

Unit 14

World War II

Section 1: Introduction

Overview

- In terms of lives lost and material destruction, WWII was the most devastating war in human history
- Began in 1939 as a European conflict between Germany and England/France
 - Widened to include most of the nations of the world
- Ended in 1945, with the U.S. and Soviet Union emerging as major world powers

Post-WWI Problems

- France, Great Britain, and the U.S. had attained their objectives with the Versailles Treaty which ended WWI
 - Reduced Germany to a military nonentity and reorganized Europe and the world
 - However, the French and British frequently disagreed on policy in the post-WWI period
 - U.S. retreated into isolationism

Attempts at Peace

- 1920s= attempts made to stabilize peace
- 1920= establishment of the League of Nations as a forum in which nations could settle their disputes
- 1921-22= Washington Conference, principal naval powers agreed to limit their navies according to a fixed ratio
- 1925= Locarno Conference, produced a treaty guarantee of the German-French boundary
- 1928= Paris Peace Pact, 63 countries, including all the great powers except the USSR, pledged to resolve all disputes among them "by pacific means"
 - The nations had agreed beforehand to exempt wars of "self-defense"

Rise of Dictators

- 1920s-1930s= In spite of efforts at peace, worldwide economic problems and disillusionment with western-style democratic ideas led to the rise of totalitarian leaders in several areas of the globe
 - Joseph Stalin- USSR
 - Benito Mussolini- Italy
 - Adolf Hitler- Germany
 - Francisco Franco- Spain (took power in the late 1930s)
 - Hideki Tojo (ruled in the name of Emperor Hirohito)- Japan
- Japan, Germany, and Italy would ally together to form the Axis powers in WWII

Section 2: Mussolini's Rise to Power

Italian Unrest

- Following WWI Italians were angry over:
 - the fact that the nation did not win large territorial gains at the 1919 Paris Peace
 - rising inflation and unemployment
- Many Italians believed their democratic government was helpless to deal with the country's problems
- In the 1920s, the wave of the political future appeared to be a form of nationalistic, militaristic totalitarianism known by its Italian name, fascism

Fascism in Italy

- fascism definition= a political philosophy, movement, or regime that exalts nation and often race above the individual; stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition
- fascism promoted extreme nationalism

Mussolini's Rise to Power

- Fascism- promised to provide for the Italian people more effectively than democracy; presented itself as the one sure defense against communism
- Communism vs. Fascism
 - Communists claimed to promote a society that was without social classes
 - Fascists believed that each class had its place and function; Fascist parties were made up of aristocrats and industrialists, war veterans, and the lower middle class
 - Fascists were nationalists, and Communists were internationalists, hoping to unite workers worldwide
- Benito Mussolini was the earliest originator of the concept and practice of Fascism and established the first Fascist dictatorship in Italy in 1922

Mussolini's Rule

- Mussolini organized a paramilitary unit known as the "Black Shirts," who terrorized political opponents and helped increase Fascist influence
- 1922- As Italy slipped into political chaos, Mussolini declared that only he could restore order and was given authority as prime minister
- 1925- He gradually dismantled all democratic institutions and made himself dictator, taking the title "Il Duce" ("the Leader")
- Once in power, he built up the military, creating jobs for the unemployed as well as building the military arsenal of Italy
- Mussolini's chief ally was Adolf Hitler of Germany

Section 3: Hitler's Rise to Power

Hitler's Background

- Adolf Hitler was born on April 20, 1889 in Austria
- Poor performance in school prevented him from obtaining a customary graduation certificate
- He intended to study art in Vienna, but was twice rejected (1907 + 1908) by the Academy of Fine Arts
- Hitler was left a small inheritance by his parents and when the money ran out he resorted to painting and selling postcards
- 1913- Hitler moved to Munich in the hope both of evading Austrian military service and of finding a better life in the Germany he admired so much
 - With the outbreak of WWI Hitler served as a volunteer in the German military

