure in practice, and even in capitalist countries mixed economies became the rule, with varying degrees of government intervention. The chief drawback in the Soviet system was the lack of freedom, political and economic, and its stifling of initiative; in the American system, its periodic economic crises. In the years after the Second World War, Americans expended a good deal more effort trying to correct the lack of security than the Soviets did to correct the lack of freedom.

Another postwar question hinged on the unity of the modern world. It was indisputably one world in the sense that there existed a close-knit, interdependent economy, that political events and environmental changes affected the whole globe, and that world cultures and religions interacted as never before. But it was far from homogeneous. All admired the steam turbine and stood in awe of nuclear fission, but beyond the material level schemes of values diverged. No people wished to be subordinated to another, or to an international body, or to lose its way of life in a uniform world civilization.

The United Nations

After the Second World War, as after the First, an international organization was set up to prevent war in the future. A conference of all anti-Axis powers, held at San Francisco in 1945, founded the United Nations (UN) and drew up its charter. The new organization was designed to maintain international peace and security and to encourage cooperative solutions to international social, economic, and cultural problems. Although it was widely acknowledged that peace would depend primarily on the Great Powers, all states, regardless of size, would be represented. Two agencies were central. The General Assembly was a deliberative body in which all member states, however small, had an equal vote. The Security Council, whose primary responsibility was to preserve peace, consisted of the five Great

Powers, who were to be permanent members, and ten rotating members chosen for two-year terms. Apart from the two superpowers, the United States and the U.S.S.R., it was not easy to define the Great Powers in 1945, but the permanent seats were assigned to the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, France, and China.[1]

Each permanent member had a veto power. Thus the Security Council could act on important matters only if the Great Powers were unanimous. Although widely criticized, the veto was accepted as necessary. In major crises the agreement of the Great Powers would be needed to maintain world peace. The U.S.S.R. demanded the veto most frankly, but the United States would not have joined without this safeguard. In the following years, however, even small countries refused to abide by judgments of the United Nations. No nation, large or small, was willing to forgo its independence or subordinate itself to an international body with the authority to put down violence, but the hope was strong that the authority and prestige of the UN would grow with time.

The United Nations had 51 original members. To symbolize the American commitment, its headquarters was located in New York. The charter provided for the admission of new members, including the former Axis countries and their satellites, and also wartime neutrals, so that it could be truly international. From 1947 to 1955 a few additional states were admitted; in 1955, 16 more; and in the next several decades, after decolonization and other changes, the organization expanded so that by 2000 it counted 189 members. In 1948, in good part because of the persuasive powers of the American delegate Eleanor Roosevelt, it adopted a sweeping Declaration of Universal Rights, but left unanswered the means of implementing it.

Membership expands

The United Nations and its Security Council failed to fulfill the role projected for it in the early postwar era because of the tensions between the American-led Western powers and the Soviets. Although the UN remained one of the few arenas where the Americans and Soviets could meet and debate, it was powerless to prevent the two superpowers from drifting further and further apart. On the other hand it helped from the beginning to mediate regional disputes and to play a role in peacekeeping missions. The office of the secretary general grew in importance. With the expansion of the UN to include the nations of the Third World—a term devised to describe the developing countries, mostly former colonial countries, not directly aligned with either the Western or Soviet camp—the General Assembly became a forum for debate in which the developing nations, critical of the wealthier West, vehemently voiced their social and economic grievances.

The Cold War: Origins and Nature

The Second World War left only the United States and the Soviet Union still standing in any strength. The United States emerged physically unscathed from the war, its economy stronger than ever before. Although it demobilized much of its wartime military force, it alone possessed the atomic bomb. The Soviet Union had been devastated by the war, in which over 20 million of its population had perished, but it was still a formidable military power, with four million soldiers under arms and in control of populations and territories in central and eastern Europe well beyond its pre-1939 boundaries. It became common to speak of the two countries as superpowers—continental land giants, possessing enormous

[1]Nationalist China (the Republic of China, or Taiwan) occupied the seat until 1971, even though the People's Republic of China (Communist China) governed the Chinese mainland after 1949.

The United Nations was established to resolve international conflicts and to foster peaceful exchanges between nations, but it also adopted a Declaration of Universal Human Rights. This picture of an early UN meeting shows a representative of the Philippines, Pedro Lopez, calling for the establishment and protection of a free press in all nations of the world.

(Hulton-Deutsch Collection/Corbis)

resources, overshadowing all other states, including the nations of western Europe long dominant in the modern centuries.

The characteristic of a two-state system is that each power knows in advance who its only dangerous enemy can be. In such a situation a diplomatic equilibrium is more difficult to sustain. Each views measures taken by the other power for what it considers its security as aggression or as provocation; and each, ignorant of the other's strength, exaggerates it. After the war the United States and the U.S.S.R. fell into this unhappy dual relationship. It was compounded by a deep-seated ideological tension between capitalist democracy and Marxist-Leninist communism that dated back to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. A widening diplomatic, geopolitical, and ideological clash of interests came to be known as the Cold War, so called because the antagonisms and rivalries, intense though they were, always fell short of open or direct military hostilities between the two powers.

The Cold War

It was not possible for anyone to know what Stalin, who dictated all decisions, or his lieutenants in the Kremlin, really believed or intended at the end of the Second World War. Probably they considered a clash between the U.S.S.R. and the Western capitalist powers as inevitable at some point in the future. Probably they were disturbed by the ambitious goals of American capitalism, which sought markets in eastern Europe and elsewhere, and by the American monopoly of the atomic bomb. They themselves undoubtedly saw an op-

portunity to consolidate their hold over territories gained during the war (or regained, since some of these had been lost at the end of the First World War), and to create an outer buffer zone for Soviet national security. Undoubtedly they also saw in the aftermath of the Second World War, as of the First, an opportunity to promote the international Communist cause.

Whether the Soviets were acting to protect their national security, fulfill old Russian territorial ambitions antedating communism, or promote communism on a world scale, President Truman and his advisers, and a great majority of the American people, became convinced that the Soviets were bent not only on consolidating their grip on central and eastern Europe but were also embarking on a worldwide Communist offensive. It was therefore the responsibility of the United States, as the only power in the West able to act effectively, to "contain" this offensive. Although the United States government would take military steps mainly in reaction to Soviet expansion or threats of expansion, many Americans came to ascribe almost all of the complex social and political unrest on the globe to initiatives launched by the Kremlin.

