

**Chapter 25****THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH C. CRISIS: WAR AND REVOLUTION**

The assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo in the summer of 1914 led within six weeks to a major war among the major powers of Europe. The Germans drove the Russians back in the east, but a stalemate developed in the west, where trenches extending from the Swiss border to the English Channel were defended by barbed wire and machine guns. The Ottoman Empire joined Germany, and Italy became one of the Allies. After German submarine attacks, the United States entered the war in 1917, but even from the beginning of the war, battles also took place in the African colonies of the Great Powers as well as in the East, making this a truly global war.

Unprepared for war, Russia soon faltered and collapsed, leading to a revolution against the tsar. But the new provisional government in Russia also soon failed, enabling the revolutionary Bolsheviks of V.I. Lenin to seize power. Lenin established a dictatorship and made a costly peace with Germany. After Russia's withdrawal from the war, Germany launched a massive attack to the west but had been severely weakened by the war. In the fall of 1918, after American troops entered the conflict, the German government collapsed, leading to the armistice on November 11, 1918.

World War I was the defining event of the twentieth century. It shattered the liberal and rational assumptions of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century European society. The incredible destruction and the deaths of almost 10 million people undermined the whole idea of progress.

New propaganda techniques had manipulated entire populations into sustaining their involvement in a meaningless slaughter.

World War I was a total war that required extensive mobilization of resources and populations. As a result, government centralization increased, as did the power of the state over the lives of its citizens. Civil liberties, such as freedom of the press, speech, assembly, and movement, were circumscribed in the name of national security. Governments' need to plan the production and distribution of goods and to ration consumer goods led to restrictions on economic freedom. Although the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had witnessed the extension of government authority into such areas as mass education, social welfare legislation, and mass conscription, World War I made the practice of strong central authority a way of life.

Finally, World War I ended the age of European hegemony over world affairs. In 1917, the Russian Revolution had laid the foundation for the creation of a new Eurasian power, the Soviet Union, and the United States had entered the war. The waning of the European age was not evident to all, however, for it was clouded by American isolationism and the withdrawal of the Soviets from world affairs while they nurtured the growth of their own socialist system. These developments, though temporary, created a political vacuum in Europe that all too soon was filled by the revival of German power.

## Chapter 26

## EUROPE BETWEEN THE WARS, 1919-1939

The devastation wrought by World War I destroyed the liberal optimism of the prewar era. Yet many in the 1920s still hoped that the progress of Western civilization, so seemingly evident before 1914, could somehow be restored. These hopes proved largely unfounded. France, feeling vulnerable to another invasion, sought to weaken Germany by occupying the Ruhr when Germany failed to pay reparations but gained little from the occupation. European recovery, largely the result of American loans and investments, ended when the Great Depression began at the end of the 1920s.

The democratic states – Great Britain, France, the Scandinavian countries, and the United States – spent much of the 1930s trying to recover from the Great Depression. New governments that aimed at total control and required the active commitment of their citizens came to power in Italy, Germany, and the Soviet Union. Italian Fascism resulted from Italy's losses in World War I, economic problems, and incompetent politicians. Mussolini organized the Fascist movement in 1919 and by threatening to march on Rome was chosen as prime minister in 1922. Rival parties were outlawed, and Mussolini used repression and propaganda to create a Fascist state. Mussolini failed, however, to attain the degree of control achieved in Hitler's Germany. Heading the Nazi Party, Adolf Hitler became chancellor in 1933 and within six months had seized dictatorial control. Hitler rearmed Germany, abolished all other political parties and the labor

unions, and created a police state under the direction of the SS. Nazi Germany excluded Jews from citizenship and beginning in 1938 with *Kristallnacht* often persecuted and encouraged them to leave Germany.

After assuming leadership of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin followed his own path to establish total control. Five-year plans were instituted to turn the Soviet Union into an industrial society, while opponents were sent to Siberia, sentenced to labor camps, or liquidated. With the exception of Czechoslovakia, authoritarian governments appeared in eastern Europe as well as in Portugal and Spain. In the Spanish Civil War, the fascist states aided Francisco Franco, and the Soviet Union backed the Popular Front.

