Chapter 16: World War II, 1939–1945

The Allies defeat the Axis powers, the Jewish people suffer through the Holocaust, and Europe and Japan are devastated by World War II.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower addresses troops preparing to invade France (June 1944).
Section 1: Hitler’s Lightning War

Using the sudden, mass attack called the blitzkrieg, Germany overruns much of Europe and North Africa.
Factors existing in post World War I Germany that help explain the rise of Adolph Hitler and the Nazi Party:

1. Long-term Bitterness
   Deep anger about the First World War and the Treaty of Versailles created an underlying bitterness to which Hitler’s viciousness and expansionism appealed, so they gave him support;

2. Ineffective Constitution and Government
   Weaknesses in the Constitution crippled the government. In fact, there were many people in Germany who wanted a return to dictatorship. When the crisis came in 1929–1933, no one seemed prepared or able to fight to stop Hitler;

3. Money
   The financial support of enough wealthy businessmen gave Hitler the money to run his propaganda and election campaigns;

4. Propaganda
   Appealing to pre-existing anti-Semitism, Nazi propaganda persuaded the German masses to believe that the Jews were to blame for the loss of the war, all of Germany’s ills, and that Hitler was their last hope;
Factors existing in post World War I Germany that help explain the rise of Adolph Hitler and the Nazi Party:

5. Program
Though often derided as promoting a laundry list of incoherent policies, Hitler promised everybody something, so many supported him;

6. The Great Depression
The Great Depression that started in full force in America following the stock market crash of October 1929 spread like a virus, and turned an already weak postwar German economy a complete disaster;

7. Attacks on Other Parties
Nazi Stormtroopers intimidated and attacked Jews and people who opposed Hitler. Many opponents kept quiet simply because they were scared of being murdered and, if they were, stormtroopers often went unpunished (see point 2);

8. Personal Qualities
Hitler was a brilliant speaker and strong organizer and politician. He was an unstable, though incredibly driven man who believed that he had been called by God to become dictator of Germany and rule the world. This kept him going when other people might have given up, and his self-belief persuaded many to believe in and follow him.
Germany Sparks a New War in Europe

Secret Agreement
- **Nonaggression pact**—Germans, Soviets agree not to fight each other
- Agreement includes secret deal to split Poland

Germany’s Lightning Attack
- 9/1/39: Hitler launches invasion of Poland
- Britain, France declare war on Germany but Poland falls quickly
- **Blitzkrieg** (lightning war); Germany’s new military strategy
- Planes, tanks, infantry used to surprise enemy and quickly conquer
Germany’s Lighting Attack

The Soviets Make Their Move
- Soviets capture Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, resistance met in Finland
- 3/40: Finland surrenders

The Phony War
- French, British mobilize along French border, wait for German attack
- Many months of no action—the "phony war"
- 4/40: Hitler attacks, quickly captures Denmark, Norway
The Fall of France

Further Gains
• 5/40: Germany conquers Netherlands, Belgium, Luxem.
• Soon after, German army reaches French coast

Rescue at Dunkirk
• German forces trap British, French on coast at Dunkirk
• British Navy, civilians cross the Channel to rescue soldiers

France Falls
• 6/40: France surrenders to Germany
• Charles de Gaulle, French general, organizes opposition to Germany
The Battle of Britain

Threat to Britain
- **Winston Churchill** becomes British prime minister, vows no surrender
- 1940: Germany plans invasion of Britain; begins with air attacks
- British use air force, radar, code-breaking to resist Germany
- **Battle of Britain**—Air war over Britain, lasted until 5/41
- Stunned by British resistance, Hitler calls off attacks
The Mediterranean and the Eastern Front

Axis Forces Attack North Africa
• Mussolini, Italy at first neutral
• Mussolini declares war on France, Britain after German victory
• 9/40: Mussolini attacks British in North Africa

Britain Strikes Back
• 12/40: British attack and drive Italians back
• **Erwin Rommel**, German general, battles British in North Africa
• 1942: Rommel first retreats, then succeeds against British
The Mediterranean and the Eastern Front

The War in the Balkans
- Hitler plans to invade Soviet Union; moves to take Balkan countries
- 4/41: Hitler invades Yugoslavia, Greece; both fall quickly