Containment

In Europe, at the close of hostilities, Soviet armies occupied eastern Europe and Germany as far west as the Elbe River. American, British, and French armies held the remainder of Germany, most of Austria, and all of Italy. During the war, the armed forces liberating an area exercised political authority. In that way, the sweep of the Red Army gave the Soviets political control over much of central and eastern Europe; 100 million people passed under Soviet domination. On the other hand, the United States excluded the Soviets from any active role in its occupation of Italy (and, in Asia, of Japan). For the Soviet Union, occupation meant full control over the political, economic, and social institutions of countries and the right to shape them in its own image. The Western powers, on the other hand, had hoped for pluralist and democratic societies, which would have been open to Western trade and influence. During the war the Americans and British had conceded Soviet predominance in eastern Europe, which the Soviets had liberated, but they soon resented the transformation of Poland and other East European countries into Soviet-dominated Communist states.

For Stalin, however, this kind of transformation was the only way to guarantee "friendly regimes" on his borders. From the Potsdam conference in July 1945 on, Truman denounced the Soviets for violating their pledge of free elections for the East European states and for failing to cooperate in the joint occupation of Germany. To the Americans Soviet control over eastern Europe seemed like the first step in a plan for unlimited expansion in Europe and elsewhere—not unlike the Nazi and Fascist aggression of the 1930s, to which Truman frequently compared it. Stalin may have been acting more as a Russian nationalist bent on protecting Russian national security than as a champion of worldwide Communist revolution, but his stubbornness and paranoia about capitalist encirclement, and lack of concern for world public opinion, made it difficult for the West to deal with him in the Cold War or to distinguish between what might have been legitimate Soviet security needs and expansionist missionary zeal.

Concerns about Soviet expansion

A series of Soviet actions fed the belief that Stalin's ambitions transcended eastern Europe. In Asia, as pledged at Yalta, the Soviets had declared war on Japan in August 1945 and moved into Manchuria, where they were well positioned to help the Chinese Communists. In Korea, once the Japanese were defeated, the Soviets by agreement occupied the northern part of the country but also took steps to consolidate their occupation zone into a

Communist government. Iran was another trouble spot. The Americans, British, and Russians had jointly occupied Iran during the war to forestall a Nazi takeover, but the Soviets refused to evacuate their troops at the stipulated time and pressed for oil concessions (such as the British and Americans already enjoyed).

The Soviets sought a trusteeship over the former Italian colonies in North Africa, within easy reach of the Suez Canal, and they massed troops on the Turkish border, pressing for joint control over the Black Sea straits and for naval access to the Mediterranean through the Dardanelles—an old tsarist goal. The British, acting as the guardians of the Mediterranean and Middle East, bolstered the Turkish defenses despite their own financial weakness. In Greece, in a civil war which raged from 1946 to 1949, Communist guerrillas battled the British-supported royalist, or nationalist, army. Stalin, as if recognizing his wartime commitment to Churchill that Greece remain in the Western sphere of influence, lent little aid to the Communists, but Tito's new Communist regime in Yugoslavia helped the Communist guerrillas. The Communist pressures on Turkey, Greece, and Iran aroused deep British and American concerns about Soviet strategic designs on the eastern Mediterranean and on the oil reserves of the Middle East.

Mutual mistrust

One casualty of the tension was a plan for international supervision of nuclear weapons. The United States knew that it was only a matter of time before the Soviets (and other nations) could build the atomic bomb, since the scientific basis for it was known. At the moment the British alone shared the secret. The United States proposed in 1946 that atomic energy be controlled by an international authority and that its use be limited to peaceful purposes. Such an international body would have the right to send inspectors into any country to check violations and enforce sanctions that would not be subject to veto in the Security Council. The Soviets objected and would not give up their veto. The idea of foreigners freely examining their society was repugnant to them. They questioned the good faith of the United States, which would not destroy its atomic bombs or halt further testing and production until the proposed international authority was established (many Americans also opposed international controls on their own nuclear arms). The British, in turn, fearful of an American relapse into isolationism, undertook to become a nuclear power on their own. The plan for international control foundered on mutual suspicion and mistrust. The Soviets proceeded with their own atomic research (and efficient espionage), which yielded results even sooner than expected. In 1949 the Soviets successfully tested an atomic bomb, and the nuclear arms race, universally dreaded, began.

The political conflicts had meanwhile deepened in 1946 and 1947. The American policy of containment, as formulated by the State Department, postulated that the Russians would expand wherever a power vacuum existed. Advocates for the strategy of containment argued that the West should show both patience and firmness, and in time Soviet society itself might change. In the meantime, however, the West needed to maintain its military strength and use economic and other counterpressures to resist the Soviets. Containment, the cornerstone of American policy, came to be interpreted in more rigorously military terms than some of its proponents had intended, and it was accompanied by a tendency of some Americans to blame all global unrest on a monolithic Moscow-controlled communism. Meanwhile Churchill, even before the Soviets had fully completed the transformation of eastern Europe into Communist satellites, made an eloquent speech in March 1946 in which he described the "iron curtain" that had descended between eastern and western Europe—"from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic." That spring the United States turned down a pending Soviet request for a reconstruction loan, Congress

having decided that Lend-Lease should end with the war, and also cut off reparations deliveries to the Soviets from the American occupation zone of Germany.

In 1947 financially strained Great Britain, forced to cut back on its commitments in the Mediterranean, informed Washington that it could no longer aid the anti-Communist forces in Greece or support Turkey in its resistance to Soviet pressures. The United States quickly moved to fill the vacuum. Truman not only agreed to provide the necessary assistance in the Mediterranean but at the same time also formulated in March 1947 a broad national policy to contain communism everywhere—"to assist free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures." The Truman Doctrine committed the United States to unprecedented involvement in global military and economic affairs. The Marshall Plan, designed to hasten European economic recovery and hence check Communist expansion, was also announced in the spring of 1947.

The Truman Doctrine

The American national security state began to take shape. A National Security Council was created to advise the president on security matters and a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was created to coordinate the gathering of intelligence. The CIA soon received authorization to conduct covert operations as well. The authority of the executive branch to conduct foreign policy grew. In 1948 the United States adopted its first peacetime military draft.

The Soviets in their turn denounced the American capitalist and imperialist "warmongers." With the United States arming Greece and Turkey, American air bases established in the Middle East, American armed forces in occupation of Japan, Okinawa, and South Korea, and the Americans possessing the atomic bomb, the Soviets felt threatened and encircled. Soviet suspicions, dating from Western intervention in the Russian Revolution and civil war in 1917–1920, their exclusion from the Munich Pact, the delay in opening up a second front in the Second World War, the cessation of Lend-Lease at the end of the war, and the rejection of a requested postwar loan, mounted.