The new authoritarian governments not only restricted individual freedoms and the rule of law but, especially in Germany and the Soviet Union, sought even greater control over the lives of their subjects in order to manipulate and guide them to achieve the goals of their regimes. For many people, despite the loss of personal freedom, these mass movements offered some sense of security in a world that seemed fraught with uncertainty, an uncertainty that was also evident in popular culture, the arts, literature, and even physics. But the seeming security of these mass movements gave rise to even greater uncertainty as Europeans, after a brief twenty-year interlude of peace, again plunged into war.

**Chapter 27****THE DEEPENING OF THE EUROPEAN CRISIS: WORLD WAR II**

Between 1933 and 1939, Europeans watched as Adolf Hitler rebuilt Germany into a great military power. For Hitler, military power was an absolute prerequisite for the creation of a German racial empire that would dominate Europe and the world for generations to come. During that same period, the nation of Japan fell under the influence of military leaders who conspired with right-wing forces to push a program of expansion at the expense of China and the Soviet Union as well as territories in Southeast Asia. The ambitions of Germany in Europe and those of Japan in Asia led to a global conflict that became the most devastating war in human history.

The Axis nations, Germany, Italy, and Japan, proved victorious during the first two years of the war, which began after the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. By 1942, the war had begun to turn in favor of the Allies, an alliance of Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States. The Japanese advance was ended at the naval battles of the Coral Sea and Midway in 1942. In February 1943, the Soviets won the Battle of Stalingrad and began to push westward. By mid-1943, Germany and Italy had been driven out of North Africa; in June 1944, Rome fell to the Allies, and an Allied invasion force landed in Normandy in France. After the Soviets linked up with British and American forces in April 1945, Hitler committed suicide, and the war in Europe came to an end. After atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, the war in Asia also ended.

During its domination of Europe, the Nazi empire brought death and destruction to many, especially Jews, minorities, and others that the Nazis considered racially inferior peoples. The Japanese New Order in Asia, while claiming to promote a policy of “Asia for the Asians,” also brought economic exploitation, severe hardships, and often death for the subject peoples under Japanese control. All sides bombed civilian populations, making World War II as devastating for civilians as for front-line soldiers.

If Hitler had been successful, the Nazi New Order, built on authoritarianism, racial extermination, and the brutal oppression of peoples, would have meant a triumph of barbarism and the end of freedom and equality, which, however imperfectly realized, had become important ideals in Western civilization.

The Nazis lost, but only after tremendous sacrifices and costs. Much of European civilization lay in ruins, and the old Europe had disappeared forever. Europeans, who had been accustomed to dominating the world at the beginning of the twentieth century, now watched helplessly at mid-century as the two new superpowers created by the two world wars took control of their destinies. Even before the last battles had been fought, the United States and the Soviet Union had arrived at different visions of the postwar European world. No sooner had the war ended than their differences gave rise to a new and potentially even more devastating conflict. Europe came to an end. After atomic bombs were dropped known as the Cold War.

**Chapter 28****COLD WAR AND A NEW WESTERN WORLD, 1945-1965**

At the end of a devastating world war, a new kind of conflict erupted in the Western world as two of the victors, the United States and the Soviet Union, emerged as superpowers and began to argue over the political organization of a Europe liberated from Nazi Germany. Europeans, whether they wanted to or not, were forced to become supporters of one side or the other. The Western world was soon divided between supporters of a capitalistic West and adherents of a Communist East. In 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was created by the United States, Canada, and ten nations of Western Europe as a defensive alliance against Soviet aggression. In 1955, the Soviet Union formed a military alliance with seven Eastern European states, and Europe was once again divided into hostile alliance systems.

Western Europe emerged as a new community in the 1950s and the 1960s and staged a remarkable economic recovery. While the Western European economy boomed, Eastern Europe seemed to stagnate under the control of the Soviet Union. The economic integration of the Western European nations began in 1951 with the European Coal and Steel Community and continued in 1957 with the formation of the European Economic Community, also known as the Common Market. Eastern European states had made their own efforts at economic cooperation when

they formed the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in 1949. Regardless of their economic differences, however, both Western and Eastern Europeans were well aware that their future still depended on the conflict between the two superpowers.

A new European society also emerged after World War II. White-collar workers increased in number, and installment plan buying helped create a consumer society. Rising incomes, combined with shorter working hours, created an ever-greater market for mass leisure activities. The welfare state provided both pensions and health care. Birth control led to smaller families, and more women joined the workforce.