Hitler Invades the Soviet Union
- 6/41: Germany invades an unprepared Soviet Union
- Soviet troops burn land as they retreat; Germans move into Russia
- Germans stopped at Leningrad, forced to undertake long siege
- Germans almost capture Moscow, but forced to pull back
The United States Aids Its Allies

American Policy

• Most Americans want to avoid war
• Roosevelt fears that if allies fall, U.S. would have to fight
• He hopes to strengthen allies so they can resist Germany
• Lend-Lease Act— U.S. loans weapons to countries fighting Germany
• Roosevelt and Churchill meet, issue statement of principles
  • Atlantic Charter— supports free trade, right to form own government
Section 2: Japan’s Pacific Campaign

Japan attacks Pearl Harbor in Hawaii and brings the United States into World War II.
Surprise Attack on Pearl Harbor

Japan and the U.S.
- Japan develops plan for attacks on European colonies, U.S. bases
- 1941: FDR blocks oil shipments to Japan
- Admiral Isoroku Yamamato plans attack on U.S. fleet in Hawaii

Day of Infamy
- 12/7/41: Japan attacks Pearl Harbor; U.S. naval base in Hawaii
- U.S. declares war on Japan
- Japan also attacks Hong Kong, Thailand, and other islands
Japanese Victories

Gains in Many Places

• Japanese attack Philippine Islands defended by U.S., Filipino troops
• 1942: Philippine islands fall to Japanese
• Japan captures British holdings, including Hong Kong, Singapore
• Also conquers Dutch East Indies, rich in minerals
• Capture of Burma threatens India, Britain’s main possession in Asia
• Japanese forces treat conquered peoples, prisoners of war brutally
The Allies Strike Back

Stunning Raid
• 4/42: U.S. bombers attack Tokyo, other Japanese cities
• Raid does little damage, but shows that Japan is vulnerable

The Allies Turn the Tide
• 5/42: Battle of the Coral Sea; Americans stop Japanese advance
• New kind of naval warfare; ships launch planes to fight each other

The Battle of Midway
• Japanese send powerful fleet to capture Midway Island
• **Battle of Midway**; U.S. destroys Japan’s naval fleet, Japan retreats
An Allied Offensive

MacArthur’s Plan

- **Douglas MacArthur**— American army commander in Pacific
- Plans to “island-hop” past strongholds, attack weaker Japanese bases
- **Battle of Guadalcanal**; hellish battle that ends in Allied victory
Section 3: The Holocaust

During the Holocaust, Hitler’s Nazis kill 6 million Jews and 5 million other “non-Arayans.”
The Holocaust Begins

Racist Beliefs
• Hitler and Nazis say Aryans, Germanic peoples, are “master race”
• They launch the Holocaust, or systematic murder of Jews and others

Anti-Semitism
• Nazis tap into long-held feeling of many Europeans against Jews
• 1935 Nuremberg Laws take away rights of German Jews

“Night of Broken Glass”
• 11/9/38: Kristallnacht, “night of broken glass”
• Jewish homes, businesses, synagogues attacked; many Jews killed
The Holocaust Begins

A Flood of Refugees
• Fearing more violence, many German Jews flee to other countries
• Hitler favors emigration but other countries limit Jewish refugees

Isolating the Jews
• Hitler has all Jews moved to designated cities
• They are forced to live in ghettos, separate Jewish areas
• Hitler hopes that Jews in ghettos will die of disease, starvation
• Despite bad conditions, Jews survive in these areas
The “Final Solution”

Hitler Seeks New Answer
- “Final Solution,” Hitler’s final plan for treatment of Jews
- Chooses genocide, systematic killing of an entire people

The Killings Begin
- Nazis in Eastern Europe, Soviet Union create killing squads
- They shoot men, women, children in mass executions
- Other Jews sent to concentration camps or slave labor prisons
The “Final Solution”

The Final Stage
- By 1942, Nazis building huge, efficient extermination camps
- Camps separate strong from weak people
- Weak (mostly women, children, elderly, sick) killed immediately

The Survivors
- Nazis kill about six million European Jews during the war
- Fewer than four million survive
Section 4: The Allied Victory