Soviet suspicions

In 1947 the Soviets, to exert closer control over all Communist parties, reestablished in new form the old Communist International, or Comintern, which had been abandoned in 1943 as a gesture of wartime cooperation and goodwill, renaming it the Communist Information Bureau, or Cominform. The Soviets also replaced coalition governments in central and eastern Europe, in which the Communists had formerly shared power, with regimes dominated by Communist parties. In Czechoslovakia, where President Benes's democratic coalition had been viewed as a possible bridge between East and West, the Czech Communist party, faced with defeat in a forthcoming election, seized power in February 1948. A serious crisis next arose over Berlin.

Germany: The Berlin Blockade and the Airlift of 1948–1949

The key to the rebuilding of Europe, and the most critical area of Soviet-Western contention, was Germany, divided by Allied agreement into four zones and occupied by the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and France. The Allies had agreed to joint Allied policies for a defeated Germany, even though each of the four powers was to occupy its separate zone. Berlin also was divided into four separate Allied sectors, with joint administration for the city as a whole. All had agreed that Germany should pay reparations, both in capital equipment and current production, mainly to the Soviet Union, which had suffered most from German military destruction, and that limits should be placed on German productive capacity.

DEPORTATION AND RESETTLEMENT, 1939–1950

The age-old distribution of nationalities in central and eastern Europe was radically transformed between 1939 and 1950. About 6 million Jews died in the Holocaust, with over 300,000 survivors emigrating to Israel by 1950, and millions of Germans, Poles, and others were forcibly uprooted.

Left panel: **The first stage began with the Nazi–Soviet Pact of 1939, after which the Germans occupied western Poland, while the Russians annexed eastern Poland and the three Baltic republics. Western Poland received Poles expelled from Germany, while in eastern Poland about 2 million Poles were deported to Siberia, being replaced by about the same number of Russians and Ukranians. Many Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians were moved to other parts of the Soviet Union. Thousands of Germans were "returned" to Germany from the Baltic republics and from places such as Romania, where they had long formed German enclaves. The "Volga Germans," Tatars, and others in south Russia were sent to Siberia.**

Two Germanys emerge

At the war's end the Americans, supported by the British, quickly came to favor the economic reconstruction of Germany to accelerate European recovery and to reduce European dependence on American financial aid. The Ruhr, in the western zone, was still Europe's industrial heartland. The Soviets, on the other hand, were determined to use German resources to repair the devastation in their own country. They removed large amounts of food and stripped entire plants of machinery in their zone. The Western Allies refused to permit the dismantling of factories in their zones and insisted that the Soviets take their share of current production only from their own zone. By May 1946 joint administration of Germany

Right panel: **A second stage of displacements came with the Soviet victory and collapse of Hitler's Reich. The German–Polish frontier was now moved westward to the Oder River. Millions of Germans from east of the Oder, along with other millions from the Sudeten regions of Czechoslovakia, from Hungary, and from Romania, were thrown back into what remained of Germany, most fleeing to the Western zone. Poles streamed into what had been Germany east of the Oder; others came into Poland from Ukraine. Russians moved into what had been eastern Poland and the Baltic states. Ukranians and various non-Russian minorities were sent to Siberia. Some Balts escaped to the West; others were redistributed to various places in the Soviet Union.**

Amid all of these movements of people, the most conspicuous, long-term changes, in addition to the virtual disappearance of East European Jews, were the expulsion of the Germans from Eastern Europe and a westward movement of Poles and Russians.
(Westermanns Atlas zur Weltgeschichte)

had all but broken down. Early in 1947 the United States and Britain united their two zones (which they called "Bizonia"); the French, overcoming their initial reluctance to see a revived Germany, soon merged their zone as well. The Western powers encouraged the reconstruction of governments in the individual German states and the convening of a constituent assembly to set up a federal republic. The Soviets, in their zone, took steps to establish a Communist-dominated government. Two Germanys were emerging.

In June 1948 the Western powers, recognizing the need for drastic currency reform to cope with inflation and encourage West German economic revival, suddenly revoked the old worthless currency and at a 1-to-10 ratio issued a new German mark, the Deutsche

The Soviet closure of the railways and roads into Berlin provoked one of the most dramatic events of the early Cold War: the Berlin Airlift. For almost a year (1948–1949) the Americans and their Western allies flew supplies into the isolated city on military aircraft such as the plane in this picture. Images of the airlift became part of the evolving Cold War struggle for international public opinion and an enduring symbol of the links between West Berlin and the Western Allies.

(Hulton-Deutsch Collection/Corbis).

Berlin blockade and airlift

mark. The Soviets, who had not been consulted, objected to this violation of the wartime agreement to treat Germany as a single economic unit. In retaliation they blockaded all road and rail access to Berlin, which lay 100 miles deep within the Soviet zone. The blockade was a sharp challenge and test of will. If the West abandoned Berlin, it could lose authority in all Europe and open the way for Soviet westward expansion, and perhaps expansion elsewhere. Knowing that they could not resort to military measures against the much stronger Soviet ground forces,

the Allies responded with a massive air lift. For close to a year, American and Western aircraft flew in thousands of tons of food and other supplies to the occupation forces and to the three million inhabitants of West Berlin. The Soviets harassed the planes but avoided direct confrontation and, finally, in May 1949 lifted the blockade.

Each side proceeded with the formation of a German government. The Federal Republic of Germany, its capital in the small Rhineland city of Bonn, came into existence in September 1949; the German Democratic Republic, its capital in the eastern sector of Berlin, one month later. There were now two Germanys. The division of Europe had hardened.

The Atlantic Alliance

In 1948 Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg formed a West European Union for collective self-defense, but it remained at the time of only nominal importance. In 1949 the United States took the lead in creating a larger military alliance and collective security system. The United States, Canada, and ten European nations met in Washington and agreed to military arrangements for the joint defense of western Europe. The Atlantic Pact was a military alliance of unlimited duration and broad scope: "an armed attack against one or more" was to be considered "an attack against all." The United States formally committed itself to the security of western Europe and agreed to supply funds and equipment for European rearmament. It was the first such military alliance of its kind in American history.

NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) emerged with a network of military arrangements and a chain of command headed by General Eisenhower. Because West Germany remained the most vulnerable target for Soviet expansion, large numbers of American troops (eventually over 300,000) were stationed there as the nucleus of the NATO armed forces. With overwhelming Soviet superiority in ground forces, the NATO defense strategy was based primarily on American air power rather than on ground troops alone. The treaty solemnly affirmed American determination not to abandon the Continent. In later years the West Europeans became restive with American leadership, or, alternatively, feared an American decoupling from Europe, but NATO remained western Europe's shield against Soviet aggression. The Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization were the three prongs of the American and Western response to a potential Soviet challenge.