Hitler After WWI

- While in the military, Hitler served as an instructor in a program for the political indoctrination of the troops; discovered his persuasive power as a public speaker
- After WWI Hitler was discharged from the army when the German military was nearly disbanded with the Versailles Treaty
- Hitler's political career began when he returned to Munich in 1919- he joined the National Socialist German Workers' Party, or Nazi Party
 - a group of extreme nationalists and anti-Semites who in the aftermath of the defeat of WWI attempted to persuade people that Jews were primarily responsible for Germany's problems
 - the Nazi party sought to overturn the Treaty of Versailles and combat communism

Hitler in the Nazi party

- Hitler realized that the Nazi Party offered him the best chance for political power
- Hitler developed a new system of political propaganda for the Nazi party, that emphasized mass emotionalism and violent provocation
- July 1921- Hitler became the party chairman
- November 1923- Beer Hall Putsch- Hitler and a group of conspirators attempted to capture the Bavarian gov't
 - Jailed for his activities- writes *Mein Kampf (My Struggle)*

Hitler in Government

- After being released from prison Hitler continued to grow the popularity of the Nazi party
- 1932- Germany close to anarchy
 - Hitler narrowly lost to the incumbent Paul von Hindenburg in the presidential elections in April
 - But, in the November elections the Nazi vote decreased to 33.1%
- 1933- A conservative group led by Franz von Papen arranged for Hitler to enter the government in the appointed position of Chancellor
 - President Hindenburg appointed Hitler chancellor making Hitler the head of the Third Reich which was used to describe the Nazi regime in Germany from January 30, 1933, to May 8, 1945

Consolidation of Power

- The conservatives deluded themselves in thinking they could use Hitler for their own interests
- Within four months Hitler:
 - Controlled all political groups
 - Destroyed the Communist party and the labor unions
 - Forced right wing parties to dissolve
 - Destroyed the paramilitary organizations
 - Eliminated the federal structure of the republic

Enabling Act

- February 27, 1933- fire breaks out at the Reichstag building; was set by an unstable communist supporter named Marinus van der Lubbe
- Hitler and the Nazi used the incident to claim that Germany was under attack from a communist conspiracy
- Hitler convinced Hindenburg to issue a decree suspending all basic rights until the “emergency” was over; gave Nazis power to arrest/imprison anyone
- March 23, 1933- Enabling Act= allowed the gov't to issue laws bypassing constitutional safeguards- Hitler no longer needed the Reichstag or Hindenburg to approve his actions and became a dictator
 - Enabling Act= allowed Hitler to gain dictatorial powers by “legal” means

Consolidation of Power

- 1934- Hitler faced challenges within the party when Hindenburg's deteriorating health raised the question of his succession
- Hitler survived the crisis by rallying behind himself the party leaders, the army, and Himmler's SS (the *Schutzstaffel*, or Blackshirts)
 - Purpose of the SS was to use terror to enforce the policies of Nazi Germany
- August 2, 1934- Hindenburg dies, and Hitler officially assumed the title of *Fuhrer*, or supreme head of Germany

Persecution of Jews Begins

- Nuremberg Laws of 1935- deprived Jews of their citizenship and forbade marriages between Jews and non-Jews
- Additional restrictive laws were passed during the next few years
 - Hitler's policies resulted in a large-scale emigration of Jews, socialists, and intellectuals from Germany

Kristallnacht

- November 9-10, 1938- *Kristallnacht* ("Night of broken glass"); Nazi persecution of Jews= troops attacked Jewish homes, businesses, and synagogues
- A German official was assassinated in Paris by a Jewish teenager
- A Nazi-led rampage against the Jews in Germany followed the assassination
- Synagogues were burned; 7,000 Jewish businesses destroyed; 100 Jews killed; 20,000 Jewish men sent to concentration camps
- Led to Jews being barred from all public buildings and prohibited from owning, managing, or working in any retail store
- Jews "encouraged" to emigrate from Germany

Section 4: Axis Powers Threaten Peace

German Aggression Before WWII

- Hitler violated the Treaty of Versailles in several key areas:
 - Introduced a military draft and expanded the German army to more than half a million men
 - Remilitarized the Rhineland
 - German rearmament
- Nothing was done by Italy, G.B., or France to stop the military build-up