Led by the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, the Allies score key victories and win the war.
The Tide Turns on Two Fronts

The North African Campaign

- 6/42: Rommel takes Tobruk; pushes toward Egypt
- British General Montgomery attacks at El Alamein, forces Rommel back
- 11/42: American forces land in Morocco
- General Dwight D. Eisenhower, American commander in Morocco
- 5/43, Rommel’s forces defeated by Allies
The Tide Turns on Two Fronts

The Battle for Stalingrad

- German army moves to capture Soviet oil fields
- **Battle of Stalingrad**—Soviets, Germans battle for control of city
- German troops capture city, but eventually surrender

The Invasion of Italy

- 1943: U.S., British forces land on, capture Sicily
- Mussolini loses power but Germans keep control of northern Italy
- Allies invade Italy, but Germans keep fighting there until war ends
The Allied Home Fronts

Mobilizing for War
- Fighting the war requires complete use of all national resources
- 17 to 18 million U.S. workers, many of them women, make weapons
- People at home face shortages of consumer goods
- Propaganda aims to inspire civilians to aid war effort

War Limits Civil Rights
- Japanese Americans face prejudice, fear
- 1942: Army puts Japanese Americans in internment camps
Victory in Europe

The D-Day Invasion
- Allies plan invasion of France; use deception to confuse Germans
- **D-Day** (6/6/44); day of “Operation Overlord” invasion of France
- Allied forces capture Normandy beaches; liberate Paris by September

The Battle of the Bulge
- U.S., British forces advance on Germany from west, Soviets from east
- 12/44: **Battle of the Bulge**—last German (early success, but forced to retreat) counterattack
Victory in Europe

Germany’s Unconditional Surrender

- By 1945, Allied armies approach Germany from two sides
- 4/45: Soviets surround Berlin
- 4/12/45: FDR dies in April; Harry Truman becomes president
- 4/30/45: Hitler commits suicide
- 5/9/45: Germany officially surrenders, marking V-E Day
Victory in the Pacific

The Japanese in Retreat
- Allies move to retake the Philippines in late 1944
- Battle of Leyte Gulf leaves Japanese navy badly damaged
- **Kamikazes**—Japanese pilots who fly suicide missions
- 3/45: American forces capture Iwo Jima
- 6/45: U.S. takes Okinawa; Japan suffers huge casualties
Victory in the Pacific

The Japanese Surrender
- Advisors warn Truman that invasion of Japan will cost many lives
- He has alternative; powerful new weapon called atomic bomb
- Manhattan Project—secret program to develop the bomb
- 8/6/45: Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima; c. 75,000 die
- 8/9/45: Nagasaki bombed; 70,000 die instantly
- 9/2/45: Japanese surrender unconditionally
Section 5: Europe and Japan in Ruins

World War II cost millions of human lives and billions of dollars in damages. It leaves Europe and Japan in ruins.
Devastation in Europe

A Harvest of Destruction
• Many cities across Europe badly damaged by war
• Many people displaced by war and peace agreements

Misery Continues After the War
• Lack of food, destruction of roads, factories lead to hardship
• Many people suffer from hunger, disease after war
Postwar Governments and Politics

Need for New Leaders
- Many conquered countries went back to old governments
- New leaders needed in Germany, Italy, and France
- Communist parties make gains in Italy, France by promising change
- Communist interest fades as economies recover

The Nuremberg Trials
- Nuremberg Trials—trials of 22 Nazi leaders for war crimes
- Some Nazi leaders are executed for their actions
Postwar Japan

Serious Damage
• In war, Japan loses two million people; severe damage to many cities

Occupied Japan
• MacArthur takes charge of U.S. occupation of Japan
• Starts process of **demilitarization**, disbanding Japan’s armed forces
• Also launches **democratization**—creating democracy in Japan
• 1947: Japanese people adopt new constitution
• MacArthur puts economic reforms in place
Occupation Brings Deep Changes

Changing Japanese Society
- Emperor kept on, but he loses power and becomes figurehead
- Japanese people elect two-house legislature
- Bill of rights guarantees freedoms; women also have right to vote
- Constitution says Japan cannot attack another country
- In 1951, peace treaty with Japan signed; U.S. occupation ends
- U.S. and Japan become allies