Meanwhile the West European countries, with the aid of the Marshall Plan, were making an impressive economic recovery and cooperating with each other. In a few short years after the most devastating war in history western Europe had reconstructed itself politically, recovered economically, and was rearming. The Soviets could not be expected to view with equanimity the revival and growing unity of western Europe. American financial and military assistance, NATO, the containment policy, all defensive in Western eyes, and indeed provoked by Soviet expansionism, were hostile acts from the Soviet perspective. The Soviet Union drew its six satellite or client states, variously styled people's republics or people's democracies, closer to it. It formalized economic ties by creating in 1949 a Council for Mutual Economic Aid and a few years later coordinated the existing network of military alliances in the Warsaw Pact of 1955. The Soviets added to their military and air power and continued their nuclear research.

By 1949 Stalin's postwar expansion seemed contained and Truman could claim success for his policies. The Soviets had dropped their demands on Turkey and departed from

Iran. Insurrectionary strikes launched by Communist parties in western Europe had failed, as did a Communist bid for power in Italy in the elections of 1948, in which the Vatican and the United States strongly supported the anti-Communist camp. Marshal Tito in 1948 successfully defied the Cominform and Yugoslavia went its separate Communist way. In Greece the American- and British-backed Greek royalists triumphed in 1949 against the Communist guerrillas. The Soviet blockade of Berlin had failed to drive the West from the city.

Stalemate in Europe

The rivalry over Europe ended in stalemate. The Soviet threat to western Europe diminished. The continent remained divided into a western and eastern Europe (the term central Europe tended to drop from use), Germany into two Germanys, Berlin into West and East Berlin. After the failure of the Soviet blockade of Berlin, there was no such overt conflict in Europe. Despite renewed threats to Berlin, each side recognized the strength and security concerns of the other. But any thoughts that the world might settle into peace, no matter how uneasy, were shattered in June 1950. The Western-Soviet struggle shifted to Asia.

The Revival of Japan

In Asia events also moved rapidly in the early postwar years. In China the Chinese Communists triumphed over the Nationalists and Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China in 1949. In Japan the United States used its military occupation from 1945 to 1952 to foster parliamentary institutions and revive the Japanese economy.

The occupation of Japan

Rejecting Soviet demands for a share in the occupation of Japan, the United States, with British and French approval, lodged full authority in General Douglas MacArthur as supreme commander of the occupation forces. In good part in response to Cold War tensions the American occupation encouraged economic revival and political reconstruction, not vindictiveness, and the Japanese, stunned by their disastrous defeat, cooperated. In the interests of stability the emperor received special status and was shielded from trial or even criticism. A new constitution in 1946 ended divine-right rule, transferred sovereignty from the emperor to the people, established machinery for parliamentary government, gave women the vote, and encouraged local self-government. The constitution "forever" renounced war and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes; the small Japanese armed forces were to be restricted to defensive purposes. Although trials of Japanese war criminals were held, there were no extensive purges. The Japanese paid reparations to Asian nations that had been the victims of Japanese conquest but did not even years later fully acknowledge the brutality that had accompanied these conquests.

Efforts at social and economic reform under the occupation were less sweeping than originally planned. The large family holdings in heavy industry and banking were dissolved, but within a short time new forms of economic concentration replaced them. Labor unions were reinstituted but their powers were curtailed. When the occupation inaugurated a program of land redistribution, with a limit on large landholdings, small farmers lacked the means to purchase the land offered them. Although a moderate Socialist party emerged, and militant activists in later years frequently demonstrated their discontent, political control remained in the hands of conservatives drawn from the upper social classes. By the end of the occupation the Liberal Democratic party (a conservative party) dominated the government and long continued to do so.

Economic recovery

The conservative-led political consensus had a strong commitment to economic recovery and growth. Like western Europe, Japan, too, recovered

rapidly. In 1945 it had been prostrate, a fourth of its housing destroyed, agricultural and industrial output reduced to half its prewar level, its shipping and financial reserves gone. Under the occupation, and with American help, the economy revived and expanded; by 1954 its gross national product reached prewar levels. Labor self-discipline and social patterns of deference and loyalty kept industrial unrest to a minimum. Close cooperation between government and business encouraged savings, investment, research, and economic growth. The very need to rebuild and renovate the economy from the bottom up proved an advantage.

Beginning in the early 1950s the economy grew at an amazing rate of nearly 10 percent each year; manufacturing output, at 14 percent. Despite the repatriation of millions of Japanese from Manchuria, Korea, and other parts of Asia and the addition of large numbers of rural workers to the labor force, Japan still had a labor shortage. The response was an intense level of automation. Japan became a pioneer in advanced high technology and came to depend on technological innovations to sustain its growth. Its consumer products soon entered the world economy, and its exports came to rival those of the Americans and the Europeans. Because a large military establishment was forbidden, expenditures that might have gone into the military, as in the past, were now plowed into industrial investments. By the 1950s Japan was once again a major economic power, a bastion of social stability, and a major new element in the global economy. For the Soviets the revival of Japan under American auspices, which they saw as a counterweight to Soviet influence and as a bulwark against revolution in Asia, loomed as still another threat.

Containment in Asia: The Korean War

In June 1950 the Korean War broke out. The Western Allies and the Soviet Union had agreed that Korea, once an object of imperialist rivalry between Japan and tsarist Russia, but under Japanese rule since 1910, would become free and independent after Japan's defeat. In 1945 the United States, for reasons of military expediency, proposed that Soviet troops temporarily occupy the northern part of the country down to the thirty-eighth parallel; United States troops would temporarily occupy the southern half. But postwar negotiations for a unified Korea foundered. The U.S.S.R. established a satellite government in its occupation zone under the Communist leader Kim Il Sung and built up North Korean military strength. The United States developed its own client state in the south and lent economic and military assistance. In 1947 a UN commission sought to sponsor nationwide elections, but the Soviet Union would not permit supervision of elections in the north. The elections in the south in May 1948 resulted in the presidency of Syngman Rhee, who, despite superficial forms of democracy, governed autocratically. Anticommunism in Korea and elsewhere did not necessarily equate with democracy. After the elections the United States withdrew its occupation forces but continued military and economic support. The Soviet Union also removed its occupation forces but left behind a well-trained and well-equipped North Korean army. Despite the original intention, two Koreas had come into existence.

