

## CHAPTER 29

# The Collapse of the Old Order, 1929–1949

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

#### I. The Stalin Revolution

##### A. Five-Year Plans

1. Joseph Stalin, the son of a poor shoemaker, was a skillful administrator who rose within the Communist Party and used his power within the bureaucracy to eliminate Leon Trotsky and all other contenders for power. Stalin then set about the task of industrializing the Soviet Union in such a way as to increase the power of the Communist Party domestically and to increase the power of the Soviet Union in relation to other countries.
2. Beginning in October 1928 Stalin devised a series of Five-Year Plans that were designed to achieve ambitious goals by instituting centralized state control over the economy. Under the Five-Year Plans the Soviet Union achieved rapid industrialization, accompanied by the kind of environmental change that was experienced by the United States and Canada during their period of industrialization several decades earlier.

##### B. Collectivization of Agriculture

1. The Soviet Union squeezed the peasantry in order to pay for the massive investments required by the Five-Year Plans and in order to provide the necessary labor and food supplies required by the new industrial workers. The way the Soviet Union did this was to consolidate small farms into vast collectives that were expected to supply the government with a fixed amount of food and distribute what was left among their members.
2. Collectivization was an attempt to organize the peasants into an industrial way of life and to bring them firmly under the control of the government. Collectivization was accomplished by the violent suppression of the better-off peasants (the kulaks) and disrupted agricultural production so badly as to cause a famine that killed some 5 million people after the bad harvests of 1933 and 1934.
3. The Second Five-Year Plan (1933–1937) was originally intended to increase the output of consumer goods, but fear of the Nazi regime in Germany prompted Stalin to shift the emphasis to heavy industries and armaments. Consumer goods became scarce and food was rationed.

##### C. Terror and Opportunities

1. Stalin's policies of industrialization and collectivization could only be carried out by threats and by force. In order to prevent any possible resistance or rebellion, Stalin used the NKVD (secret police) in order to create a climate of terror that extended from the intellectuals and the upper levels of the Party all the way down to ordinary Soviet citizens.
2. Many Soviet citizens supported Stalin's regime in spite of the fear and hardships. Stalinism created new opportunities for women to join the workforce and for obedient, unquestioning people to rise within the ranks of the Communist Party, the military, the government, or their professions.
3. Stalin's brutal methods helped the Soviet Union to industrialize faster than any country had ever done. In the late 1930s the contrast between the economic strength of the Soviet

Union and the Depression troubles of the capitalist nations gave many the impression that Stalin's planned economy was a success.

## II. The Depression

### A. Economic Crisis

1. In the United States the collapse of the New York stock market on October 29, 1929 caused a chain reaction in which consumers cut their purchases, companies laid off workers, and small farms failed.
2. On the international scale, the stock-market collapse led New York banks to recall their loans to Germany and Austria, thus ending their payment of reparations to France and Britain, who then could not repay their war loans to the United States. In 1930, the United States tried to protect its industries by passing the Smoot-Hawley tariff act; other countries followed suit, and world trade declined by 62 percent between 1929 and 1932.

### B. Depression in Industrial Nations

1. France and Britain were able to escape the worst of the Depression by forcing their colonies to purchase their products. Japan and Germany suffered much more because they relied on exports to pay for imports of food and fuel.
2. The Depression had profound political repercussions. In the United States, Britain, and France, governments used programs like the American New Deal in an attempt to stimulate their economies. In Germany and Japan, radical politicians devoted their economies to military build-up, hoping to acquire empires large enough to support self-sufficient economies.

### C. Depression in Nonindustrial Regions

1. The Depression spread to Asia, Africa, and Latin America unevenly.
2. India and China were not dependent on foreign trade and thus were little affected. Countries that depended on exports of raw materials or on tourism were devastated. In Latin America the Depression led to the establishment of military dictatorships that tried to solve economic problems by imposing authoritarian control over their economies.
3. Southern Africa boomed during the 1930s. The increasing value of gold and the relatively cheaper copper deposits of Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo led to a mining boom that benefited European and South African mine owners.

