

A New Global Conflict

World War I was called the "great war" and "the war to end all wars." People thought it would be the last big war in human history. But, unhappily, we know it wasn't. World War II was even bigger.

Historians now call the twenty years between the Versailles Treaty in 1919 and the German invasion of Poland in 1939 "the time between the wars." There were many causes of World War II. We can sum them up in two ways. Some of the problems that caused World War I were not solved. Also, new problems arose during the 1920s and 1930s.

OLD PROBLEMS

If you think back on World War I, you will remember that we listed four causes for the war. They were: colonial rivalries (caused by *imperialism*), entangling *alliances*, *nationalism*, and *militarism*. After the Versailles Treaty, people hoped these problems would be solved. Let's see why they weren't.

The few colonies that Germany had gained were lost as a result of the peace treaty. This made many Germans feel cheated. In the Pacific, Japan was rapidly becoming a powerful industrial nation. Japanese leaders looked toward countries near Japan like China, French Indochina, and the Dutch East Indies that were wealthy with coal, rubber, oil, and other raw materials. Italy was another country that felt cheated because the Italian colonies in Africa were not as wealthy as those of Britain and France.

In the 1920s and early 1930s, Europe again began to divide into two armed camps. France and Britain remained close allies and attempted to "punish" Germany because of World War I. Germany and Italy were drawn closer together because both countries felt left out of the race for colonial empires. Soon, nearly all the European countries were forced to "choose sides" again.

The 1920s and 1930s were times of extreme nationalism in just about every country. In Europe, most Germans believed that their country had been treated unfairly by the Allies. Many wanted revenge. Italians felt that they had not been rewarded enough for their part on the Allied side. In Asia, the Japanese believed that it was their "right" to control all the lands and ocean areas near Japan.

For a while after World War I, there were some international agreements to reduce the size of armies and navies. But Germany soon began to rebuild a powerful military force. France and the Soviet Union began to build huge armies too. Japan's new military leaders built a powerful navy and army.

NEW PROBLEMS

Economic Depression

As you learned earlier, the Great Depression hit the United States in the 1930s. But several European countries were in deep trouble long before that. Gradually, the depression spread to nearly every industrialized country. Millions of people were out of work and were ready to accept any leader who promised to help them.



At this point you have the information needed to answer questions 1 and 2 of the worksheet.

The Rise of Dictatorships

In the time between the wars, several countries changed their governments to dictatorships. A *dictatorship* is a government where one person or group has absolute control over the people. A government like this is called *totalitarian*, meaning total control.

In Italy, a former teacher, Benito Mussolini, helped start a new political group called the **Fascists**. He promised the Italians that he would bring back the glories of the Roman Empire. By 1922, his followers were so strong that they forced the democratic leader to resign, and Mussolini became the dictator of Italy.

In Germany, the economic collapse after the loss of World War I led to another dictator. Adolf Hitler had been a corporal in the war and believed that Germany would have won if its leaders had been stronger. He formed a political party called the National Socialists. This was a fascist party like that of Mussolini but more extreme. It came to be known as the **Nazi** party, and Hitler's followers were called the **Nazis**.

Hitler claimed that the loss of World War I was the fault of the old leaders. Since he was violently against Jews, or anti-Semitic, he blamed them too. He claimed that the Communists would take over Germany with Jewish help unless he was given power. He promised to bring economic recovery and glory to Germany. In 1933, he became the German dictator, and was called the *fuhrer*, or "leader."

In Japan, military leaders came to power in the 1920s. They promised the same things—power, glory, and economic recovery.



At this point you have the information needed to answer questions 3-8 of the worksheet.

A Slow March toward War

In 1931, Japan invaded the coal-rich Chinese province of Manchuria. The League of Nations was too weak to stop the Japanese. Japan changed Manchuria's name to Manchukuo and made it part of the Japanese Empire.

Mussolini sent Italian troops into the independent African country of Ethiopia in 1935. Although the Ethiopians fought bravely, their rifles and spears were no match for the Italian tanks and airplanes. Once again, the League of Nations was too weak.

In Germany, Adolf Hitler was making speeches promising to the people and to the world that Germany would expand its borders. Hitler had built a powerful military force and was ready to use it. He told the Germans that they were a "master race" and that other people were inferior to them.