East Asia in 1950

By 1950 the situation in East Asia, as we have seen, had altered dramatically. Japan had revived. The United States through its postwar occupation had helped to create a stable Japan, friendly to the West and with a prospering economy. In addition, the Chinese Communists, with only limited and grudging Soviet support, had triumphed over the Nationalists in a long civil war and in 1949 had proclaimed the Chinese People's Republic. Although relations between the Chinese Communists and the Soviets were neither warm nor cordial, the two countries,

out of mutual concern over the revival of Japan and the growth of American influence in East Asia, drew together in a mutual defense pact in February 1950. The U.S.S.R. meanwhile campaigned to have the People's Republic of China replace Nationalist China in the United Nations. When the effort failed, the Soviets in protest boycotted the Security Council meetings.

Although border skirmishes between North and South Korea had been frequent, the full-scale North Korean invasion of the south came as a surprise. In the West it was seen as an open act of military aggression, the first such clear-cut military aggression of the Cold War. Because of the boldness of their initiative and their superior forces, the North Koreans expected a quick victory. They gambled that the United States would not intervene and that the outside world would lodge no more than a moral protest.

The precise inspiration for the invasion remains somewhat unclear. North Korea, concerned over the south's avowed ambition to unite the country on pro-Western terms, seems to have taken the initiative on its own. It is known, however, that Stalin was aware of the North Korean intentions and even allowed the Soviet military to help plan aspects of the invasion, counting on a quick victory and a limited international response. Yet the timing of the invasion seems to have surprised the Soviets who, as noted, were boycotting the Security Council, unable to exercise their veto when the Council condemned the invasion and authorized military countermeasures. The Chinese, recovering from their civil war, barely established in power, and still facing a challenge from the Nationalists in Taiwan, could scarcely have helped initiate it. Meanwhile the sweeping initial successes of the North Koreans offered the Soviets and the Chinese an opportunity to check the growing American influence in Japan and East Asia. The Soviets quietly furnished military aid to North Korea and denounced the United States for intervening in Asian affairs—on the very doorsteps of the U.S.S.R. and the People's Republic of China.

A test of will

For the American government, and for most Americans, it was difficult to believe that the attack had not been engineered in Moscow or that the North Koreans were capable of independent action. The assumption was that the Soviets, probing in Asia for weak spots, as they had elsewhere, had found one and now must be halted. Korea, like Berlin, became another test of American and Western will. Truman, already concerned about the "loss of China" (the formula used at the time by his political critics for the Chinese Communist victory in 1949) saw it as a test of the "free world's commitment to liberty." The attack challenged the entire system of collective security and containment built to stem the tide of Soviet communism. The Soviets, he said, had passed "beyond the use of subversion" to "armed invasion and war." Without asking for an American declaration of war because it was deemed to be a "police action," Truman, in conformity with the Security Council resolution, ordered American combat troops to Korea and called for air strikes above the thirty-eighth parallel. General MacArthur, the wartime hero of the Pacific who had successfully presided over the occupation of Japan, was named commander of the UN multinational forces, of which the Americans made up the major part.

In the early fighting in the summer of 1950 the American-led United Nations forces were driven south to the very water's edge, where they faced expulsion from the peninsula. But in September MacArthur made a remarkable amphibious landing on the western side of the peninsula, drove the North Koreans back above the thirty-eighth parallel, and then rapidly moved north toward the Yalu River, the boundary between Korea and the People's Republic of China. Mao, incensed, took action to assert China's international importance. In late October, a large Chinese "voluntary" army suddenly appeared and within two

The Korean War was a key test for President Harry Truman's policy of containing communism, yet, like all modern wars, it disrupted the lives of millions of civilians, including those who knew little about the larger political issues at stake. This Korean girl and her baby brother were photographed near an American tank in the summer of 1951, but their expressions convey some of the timeless, local struggle to survive amid the violent international conflicts of governments and global powers.
(R. V. Spencer/TimePix)

weeks drove the advancing UN armies back below the thirty-eighth parallel. It was an entirely new war, to which China was now committed. The European allies, at first gratified by the American show of determination, grew worried that the war could escalate into a global, possibly nuclear, conflict.

Meanwhile the battle lines seesawed. MacArthur forced the Chinese and North Korean troops to retreat, again crossed the thirty-eighth parallel, and demanded unconditional surrender. He proposed to blockade the Chinese coast, bomb Chinese cities, encourage the Chinese Nationalists to attack the Chinese mainland, and even seal off Korea from China by a field of radioactive waste. Truman, alarmed, recognized that MacArthur's threats could lead to full-scale war with China, to Soviet intervention, and to a wider war in which the United States would lack the full support of its European allies. When the general publicly flouted the president's authority, Truman relieved him of his command and replaced him.

Cease-fire and armistice

In July 1951 a cease-fire agreement brought large-scale fighting to a halt, but armistice negotiations dragged on, deadlocked over the repatriation of North Korean prisoners who did not wish to return home. In July 1953 under General Eisenhower's presidency an armistice was signed, the line of partition drawn roughly where the fighting had begun three years earlier, at the thirty-eighth parallel, with provision for a demilitarized buffer zone. The partition hardened into a long-term division. North Korea became a Communist state and a full-fledged ally of the Soviet Union. South Korea, unable to achieve political democracy under Syngman Rhee or for a long time under his successors, nonetheless developed a dynamic capitalist economy, far outstripping North Korea in economic strength. At the end of the century, many decades later, over 40,000 American troops remained stationed in South Korea to police the demilitarized zone, but negotiations were beginning to reduce some of the tensions between the two Koreas.

Results of the Korean War

The United States spent over $15 billion on the war. Because it could not by itself supply all its military needs, the war vastly stimulated the economic growth of western Europe and Japan. It also quickened the pressures for German rearmament. Although 15 countries participated in the fighting, it was largely an American military operation. The United States furnished half the ground

forces and close to all the naval and air power. The Americans suffered over 54,000 battle deaths in the undeclared war, close to half as many as in the First World War; the American wounded were estimated at over 100,000. But the South Koreans suffered over one million casualties in dead, wounded, and missing; the North Koreans and the Chinese, each an equal number. In all some three to four million lives may have been lost. The Soviets had fought by proxy.