## III. The Rise of Fascism

### A. Mussolini's Italy

1. In postwar Italy thousands of unemployed veterans and violent youths banded together in *fasci di combattimento* to demand action, intimidate politicians, and serve as strong-arm men for factory and property owners. Benito Mussolini, a former socialist, became leader of the Fascist Party and used the *fasci di combattimento* to force the government to appoint him to the post of prime minister.
2. In power, Mussolini installed Fascist Party members in all government jobs and crushed all sources of opposition. Mussolini and the Fascist movement excelled at propaganda and glorified war, but Mussolini's foreign policy was cautious.
3. The Italian Fascist movement was imitated in most European countries, Latin America, China, and Japan.

### B. Hitler's Germany

1. Germany had been hard-hit by its defeat in the First World War, the hyperinflation of 1923, and the Depression. Germans blamed socialists, Jews, and foreigners for their troubles.
2. Adolf Hitler was an Austrian-born German army veteran who became leader of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazis) and led them in an unsuccessful uprising in Munich in 1924. In 1925 Hitler published *Mein Kampf*, in which he laid forth his racial theories, his aspirations for the German nation, and his proposal to eliminate all Jews from Europe.

3. When the Depression hit Germany the Nazis gained support from the unemployed and from property owners. As leader of the largest party in Germany, Hitler assumed the post of chancellor in March 1933 and proceeded to assume dictatorial power, declaring himself *Führer* of the “Third Reich” in August 1934.
  4. Hitler’s economic and social policies were spectacularly effective. Public works contracts, a military build-up, and a policy of encouraging women to leave the workplace in order to release jobs for men led to an economic boom, low unemployment, and rising standards of living.
- C. The Road to War, 1933–1939
1. In order to pursue his goal of territorial conquest, Hitler built up his armed forces and tested the reactions of other powers by withdrawing from the League of Nations, introducing conscription, and establishing an air force—all in violation of the Versailles treaty. Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935, and Hitler sent ground troops into the Rhineland in 1936.
  2. Hitler’s and Mussolini’s actions met with no serious objections from France, Britain, or the United States. Hitler was thus emboldened in 1938 to invade Austria and to demand the German-speaking portions of Czechoslovakia, to which the leaders of France, Britain, and Italy agreed in the Munich Conference of September 1938.
  3. There were three causes for the weakness of the democracies—now called “appeasement.” The democracies had a deep-seated fear of war, they feared communism more than they feared Germany, and they believed that Hitler was an honorable man who could be trusted when he assured them at Munich that he had “no further territorial demands.”
  4. After Munich it was too late to stop Hitler short of war. In March 1939 Hitler’s invasion of Czechoslovakia inspired France and Britain to ask for Soviet help, but Hitler and Stalin were already negotiating the Nazi-Soviet Pact in which the two countries agreed to divide Poland between them.
- IV. East Asia, 1931–1945
- A. The Manchurian Incident of 1931
1. Ultrationalists, including young army officers, believed that Japan could end its dependence on foreign trade only if Japan had a colonial empire in China. In 1931 junior officers in the Japanese Army guarding the railway in Manchuria made an explosion on the railroad track their excuse for conquering the entire province, an action to which the Japanese government acquiesced after the fact.
  2. Japan built heavy industries and railways in Manchuria and northeastern China and sped up their rearmament. At home, the government grew more authoritarian, and mutinies and political assassinations committed by junior officers brought generals and admirals into government positions formerly controlled by civilians.
- B. The Chinese Communists and the Long March
1. The main challenge to the government of Chiang Kai-shek came from the Communist Party, which had cooperated with the Guomindang until Chiang arrested and executed Communists, forcing those who survived to flee to the remote mountains of Jiangxi province in southeastern China.
  2. Mao Zedong (1893–1976) was a farmer’s son and man of action who became a leader of the Communist Party in the 1920s. In Jiangxi, Mao departed from standard Marxist-Leninist ideology when he planned to redistribute land from the wealthy to the poor peasants in order to gain peasant (rather than industrial worker) support for a social revolution. Mao was also an advocate of women’s equality, but the Party reserved leadership positions for men, whose primary task was warfare.
  3. The Guomindang army pursued the Communists into the mountains; Mao responded with guerilla warfare and with policies designed to win the support of the peasants.