Hitler's Long Term Plans

- According to Hitler, the Germans, the leading group of Aryans, were threatened from the east by a large mass of inferior people
- Germany needed *Lebensraum* ("living space") for the German people; Hitler's method for achieving this living space would be to conquer other countries, particularly by gaining more land for Germany in East Europe and Russia

Hitler's Popularity

- Hitler was relatively popular among the German people for the following reasons:
 1. Alleviating economic problems caused by the Great Depression
 - Hitler put people to work in armament factories and the army, and launched a public works program similar to Roosevelt's New Deal
 - Unemployment went from 6 million in 1933 to only one million in 1936; no other European leader could rival this economic growth
 2. His aim to restore Germany's power among the nations of Europe
 3. His threat to tear up the unpopular Versailles Treaty

Italian Aggression

- October, 1935- Italy attacked Ethiopia
 - The League proved ineffectual in this conflict
 - The British Mediterranean fleet could have stopped the operation by preventing Italian soldiers from using the Suez Canal, but both Britain and France were afraid to antagonize Mussolini
 - Hitler supported the action; brought Mussolini and Hitler closer
 - Ethiopian appeal to the League of Nations: "It is us today. It will be you tomorrow."

Violation of the Demilitarized Zone

- March, 1936- while the Ethiopian campaign was still underway, Germany took advantage of the confusion to march into the Rhineland, eliminating the demilitarized zone provided for in the Treaty of Versailles
 - This removed one of the most important elements of French security and also gave Hitler a defensible frontier on the West
- Britain refused to act against Germany- viewed German occupation of German land as reasonable

Axis Powers Form

- September, 1931- Japan seized control of Chinese held Manchuria
 - League of Nations denounced the move; Japan withdraws from the League
 - By the 1930s, militants connected with the gov't, and the armed forces were in control of Japanese politics
- 1936- Italy and Germany jointly intervened on behalf of General Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War
- October, 1936- Mussolini and Hitler sign an agreement that recognized their common political and economic interests
 - One month later Mussolini referred publicly to the Rome-Berlin Axis
- November, 1936- Germany and Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact; agreed to maintain a common front against communism
- 1937- Japan joined the Axis Powers to form the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis

German Aggression Increases

- 1938 - Hitler "unites" Germany and Austria
 - Called the *Anschluss*
 - by threatening Austria with invasion, Hitler coerced the Austrian chancellor into putting Austrian Nazis in charge of the gov't
 - the new gov't "invited" German troops to help maintain order in Austria
 - Hitler was convinced that neither the French or British would intervene- he was right

Czechoslovakia

- 1938- Hitler next turned on Czechoslovakia, which contained three million Germans in its Sudetenland area; these Germans resented their minority status and voted to return to Germany
- When the Czech government refused to dismember itself, Hitler moved his army to the border
- At the Munich conference in September, 1938, Hitler demanded the annexation of the Sudetenland, France allowed Hitler to annex the area
 - Hitler pledged this all he wanted of Czechoslovakia was the Sudetenland area, and the other powers accepted his assurances
- March, 1939- Hitler violated the promises made at the Munich conference and absorbed the rest of Czechoslovakia by force
- Realizing the danger, Britain and France responded with a peacetime draft and attempt negotiations with the Soviet Union

Declaration of War

- Hitler and Stalin shocked the world by signing a non-aggression pact; the agreement gave Germany the western half of Poland and the Soviet Union the eastern half of Poland
 - This aided Hitler's invasion of Poland
- September 1, 1939- Germany invaded Poland; this invasion of Poland prompted Britain and France to declare war on Germany
- Axis Powers included= Germany, Italy, Japan
- Allied Powers included= Great Britain, France, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, India, the Soviet Union, China and the United States

Blitzkrieg

- A new form of warfare called the "*blitzkrieg*" (or lightning war) was launched
 - *Blitzkrieg* was a sudden attack by land and air forces
 - Depended on surprise and overwhelming force
- Within a few weeks, Germany had taken control of the western half of Poland

Section 5: The War (1939-1941)