In American eyes a flagrant act of aggression had been checked, and a precedent for a containment strategy in Asia had been established. In western Europe, despite the anxiety over MacArthur's recklessness, the show of American firmness was reassuring. As seen in the Communist world, however, and indeed in many of the nonaligned countries in Asia such as India or Indonesia, the United States, the great capitalist power, had been prevented from reasserting Western imperialist supremacy in the East. In its efforts to create regional security pacts in Asia, the United States found little enthusiasm among the larger non-Communist Asian powers who disliked communism but also distrusted the West. Although the United States had been the least involved of all the Great Powers in nineteenth-century territorial imperialism in Asia, its new leadership of the Western world made it a symbol of Western oppression, buttressed by the suspicion that its free-world rhetoric only masked a drive to create world markets for American capitalism—an image assiduously cultivated by the Soviets and, even more aggressively, by the Chinese Communists.

On the other hand, its success in checking the North Korean act of aggression by force of arms reinforced the American belief that military strength and decisiveness could check Communist expansion anywhere in the world; containment would be global. The Korean War inaugurated an era of deep American involvement in Asia and served as prelude to an even longer and more costly conflict, the war in Vietnam in the following decade. In late 1952 the United States successfully tested its first thermonuclear or hydrogen bomb, hundreds of times more powerful than the atomic bomb used at Hiroshima; the Soviets at almost the same time, in 1953, did the same.

American involvement in Asia

The Korean War had its political repercussions in Europe. Despite continuing misgivings in France and in other parts of Europe over a revival of German military strength, the Americans pressed for West German rearmament. When a French proposal for a European Defense Community (with a "European army," in which the Germans were to serve as "European soldiers") failed to pass the French legislature in 1954, West Germany was authorized to create an army of its own under the overall command of NATO. Concern over a resurgent German militarism was receding. The West German constitution guaranteed civilian control over the military, and a strong antimilitarist movement had emerged in the country itself. In 1955 the Federal Republic of Germany became a full member of NATO.

Peace with Japan

The Korean War hastened a peace treaty with Japan. In the peace treaty signed in 1951 in San Francisco by 50 nations, but without Soviet participation, no general reparations were exacted, but individual countries were to work out their own reparations agreements. In a separate security pact the United States retained military rights in Japan and occupied nearby islands, where, under agreement, the United States would remain as long as necessary for peace and security. A year later the American occupation of Japan formally ended. The Soviets made no move to return the Kurile Islands, which they had occupied at the end of the Second World War. The United States meanwhile signed security pacts with Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines, reinforcing its global commitments.

The decades that followed the troubled international relations of the early Cold War brought new confrontations and crises—over Berlin, Cuba, Vietnam, the Middle East, and

Africa, to name only the most important—and above all, a mounting nuclear arms race between the two superpowers and the stockpiling of the most formidable weaponry ever assembled. But before continuing with the Cold War, we must examine in this and the following chapter many other developments of these years—the remarkable economic recovery and political reconstruction of western Europe, the reshaping of the global economy, the world of the Communist countries, and the emergence of new nations from the old Western colonial empires.

110. WESTERN EUROPE: ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION

The Second World War had left Europe in a worse state of disorder than the First. It had ruined one of the world's chief industrial areas and brought its economic system to collapse. Even when the worst local devastation was repaired, suffering and distress persisted. With problems of transportation and exchange unresolved, western Europe was cut off from the areas with which it had traded. It could no longer pay for the imports that it needed. During the war the West Europeans, and especially the British, had used up their overseas investments and lost a good share of the shipping services they had once provided. Overseas countries had built up their own industries and needed those of Europe less, and the United States had taken over markets once in European hands.

At the same time, western Europe was not to be written off. Its population exceeded that of either of the superpowers. Even in ruins, it still possessed one of the world's leading industrial plants and the skills needed to rehabilitate and run it. The Europeans did not wish to be rescued by either of the superpowers. Most rejected communism as a form of slavery. Yet they feared excessive dependence on the United States. Memories of the stock-market crash of 1929, the economic collapse of Europe after the withdrawal of American capital, and the Great Depression bred skepticism about American capitalism. Europeans were also sensitive to a persistent strain of American isolationism.

The Marshall Plan and European Recovery

U.S. economic strength

For the non-Communist world, the single most important factor in the early postwar years was the productivity of the American economic system. The American economy had expanded enormously during the war. At the war's end the United States accounted for two-thirds of the world's industrial production and held two-thirds of the world's gold. Its gross national product was two and a half times higher than in 1939; its exports were three times greater. Despite predictions about postwar economic collapse, its economy grew at unprecedented rates in the 1950s and 1960s.

When Lend-Lease ended after the war, the United States sent billions of dollars worth of goods to western Europe to relieve distress and made loans to individual states, especially to Britain. But the Europeans themselves quickly set about to rebuild their economies. Within two years, by 1947, the economies of western Europe were approaching prewar levels of production. American aid was still desperately needed, however, to continue the purchase of food, fuel, raw materials, and industrial parts essential to full recovery. By the spring of 1947 that recovery appeared at risk. The poorest harvest in a century was feared. With Cold War tensions mounting, Communist parties in France and Italy, which had earlier cooperated in postwar reconstruction, launched strikes. Even if the Soviet Union was not actively promoting revolution in western Europe, understanding

of Stalin. The reform-minded Communist leader Imre Nagy, who had earlier been driven from the premiership, returned to power. His reform program and release of political prisoners ignited pressures not only for democratization and parliamentary government but also for the severance of ties to Moscow. Alarmed, the Soviets forced the party leadership to remove Nagy from power and to replace him with the more subservient János Kádar, who accepted Soviet intervention. Khrushchev dispatched troops, tanks, and artillery to suppress the "counterrevolution" and forcefully reestablished Communist rule. Severe reprisals followed. Nagy himself was imprisoned, then tried and hanged, and his body was thrown into a mass grave. In the wake of the repression, 200,000 Hungarians fled into exile, mainly to the United States, a larger number than at any time since the crushing of the European revolutions of 1848–1849. The Soviet tanks in Budapest weakened any remaining illusions about the benevolence and liberalism of Stalin's successors and shook the Communist faithful in western Europe and elsewhere.

114. THE COMMUNIST WORLD: MAO ZEDONG AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The Civil War

The proclamation on October 1, 1949, of the People's Republic of China by Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist party, the final episode in the long civil war between the Guomindang, or Nationalists, and the Communists, was among the most momentous of events shaping the world after 1945.

Nationalists and Communists

The civil war had gone on intermittently since 1927. In 1937 Nationalists and Communists entered into an uneasy alliance to fight the Japanese. Mao agreed to place the People's Liberation Army under the command of Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists, but Mao actually waged a separate guerrilla war against the Japanese from the northern bases he controlled and over which he imposed his own Communist regime, winning peasant support through land reforms. The Nationalists, cut off by the Japanese from the urban centers of eastern China, suffered from chaotic economic conditions and severe inflation and became increasingly corrupt, authoritarian, and repressive.