In 1936, German troops moved into the Rhineland, which after World War I had been made a "demilitarized zone." By 1937, Germany, Italy, and Japan had formed an anti-communist, anti-democratic alliance—the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis. They became known as the Axis powers.

In 1938, the German army marched into Austria and the western part of Czechoslovakia. France and Britain agreed to these moves in the hope of avoiding another major war. Their policy of giving in was called **appeasement**.

Although Hitler hated the Soviet communists, he wanted to prevent a war from breaking out with

them. He was afraid of fighting a war on both Germany's eastern and western borders at the same time. In 1939, Germany signed a "nonaggression" treaty with the Soviet Union, promising not to attack.

On September 1, 1939, German troops attacked Poland. They moved in so quickly with planes and tanks that it was called a "blitzkrieg," a word in German meaning "lightning war."

With this move, the Allied powers, led by France and Britain, knew that appeasement had not worked. They declared war on Germany and its allies, Italy and Japan.



At this point you have the information needed to answer questions 9-11 of the worksheet.

The United States Enters the War

When France and Britain declared war on Germany, the United States once again tried to remain neutral.

But events in Europe made the attempt almost impossible. The German military machine, with Italian help, was conquering vast areas of Europe. After Poland, German troops attacked and defeated Norway, Denmark, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Left alone on the Continent, France was forced to surrender. Only Britain stood in the way of Hitler's push to control Europe.

Roosevelt did two things. First, he built up the American military forces so that the United States would be better prepared in case of war. Second, he began to provide large amounts of aid to the British so that they would not be defeated by the Germans.

For two years, the United States stayed out of the war. Then, on December 7, 1941, Japanese air and naval forces attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, in the Hawaiian Islands. The next day, President Roosevelt asked Congress to declare war on Japan.



At this point you have the information needed to answer questions 12 and 13 of the worksheet.

THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR

The War in Europe

After the fall of France, German troops invaded the Soviet Union in spite of the "nonaggression" treaty. This brought the Soviet Union into the war. Britain now had two new powerful allies—the United States and the Soviet Union. The leaders of these countries—President Roosevelt, Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and the Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin—began to work together to plan the defeat of Germany, Italy, and Japan.

They decided to drive the Germans and Italians out of North Africa, then invade Italy, and finally invade German-controlled France. Gradually, the plan worked.

On "D-day," June 6, 1944, the invasion of France took place. The Allied Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, sent a combined force of American, British, Canadian, and French soldiers against the Germans. The German troops were slowly driven back. At the same time, Russian troops forced German retreats on the eastern front.

Eleven months after D-day the Germans were defeated. On May 7, 1945, Hitler committed suicide. A few days later, Germany surrendered. The war in Europe was over.

As Allied troops moved into German-controlled territory from both sides, they freed thousands of prisoners from German "concentration camps" or prisons. What they found in these camps shocked and angered the world. People had been tortured, starved, used for cruel medical experiments, and killed. Their bodies were buried in huge graves or burned in enormous ovens. More than six million Jews had been killed. Nearly that many other victims of Nazi hatred had also lost their lives in the camps.



At this point you have the information needed to answer questions 14-20 of the worksheet.

The War in the Pacific

In the Pacific, the United States was first pushed back by the strong Japanese forces. By 1942, Japan controlled large parts of China, all of Southeast Asia, and many Pacific islands.

The Japanese advance was stopped at the Battle of Midway in 1942. The next year, the United States began to attack Japanese bases. Each island became a major battle, and thousands of lives were lost fighting for names like Guadalcanal, Guam, and Iwo Jima. From Okinawa and other bases, American planes began to bomb Japanese cities night and day.

Meanwhile, a powerful new weapon had been developed in the United States. Working at several secret bases, scientists had been directed to build the atomic bomb. Its power was so great that one bomb could destroy an entire city.

President Harry S. Truman, who took office after Roosevelt's death in 1945, warned the Japanese to surrender or he would use this new, secret weapon. When the Japanese refused, Truman ordered an atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. More than 100,000 Japanese people were killed. A few days later, a second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. The Japanese surrendered on August 14, 1945. World War II was over.



At this point you have the information needed to answer questions 21-24 of the worksheet.