Hitler Invades France

- When Germany invaded Poland, France and England declared war on Germany
 - However, little fighting took place for six months (the "Sitzkrieg" or "phony war")
- May 29-June 4, 1940- 360,000 Allied troops are forced to withdraw by sea from the beaches of Dunkirk, France
- June 5, 1940- Germany successfully invades France over a 100 mile front and heads to Paris
 - Italy declares war on Britain and France
- June 14, 1940- Germans occupy Paris
 - the southern part of the country not controlled by Germany formed a collaborative government at Vichy under the control of Marshal Petain

U.S. Involvement

- United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt had given British Prime Minister Winston Churchill a pledge to support the English war efforts with materials and munitions
 - Lend-lease= the U.S. could supply the countries fighting the Axis powers with the necessary equipment
 - U.S. sent large amounts of military aid, including \$50 billion worth of trucks, planes, and other arms, to the British and Soviets
- However, the United States was not an official participant in the conflict

Battle of Britain

- July 10, 1940 – Oct 31, 1940- Battle of Britain; air campaign by the Germans followed by a planned invasion of Britain
 - the *Luftwaffe* (German air force) launched a major offensive of bombing against the military infrastructure of Britain in preparation for an invasion
 - September- Hitler attempts to break the morale of the British people through massive bombings of British cities
 - Allowed the British time to rebuild their air force; by the end of Sept/Oct Germany has lost the battle of Britain

Hitler Invades the Soviets

- Hitler became convinced that Britain was remaining in the war only because it expected Soviet support- decided to go back on his pact with Stalin and invade the Soviet Union
- Hitler planned this invasion of the USSR so that he could acquire living space and resources for the German people
- Hitler was sure the USSR could be defeated quickly
- Although the invasion of the Soviet Union was scheduled for spring 1941, the attack was delayed because of problems in the Balkans

Soviet Union Invasion

- June, 1941- Germany invades Russia (operation Barbarossa); believes they can be defeated before winter
 - Italy, Hungary, Finland and Romania (cooperating politically with Germany) declare war on Russia
 - Russian Guerrilla warfare slowed the German advance; Russia used a “scorched earth policy”
 - Early winter devastated the Germans
- Soviet counter offensive drove Germans back from the outskirts of Moscow and Leningrad in late 1941
- German defeat in Russia represented a similarity in the careers of Napoleon and Hitler

U.S. Enters WWII

- In conjunction with the German invasion of Russia, Japan moved against Thailand
 - U.S. and Great Britain protested
- December 7, 1941- Japan, without a formal declaration of war, bombed the U.S. Pacific Fleet home port of Pearl Harbor in Hawaii
- December 8- United States declares war on Japan
- December 9- China declares war on Japan, Germany and Italy
- December 11- Germany and Italy declare war on the U.S.; the United States then declares war on Germany and Italy

Japanese-American Internment

- Roosevelt ordered 110,000 Japanese Americans into “relocation camps” or internment camps beginning in 1942
 - Many of Japanese descent were falsely labeled as enemies
 - Like prisons, fenced in with barbed wire
 - Soldiers guarded the camps with guns
 - Had to sell their homes, businesses, and belongings

Section 6: The Holocaust

The Holocaust Overview

- Jews were living in every country in Europe before the Nazis came into power in 1933
- The Holocaust ultimately killed approximately two-thirds of Europe’s Jewish population
- Approximately 6 million Jews were killed
- Poland and the Soviet Union had the largest populations

Anti-Semitism

- Jews had faced prejudice and discrimination for over 2,000 years
- Jews had been scapegoated for many problems
 - For example, people blamed Jews for the “Black Death” that killed thousands in Europe during the Middle Ages
- Political leaders who used anti-Semitism as a tool relied on the ideas of racial science to portray Jews as inferior
- Nazi teachers began to apply the “principles” of racial science by measuring skull size and nose length and recording students’ eye color and hair to determine whether students belonged to the “Aryan race”

Nazi Plan for the “Jewish Question”

- The Nazi plan for dealing with the “Jewish Question” evolved in three steps:
 1. Expulsion: Drive Jews out of Germany
 2. Containment: Put Jews together in one place called ghettos
 3. “Final Solution”: Hitler’s plan to commit genocide against people the Nazis considered inferior