The victory over Japan in 1945 set the stage for renewed civil war. Nationalist troops, with American aid, returned to eastern China. The Communists, moving out from their guerrilla bases, poured into the northern provinces and made contact with the Russians in Manchuria. When Mao refused to surrender the northern provinces, disband his army, and accept Nationalist political control, the civil war resumed. An American-sponsored truce temporarily halted hostilities, but when the U.S.S.R. withdrew from Manchuria in the spring of 1946 (after removing Manchurian industrial assets as reparations), Nationalists and Communists clashed over control of Manchuria.

Taiwan

In the fighting from 1946 to 1949, the Nationalists, despite substantial American support, lost ground steadily. By the autumn of 1949 the Communists had routed the demoralized Guomindang armies. Chiang withdrew his shattered forces to the island of Taiwan (and to the lesser islands of Matsu and Quemoy), where he established a small but soon prospering Republic of China in Taiwan. The mainland regime never gave up its claim to Taiwan, and the fate of Taiwan remained an unresolved international legacy for later generations. In 1971 Taiwan had to surrender to the People's Republic of China the seat set aside for China in the United Nations.

Mao: The New Regime

Mao Zedong

For the next 27 years, until his death in 1976, Chairman Mao, as uncontested head of the party, molded the destinies of China. Much more is known about him now than at the time. He had earlier imposed his iron rule on the party and on the populations under his control. He had ruthlessly eliminated all party rivals in periodic purges. Now nothing but the total transformation of backward, agrarian China, long the hapless victim of foreign powers, would satisfy him. He had earlier formed his vision of a new proud China in which the social order of domineering landlords and oppressed peasants would be reversed, the country would be industrialized and modernized, and China would be internationally respected. In many ways he personified the Chinese resentment of Western imperialism, which had humiliated China and all but carved the country to pieces in the nineteenth century. He was resolved to set China on the path to modernity, no matter what the cost.

In 1949, for the first time since the revolution of 1911, and indeed for generations before that, a unified central government controlled China, able to direct and mobilize the most populous nation in the world. Even before the Communist triumph Chairman Mao, despite his modest title, already saw himself as something of a successor to the ancient Chinese emperors. He could link Marx's world view, which since 1920 he had adopted as the instrument for Chinese liberation, to the 4,000-year-old imperial tradition of an all-powerful emperor ruling together with mandarin scholar-officials. The emperor was to rule with the mandate of Heaven in accordance with Confucian moral precepts, as interpreted by his learned officials. They were obligated to criticize the emperor, but if they went too far they could meet a grim end—in ancient times buried alive. The new regime inherited also an ancient tradition of Chinese preeminence in the East Asian world. With traditional ways of life disrupted by decades of revolution, civil struggle, and the war against Japan, Mao's communism in some ways provided a surrogate for the older Confucian values.

The Soviet example

Mao leaned heavily on Soviet experience. The Communist party controlled and policed each level of government and manipulated all organs of information and political indoctrination. The party also added "thought control" and "rectification" labor camps, and it inaugurated a reign of terror. In the first six months of 1950, by Mao's own estimate, some 700,000 "local bullies and evil gentry" labeled "counterrevolutionaries" lost their lives. In the next two years, from 1950 to 1952, a campaign directed against the "landlords" as a class meant that some half million more men, women, and children lost their lives or were sent to labor camps. The purges then took a different turn. In 1956, in what seemed to be a burst of enthusiasm for greater diversity and toleration in the country, Mao proclaimed: "Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend." But as soon as critics were encouraged to come forward, he quickly instituted a new period of repression, an "antirightist" campaign that sent more than a half million "rightists," and "class enemies" to prisons or forced labor camps, many never to return.

Mao relentlessly mobilized the nation to rebuild the war-devastated economy and then to transform the country into an industrial power. Eliminating the old land regime in the countryside, the party established agricultural cooperatives as a prelude to collectivization. The country's initial Five-Year Plan, launched in 1953 with Soviet economic and technical assistance during a period of initial friendly relations, concentrated on heavy industry, with significant results even if all targets were not reached. In agriculture the

same floods and droughts that had troubled China for centuries refused to obey government decrees.

The Great Leap Forward

Impatient with what he considered the slowness of progress, Mao in 1957 launched the "Great Leap Forward," designed to transform the country's industry and agriculture more rapidly. The program adopted by the party proclaimed that China would "catch up with Britain" in a few years' time. The cooperatives in the countryside were amalgamated into larger "people's communes." Tightly organized in military fashion as production brigades, they were responsible for mechanizing production on the farms and developing local rural industry. Communal kitchens, nurseries, and schools left women freer to work on an equal basis in the fields and factories. Borrowing from some of the discredited Soviet experiments of Stalin, the government ordered farmers to abandon their traditional farming and to plant grain and rice everywhere, whether in suitable soil or not, and to crossbreed crops. Farmers were also encouraged to set up metallurgical furnaces in their backyards and learn to make steel.

The Great Leap Forward turned into disaster. Despite the image Mao had cultivated as the champion of the peasantry, he miscalculated on its ability to resist change. The persistent opposition of the peasants, severe crop failures, and the more bizarre experiments brought a disastrous famine. Up to 30 million died of hunger in what may have been the most disastrous agricultural experiment of all time. The outside world knew little of what was going on. Visitors to China were shielded from the disaster, which later scholars call "Mao's secret famine." Eventually moderates within the party curbed Mao's excessive zeal. Although the land remained collectivized, the party suspended the more rigid aspects of the communal experiment. Farmers were even permitted to sell or barter a portion of their crops.

Industrial gains

But the industrial sector made progress. In the years before the Communist regime, annual steel production had never reached 1 million tons; by 1960 it exceeded 18 million. By 1960 China's industrial output ranked among the top ten powers in the world, and its factories had created a base for further expansion. The government also marshaled the country's scientific and technological talents for the new technological age. It successfully tested an atomic bomb in 1964 and a hydrogen bomb in 1967, and it orbited space satellites in the 1970s.