Nonetheless, in 1934 the Guomindang forces surrounded the Jiangxi base area and forced the Communists to flee on the Long March, which brought them, much weakened, to Shaanxi in 1935.

C. The Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1945

1. On July 7, 1937 Japanese troops attacked Chinese forces near Beijing, forcing the Japanese government to initiate a full-scale war of invasion against China. The United States and the League of Nations made no efforts to stop the Japanese invasion, and the poorly-led and poorly-armed Chinese troops were unable to prevent Japan from controlling the coastal provinces of China and the lower Yangzi and Yellow River Valleys within a year.
2. The Chinese people continued to resist Japanese forces, pulling Japan deeper into an inconclusive China war that was a drain on Japan's economy and manpower and that made the Japanese military increasingly dependent on the United States for steel, machine tools, and nine-tenths of its oil. In the conduct of the war, the Japanese troops proved to be incredibly violent, committing severe atrocities when they took Nanjing in the winter of 1937–1938 and initiating a “kill all, burn all, loot all” campaign in 1940.
3. The Chinese government of Chiang Kai-shek escaped to the mountains of Sichuan, where Chiang built up a large army to prepare for future confrontation with the Communists. In Shaanxi province, Mao built up his army, formed a government, and skillfully presented the Communist Party as the only group in China that was serious about fighting the Japanese.

V. The Second World War

A. The War of Movement

1. World War I was a war of defensive maneuvers, but in World War II the introduction of motorized weapons gave back the advantage to the offensive, as may be seen in Germany's *blitzkrieg* (lightning war) and in American and Japanese use of aircraft carriers.
2. The size and mobility of the opposing forces in World War II meant that the fighting ranged over fast theaters of operation, that belligerents mobilized the populations and economies of entire continents for the war effort, and that civilians were consequently thought of as legitimate targets.

B. War in Europe and North Africa

1. It took less than a month for Germany to conquer Poland. After a lull during the winter of 1939–1940, Hitler went on an offensive in March that made him the master of all of Europe between Spain and Russia by the end of June.
2. Hitler's attempt to invade Britain was foiled by the British Royal Air Force's victory in the Battle of Britain (June–September 1940). In 1941 Hitler launched a massive invasion of the Soviet Union; his forces, successful at first, were stopped by the winter weather of 1941–1942 and finally defeated at Stalingrad in February 1943.
3. In Africa, the Italian offensive in British Somaliland and Egypt, although initially successful, was turned back by a British counterattack. German forces came to assist the Italians, but they were finally defeated at Al Alamein in northern Egypt by the British, who had the advantage of more plentiful weapons and supplies and better intelligence.

C. War in Asia and the Pacific

1. In July 1941 France allowed Japan to occupy Indochina; the United States and Britain responded by stopping shipments of steel, scrap iron, oil, and other products that Japan needed.
2. In response, the Japanese chose to go to war, hoping that a surprise attack on the United States would be so shocking that the Americans would accept Japanese control over Southeast Asia rather than continuing to fight against Japan. Japan attacked American

forces at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and proceeded to occupy all of Southeast Asia and the Dutch East Indies within the next few months.

3. The United States joined Britain and the Soviet Union in an alliance called the United Nations (or the Allies). By June 1942 the United States had destroyed four of Japan's six largest aircraft carriers; aircraft carriers were the key to victory in the Pacific, and since Japan did not have the industrial capacity to replace the carriers, the Japanese were now faced with a long and hopeless war.