In addition to the Cold War conflict, the postwar era was also characterized by decolonization. After World War II, the colonial empires of the European states were largely dissolved, and the liberated territories of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East emerged as sovereign states. All too soon, these newly independent nations of ten found themselves caught in the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. After the United States fought in Korea to prevent the spread of communism, the ideological division that had begun in Europe quickly spread to the rest of the world.

**Chapter 29****PROTEST AND STAGNATION: THE WESTERN WORLD, 1965-1985**

The late 1960s experienced a rash of protest movements. The so-called sexual revolution of the 1960s led to a revolt in sexual mores, encouraged by the birth control pill as well as sexually explicit movies, plays, and books. A growing youth movement in the 1960s questioned authority and fostered rebellion against the older generation. Numerous groups of students and radicals protested the war in Vietnam and unsatisfactory university conditions. Women actively sought equality of rights with men. The women's movement gained momentum in the 1970s and 1980s, but the student upheavals were not a "turning point in the history of postwar Europe," as some people thought at the time, especially in 1968, when the student protest movement reached its height. In the 1970s and 1980s, student rebels became middle-class professionals, and revolutionary politics remained mostly a memory.

In the 1970s, the Cold War took a new direction known as detente as the Soviet Union and the United States moved, if ever fitfully, toward a lessening of tensions. With the Antiballistic Missile Treaty in 1972, the United States and the Soviet Union believed that they had reached a balance, or "equivalence," that would assure peace. The early 1980s, however, saw renewed tensions between the superpowers. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the introduction of the cruise missile and "Star Wars"

by the American president Ronald Reagan brought a decline in detente. But as we shall see in the next chapter, a dramatic shift in Soviet leadership would soon bring an unexpected end to the Cold War.

Between 1965 and 1985, the Western world remained divided between a prosperous capitalistic and democratic West and a stagnant, politically repressed Eastern Europe. After two decades of incredible economic growth, Western European states experienced severe economic recessions in 1973-1974 and 1979-1983, although their economies largely recovered in the course of the 1980s. In Eastern Europe, Soviet leaders continued to exercise control over their satellite states while recognizing the need to provide some leeway in adopting domestic policies appropriate to local conditions.

Dramatic social and cultural developments accompanied political and economic changes after 1965. Scientific and technological developments, especially the rapid advance of the personal computer, began to revolutionize people's lives, while ecological problems became increasingly apparent and led to the Green movements and Green parties that emerged throughout Europe in the 1970s. Intellectually and culturally, the Western world after 1965 was notable for its diversity and innovation. New directions led some observers to speak of a Postmodern world in both literature and the arts.

**Chapter 30****AFTER THE FALL: WESTERN WORLD IN A GLOBAL AGE, SINCE 1985**

When Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the Soviet Union in 1985, he proposed radical reforms in both the economy and Soviet government. With these reforms, the pressure for more drastic change began to mount. In 1989, a wave of revolution swept through Eastern Europe as Communist regimes were overthrown and a new, mostly democratic order emerged, although serious divisions remained, especially in Yugoslavia. In 1991, the attempt of reactionary forces to undo the reforms of Gorbachev led instead to the complete disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of a new Russia. The Cold War, which had begun at the end of World War II and had led to a Europe divided along ideological lines, was finally over.

Although many people were optimistic about a new world order after the collapse of communism, uncertainties still prevailed. Germany was successfully reunited, and the European Union became even stronger with the adoption of a common currency in the euro. Yugoslavia, however, disintegrated into warring states that eventually all became independent, and ethnic groups that had once been forced to live under distinct national banners began rebelling to form autonomous states. Although some were successful, others, such as the Chechnyans, were brutally repressed.

While the so-called new world order was fitfully developing, other challenges emerged. The arrival of many foreigners, especially in Western Europe, not only strained the social services of European countries but also led to anti-foreign sentiment and right-wing political parties that encouraged it. Environmental abuses led to growing threats not only to Europeans but also all humans. Terrorism, especially that carried out by some parts of the Muslim world, emerged as a threat to many Western states. Since the end of World War II, terrorism seemed to have replaced communism as the number one enemy of the West.

As the beginning of the twenty-first century, a major realization has been the recognition that the problems afflicting the Western world have also become global problems. The nation-state, whose history dominated the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and which still plays an important role in contemporary affairs, nevertheless appears to be an outmoded structure if humankind is to resolve its many challenges. Nations and peoples have become more interdependent, and many Westerners recognize that a global perspective must also now become a part of the Western tradition.