Evian Conference

- The Evian Conference took place in the summer of 1938 in Evian, France
- Thirty-two countries met to discuss what to do about the Jewish refugees who were trying to leave Germany and Austria
- Despite voicing feelings of sympathy, most countries made excuses for not accepting more refugees
- U.S. Response to Jewish Refugees
 - The *SS St. Louis*, carrying Jewish refugees with Cuban visas, were denied admittance both in Cuba and in Florida
 - After being turned back to Europe, most of the passengers perished in the Holocaust

Containment

- By October, 1939 the Nazis aimed to contain and separate the Jewish population by forcing them to live in areas that were designated for Jews only, called ghettos
- Ghettos were established across all of Nazi occupied Europe, especially in areas where there was already a large Jewish population
- Many ghettos were closed off by barbed wire or walls and were guarded by SS or local police
- Life in the ghettos was difficult: food was rationed; several families often shared a small space; disease spread rapidly; heating, ventilation, and sanitation were limited

Concentration Camps

- 1933 -1945 - Nazi Germany and its allies established more than 40,000 camps and other incarceration sites
 - Most prisoners in the early concentration camps were Jews, German Communists, Socialists, Social Democrats, Roma (Gypsies), Jehovah's Witnesses, and political dissidents
- 1939- *Einsatzgruppen* were mobile killing squads made up of Nazi (SS) units and police
 - They killed Jews/camp prisoners in mass shooting actions throughout eastern Poland and the western Soviet Union

Final Solution

- In an attempt to increase the efficiency of the killing squads mass murder activities were moved to fixed death/extermination camps
 - Death camps were the means the Nazis used to achieve the "Final Solution"
- There were six extermination camps: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Chelmno, Sobibor, Majdanek, and Belzec
- Each used gas chambers to murder the Jews; at Auschwitz prisoners were told the gas chambers were "showers"
- Many prisoners were also shot to death
- 6 million Jews died in concentration camps; approximately 1 million died at Auschwitz alone

Liberation

- Soviet soldiers were the first to liberate camp prisoners on July 23, 1944, at Majdanek in Poland
- British, Canadian, American, and French troops also liberated camp prisoners
- Troops were shocked at what they saw

Nuremberg Trials

- Trials held for Nazi war crimes and crimes against humanity-held after WWII
- Brought some of those responsible for the Holocaust to justice
- There were 22 Nazi criminals tried by the Allies in the International Military Tribunal
 - 12 prominent Nazis were sentenced to death
- Most claimed that they were only following orders, which was judged to be an invalid defense

Section 7: The War (1942-1945)

War in the Pacific

- June 4- Battle of Midway Island
 - American carrier planes destroyed all four of the attacking Japanese aircraft carriers; turned the war in the Pacific against the Japanese
- Fall 1942- “Island Hopping”
 - U.S. general Douglas MacArthur begins an offensive of “island hopping” from southern China to Burma through the Dutch East Indies; the islands that were chosen for attack were the least heavily defended by Japan
 - Aug – Solomon Islands (Guadalcanal) invaded by U.S.
 - Sept – U.S. and Australia invade New Guinea

Soviet Union

- By 1943 German forces found themselves unable to gain any more land in the Soviet Union
 - However, Hitler ordered his troops to hold on to every mile of territory they had taken
 - The Soviet forces counterattacked at Stalingrad and wiped out several German battalions
- By the end of 1943, the Soviets had begun their drive to force Germany out of the Soviet Union

Tehran Meeting

- November, 1943- Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill met at Tehran (the capital of Iran) to decide the future course of the war
 - At this meeting of the “Big Three” the Allies decided to partition postwar Germany, until it could be cleared of Nazi influence

Air War

- The main action against Germany during the fall of 1944 was in the air
- U.S. bombers hit industrial targets by day, while the German cities crumbled under British bombing by night
 - iron and steel output dropped by half between September and December
 - continued bombing of Axis oil plants severely limited the fuel that would be available for the tanks and planes coming off the assembly lines

Normandy

- June 6, 1944 (D-Day)- Allies land at Normandy (on the French channel coast)
 - Code name of the D-Day landing was “Operation Overlord”
- Commanders- Dwight D. Eisenhower was the Supreme Allied Commander in charge of all forces involved in Operation Overlord; General Omar N. Bradley (U.S.); General Miles C. Dempsey (G.B.)