D. The End of the War

1. By 1943 the Soviet Red Army was receiving supplies from factories in Russia and the United States. The Soviet offensive in the east combined with Western invasions of Sicily and Italy in 1943 and of France in 1944 to defeat Germany in May 1945.
2. By May 1945 American bombing and submarine warfare had devastated the Japanese economy and cut Japan off from its sources of raw materials, while Asians who had initially welcomed the Japanese as liberators from white colonialism were now eager to see the Japanese leave. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 convinced Japan to sign terms of surrender early the next month.

E. Chinese Civil War and Communist Victory

1. After the Japanese surrender in September 1945 the Guomintang and Communist forces began a civil war that lasted until 1949. The Guomintang had the advantage of more troops and weapons and American support, but its brutal and exploitative policies and its printing of worthless paper money eroded popular support.
2. The Communists built up their forces with Japanese equipment gained from the Soviets and American equipment gained from deserting Guomintang soldiers and won popular support, especially in Manchuria, by carrying out a radical land reform program. On October 1, 1949 Mao Zedong announced the founding of the People's Republic of China as Chiang Kai-shek's Guomintang forces were being driven off the mainland to Taiwan.

VI. The Character of Warfare

A. The War of Science

1. World War II was different from previous wars both in its enormous death toll and in the vast numbers of refugees that were generated during the war. The unprecedented scale of human suffering during the war was due to a change in moral values and to the appearance of new technologies of warfare.
2. Science had a significant impact on the technology of warfare. This may be seen in the application of scientific discoveries to produce synthetic rubber and radar, in developments in cryptanalysis and antibiotics, in the development of aircraft and missiles, and in the United States government's organization of physicists and engineers in order to produce atomic weapons.

B. Bombing Raids

1. The British and Americans excelled at bombing raids that were intended not to strike individual buildings, but to break the morale of the civilian population. Massive bombing raids on German cities caused substantial casualties, but armament production continued to increase until late 1944, and the German people remained obedient and hard-working.
2. Japanese cities with their wooden buildings were also the targets of American bombing raids. Fire bombs devastated Japanese cities; the fire bombing of Tokyo in March 1945 killed 80,000 people and left a million homeless.

C. The Holocaust

1. Nazi killings of civilians were part of a calculated policy of exterminating whole races of people.
2. German Jews were deprived of their citizenship and legal rights and herded into ghettos, where many died of starvation and disease. In early 1942 the Nazis decided to apply modern industrial methods in order to slaughter the Jewish population of Europe in

concentration camps like Auschwitz. This mass extermination, now called the Holocaust, claimed some 6 million Jewish lives.

3. Besides the Jews, the Nazis also killed Polish Catholics, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Gypsies, and the disabled, all in the interests of "racial purity."
- D. The Home Front in Europe and Asia
1. During the Second World War the distinction between the "front" and the "home front" was blurred as rapid military movements and air power carried the war into people's homes. Armies swept through the land confiscating anything of value, bombing raids destroyed entire cities, people were deported to die in concentration camps, and millions fled their homes in terror.
  2. The war demanded enormous and sustained efforts from all civilians; in the Soviet Union and in the United States, industrial workers were pressed to turn out tanks, ships, and other war materiel. In the Soviet Union and in the other belligerent countries mobilization of men for the military gave women significant roles in industrial and agricultural production.
- E. The Home Front in the United States
1. Unlike the other belligerents, the United States flourished during the war, its economy stimulated by war production. Consumer goods were in short supply, so the American savings rate increased, laying the basis for the postwar consumer boom.
  2. The war weakened traditional ideas by bringing women, African-Americans, and Mexican-Americans into jobs once reserved for white men. Migrations of African-Americans north and west and of Mexican immigrants to the southwest resulted in overcrowding and discrimination in the industrial cities. Japanese-Americans were rounded up and herded into internment camps because of their race.
- F. War and the Environment
1. During the Depression, construction and industry had slowed down, reducing environmental stress. The war reversed this trend.
  2. One source of environmental stress was the damage caused by war itself, but the main cause was not the fighting, but the economic development—mining, industry, and logging—that was stimulated by the war. Nonetheless, the environmental impact of the war seems quite modest in comparison with the damage inflicted by the long consumer boom that began in the post-war era.