The regime transformed life in many ways. Road, rail, and air transport physically unified the country. Public sanitation and public health received a high national priority. Labor gangs systematically drained and filled snail-infested canals, curbing the spread of diseases like schistosomiasis. Progress was made in overcoming illiteracy. The government reformed and simplified the written Chinese language and moved toward a single spoken tongue. It also adopted a new transliteration system for spelling Chinese names and words in the Latin alphabet. Women, encouraged to reject traditional Confucian virtues of obedience and deference, received legal equality with men and could count on new opportunities, even if few entered the higher ranks of political power. Old abuses such as child marriage and concubinage were outlawed; foot-binding had been eliminated earlier in the century. More profoundly than the Russian, the Chinese Revolution refashioned the habits and ethos of a gigantic population, reaching remote villages and hamlets untouched for centuries. Within a generation an agrarian, semifeudal country was developing into a modern industrial society. Mao's transformation was succeeding—at tremendous cost, to be sure.

The Cultural Revolution

Suddenly, beginning in 1966, the country was convulsed by the Cultural Revolution unleashed by Mao. Fearful that the revolution would not

The Cultural Revolution in China was led by millions of young "Red Guards" who—with the encouragement of Mao Zedong—sought to rekindle the revolutionary fervor of the Communist revolution and to disrupt or overthrow the bureaucratic order in Chinese society. These young people in Shanghai demonstrated their militant support for Chairman Mao during a typical Red Guard rally at the height of the Cultural Revolution in early 1967.
(Bettmann/Corbis)

survive him and that its purity was endangered, he called for a purge of the highest ranks of government and party and for the removal of those who had succumbed to bureaucratic routine or lacked the zeal to push on with the social revolution. For his cause he mobilized millions of teenage students and other young people as Red Guards, or armed shock troops. Converging on Beijing and other cities, they denounced bourgeois ways, attacked Western imperialist culture, and brutally harassed and humiliated government and party officials as well as cultural and educational leaders. The worst of the brunt fell on intellectuals. Men and women of all backgrounds were arrested, marched through the streets in dunce caps, beaten, and maimed. When fanatical mobs threatened to tear the country apart, army leaders finally intervened and received Mao's authorization to restore order.

A turbulent sequence followed. Because Mao proclaimed the virtues of the land, white-collar workers, teachers, students, and party officials were forcibly sent off to the countryside to labor in the fields and experience rural life. The economy and the entire educational system broke down. By the time the worst disturbances were over in 1969, hundreds of thousands of lives had been lost. Three million persons had been sent to labor camps or to work in the fields. Thousands of high-ranking officials in the government and party, including two-thirds of the party's central committee, had been purged. The impact of the Cultural Revolution lingered on in an authoritarian pall that settled

over the country. Mao himself retreated after 1971 into a kind of self-indulgent isolation in Beijing.

The pragmatic and moderate Zhou Enlai, who had little influence in restraining Mao's more radical experiments, faithfully served him for many years as premier and foreign minister. Had he outlived Mao, he might well have been his successor, but Zhou Enlai died in early 1976. Later that same year, Mao died. The Great Helmsman was widely mourned as the towering father of the revolution for over half a century and as one of the giant figures in the history of China. He had forged a revolutionary party and a revolutionary army, fought the Japanese, defeated the Nationalists, and presided over a revolution that had unified, revitalized, and modernized the country. His theoretical teachings on the struggle against imperialism and on the vanguard role of the peasantry, and his practical successes in guerrilla warfare, influenced revolutionaries all over the world. His most famous precept, that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun," reinforced revolutionary zeal everywhere. His homilies, published in a little red book called *The Living Thoughts of Chairman Mao,* were widely quoted and assiduously studied. Mao's revolution had brought self-respect and self-confidence, industrialization, technological progress, unity, and pride to the country.

The Great Helmsman

But his radical experiments and the uncontrolled violence he had repeatedly unleashed also did irreparable harm. His experiments in social engineering in some ways outdid Stalin's and must also be counted among the most costly in all history. By any criteria he ranks among the most brutal of dictators. His successors a few years later tempered their praise for Mao, still lauding his monumental achievements as a revolutionary leader but criticizing him for his "grave blunders."

Foreign Affairs

The emergence of China as a second major Communist power undermined the ideological leadership of the Soviet Union. Stalin, playing his own game, had not always wholeheartedly supported the Chinese Communists in their civil war with the Guomindang. But once the Communist regime was established the U.S.S.R. surrendered to it the concessions acquired in Manchuria under the Yalta agreement. For a time relations remained cool but correct, although Mao always resented being treated as a junior partner. In the 1950s the Chinese received military aid, capital loans, and technical assistance from the Soviets. The Korean War, in which Chinese troops fought the Americans as alien intruders who threatened their very borders, for a time drew them closer to the Soviet Union. Western leaders were even more firmly convinced that a monolithic world Communist movement existed. The Chinese Communists resented American support for the regime in Taiwan and the American effort over two decades to bar the People's Republic of China from the United Nations.

Although professing peace, the People's Republic pursued an aggressive foreign policy. In 1950, pressing old Chinese claims of suzerainty over Tibet and in the guise of liberating the country from clerical, that is, Buddhist, despotism, China occupied Tibet and forcibly maintained its rule there over the years. Monasteries were closed; the Dalai Lama, the country's ruler, was forced into exile; and large numbers of Chinese arrived as settlers. Unresolved tensions continued to affect the people of Tibet and the Tibetan borders. In 1962 China clashed with India in border disputes along India's northeastern frontier, although India from the beginning had been one of the staunchest defenders of the Chinese Revolution.

An aggressive foreign policy

In the 1960s relations with the Soviet Union became strained. The two states hurled polemics at each other in their rivalry for ideological leadership and for control of the lands of inner Asia into which Russia had expanded in the age of the tsars. Mao, undaunted by nuclear arms, accused Khrushchev of pusillanimous behavior in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. In 1972 the two countries clashed over border territory that divided Manchuria and Russia's maritime provinces, and they continued to confront one another with large armies in other areas. Although both countries supported North Vietnam in the Vietnam War, China after the war opposed the Soviet-backed intervention by Vietnam in Cambodia. Not until the 1980s was there a rapprochement and the promise of troop reductions along the Chinese-Soviet borders.

With time, relations with the United States improved. In 1971, when the United States withdrew its objections, the People's Republic of China replaced Taiwan in the United Nations, including its permanent seat on the Security Council. The following year Mao welcomed President Nixon on a dramatic visit to China. Diplomatic channels opened and relations were normalized. The United States conceded that one day in the indefinite future Taiwan would be reunited with the mainland, with its different social and economic system respected.

Mao meets Nixon

The Chinese People's Republic had emerged as one of the great potential centers of global power. And in 1976 it was about to embark on an impressive new era of more peaceful modernization under Mao's successor. But we must first turn to those other parts of the colonial world that after the Second World War also entered a new stage in their history.