THE WAR ON THE "HOME FRONT"

Shortages at Home

Since most resources were going to the armed services, Americans sometimes had to do without. For example, no automobiles were made from 1942 to 1945. Instead, the auto companies made tanks, jeeps, or airplanes. Gasoline was also in short supply. This meant the end of Sunday drives and long car trips. In fact, all pleasure travel became a thing of the past during the war. Trains and buses were always crowded.

Fighting and winning a war as large and complex as World War II changed every American's life. As more and more men served in the armed forces, jobs in offices and factories opened up to women. After the war, the number of women working outside the home dropped temporarily, but began to rise again within a few years.

To divide goods fairly, the government set up a system of **rationing**. (Rationing means to give a fixed amount of something.) Every family got ration books of stamps. Each time people bought such items as gasoline, tires, shoes, meat, and sugar, they gave up the required number of stamps.

To help the war effort, people saved kitchen grease, scrap metal, and rubber. Grease could be used in making explosives. Scrap metal and rubber were reused by war industries. A common slogan of the day was:

*"Use it up,
Wear it out,
Make it do,
Or do without! "*

The Wartime Economy

Defense jobs gave Americans the money to buy goods they had been unable to afford during the Depression. Yet because of the war, there were few goods to buy. The result was inflation (an increase in prices). The government started an Office of Price Administration (OPA) to hold prices down. The OPA set limits on prices for items in short supply. Since housing too was scarce, limits were also placed on rents.

To help pay for the war, the government raised income taxes. It extended the tax to more people and started the payroll deduction plan. Under this plan, income taxes were deducted (taken out) from a person's wages or salary before they even got their paycheck. This was easier for people than paying all their taxes at once each year.

Another way the government paid for the war was by selling war bonds. The bonds were a kind of loan that the government promised to repay with interest. Movie stars traveled across the country to appear in war bond drives. These were huge rallies where the stars urged people to show their patriotism by buying bonds. Americans bought billions of dollars worth of bonds. It was a powerful expression of their support for the drive to victory.



At this point you have the information needed to answer questions 25-27 of the worksheet.

Japanese Americans

The war had a negative effect on the lives of Japanese Americans. Many lived in the states of California, Oregon, and Washington. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, some 110,000 Japanese Americans - 10,000 of whom were American-born citizens - were forced to "relocate" in distant states because some officials thought they would come to the aid of Japan. They had to sell their homes and possessions and move to crowded, dusty "relocation," or internment, camps. Despite this treatment, many citizens of Japanese ancestry joined the armed forces. They served with great distinction. Many gave their lives.

After the war, the government paid money to some Japanese Americans for the loss of their homes and belongings. But only about ten percent of the total financial losses suffered by these people were ever repaid.

What was life like for Japanese Americans in internment camps? Here is a short description, written by a Japanese American living in a camp. "Barbed wire fences with watch towers and armed guards and searchlights surround an area a mile square set in the middle of a swamp. The barracks are

merely bunkrooms. They are built row on row, covered with black tarpaper, unrelieved by any color or individuality. There is no privacy. A family of five has a single room."



At this point you have the information needed to answer questions 28 and 29 of the worksheet.

The Holocaust

When Adolph Hitler came to power in the 1930s, he had ordered the building of concentration camps in Europe. Those are large prison camps that can each hold large numbers of prisoners. From the 1930s through World War II, Hitler and his followers ordered millions of Jews and other "enemies" arrested and placed in the camps.

In Poland, Czechoslovakia, Russia, Belgium, France, and elsewhere, German troops rounded up whole neighborhoods of Jews and sent them to the camps.

As the Allies marched through Germany and eastern Europe, they entered the concentration camps. All the fighting and death the soldiers had seen had not prepared them for what they found there.

At some camps, soldiers found bodies stacked like firewood. The bodies were covered with terrible cuts and bruises. The soldiers also found large rooms that had been used as gas chambers. Hundreds of prisoners at a time had been locked in those rooms and killed with poison gas.

The survivors of the camps looked like living skeletons. They told stories of men, women, and children being starved, tortured, and shot.

Twelve million "enemies" of Germany died in the concentration camps. About half of them were Jews.

Today, the murder of six million Jews by the Nazis is known as the **Holocaust**. A holocaust is the complete destruction of something, usually by fire. For Jews, the Holocaust meant destruction of entire families and villages. They were destroyed not by fire, but by prejudice and hate.



At this point you have the information needed to answer questions 30 of the worksheet.