Normandy (Cont.)

- Hitler was convinced that the Normandy landings were a diversion, and the main assault would come north of the Seine River
 - He refused to release the divisions he had there and insisted on drawing in reinforcements from more distant areas
- The D-Day invasion was successful, and by the end of June, Eisenhower had 850,000 men and 150,000 vehicles ashore in Normandy
- After the breakout at Normandy, Allied troops moved south and east and liberated Paris by the end of August
- Continued to advance into Germany- by the end of April 1945 linked up with the Soviet Union
- After Normandy, Allied troops moved south and east and liberated Paris by the end of August; they continued to advance into Germany

Death of Hitler and Mussolini

- In January 1945 Hitler moved into a bunker 55 feet under Berlin to direct the final stages of the war
 - Blamed the Jews for the war until the end
- April 28, 1945- Mussolini was shot and killed by Italian forces
- April 30, 1945- Hitler committed suicide

War Ends in Europe

- Caught in the giant pincher consisting of Allied forces pushing westward from France, northward from Italy, and eastward from Russia, Germany was forced to surrender
- The war ended in Europe on May 8, 1945 (V-E Day)

Section 8: End of WWII

War in the Pacific

- The war ended in Europe on May 8, 1945, however the Japanese continued to fight
- Although Japan's position was hopeless by early 1945, an early end to the war was not in sight
 - Japanese resorted to kamikaze (Japanese, "divine wind") attacks, or suicide air attacks, during the fighting for Luzon in the Philippines
 - January 4-13, 1945- quickly trained kamikaze pilots flying obsolete planes sunk 17 U.S. ships and damaged 50 more

Atomic Bomb

- Throughout the war, the U.S. government and the British, believing Germany was doing the same, had maintained a massive scientific and industrial project to develop an atomic weapon
- The chief ingredients, uranium and plutonium, had not been available in sufficient quantity before the war in Europe ended
- The first atomic bomb was exploded in a test at Alamogordo, New Mexico, on July 16, 1945

The Bomb

- Two more bombs had been built, and the possibility arose of using them to convince the Japanese to surrender
- President Harry S. Truman decided to allow the bombs to be dropped because, he said, it might save thousands of American lives by bringing the war to the quickest possible end
- Therefore, aerial bombing of wartime Japan included the first use of an atomic bomb
 - One was dropped over Hiroshima ("Little Boy") on August 6, 1945 the other over Nagasaki ("Fat Man") on August 9, 1945

Damage

- Nagasaki and Hiroshima had not previously been bombed, and thus the bombs' damage could be accurately assessed
- U.S. estimates put the number killed in Hiroshima at 66,000 to 78,000 and in Nagasaki at 39,000
 - Japanese estimates gave a combined total of 240,000

Japanese Surrender

- WWII was finally brought to an end by the dropping of the nuclear bombs
- August 14, 1945- Japan announced its surrender
 - the formal signing took place on September 2 in Tokyo Bay aboard the battleship *Missouri*
- The Allied delegation was headed by General MacArthur, who became the military governor of occupied Japan

Aftermath of the War

- Before the war ended Roosevelt locked the Big Three into a postwar international organization called the United Nations
 - First meeting of the U.N. was April 1945 in San Francisco
- However, the total victory of the Allies in WWII was not followed by a real peace but by the beginning of a new conflict known as the Cold War, which dominated world politics until the end of the 1980s
 - Cold War= the state of political hostility that existed between the Soviet bloc countries and the US-led Western powers from 1945 to 1990
- Many in the West began to interpret Soviet policy as part of a worldwide Communist conspiracy
- The Soviets viewed Western, especially U.S., policy as nothing less than global capitalist expansionism or, in Leninist terms, economic imperialism