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The Devastation of Europe and Japan

TERMS & NAMES

- Nuremberg Trials
- demilitarization

MAIN IDEA

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

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The United States survived World War II undamaged, allowing it to become a world leader.

SETTING THE STAGE Allied victory in the war had been achieved at a high price. World War II had caused more death and destruction than any other conflict in history. It left 60 million dead, 50 million uprooted from their homes, and property damage that ran into billions of U.S. dollars.

Europe in Ruins

By the end of World War II, Europe lay in ruins. Close to 40 million Europeans had died—two-thirds of them civilians. Constant bombing and shelling had reduced hundreds of cities to rubble. The ground war had destroyed much of the countryside. Displaced persons from many nations were struggling to get home.

A Harvest of Destruction A few of the great cities of Europe—Paris, Rome, Brussels—remained undamaged by war. Many, however, had suffered terrible destruction. The Blitz left blackened ruins in London. Over five years, 60,595 London civilians had died in the German bombings. Eastern Europe and Germany were far worse off. Warsaw, the capital of Poland, was almost wiped from the face of the earth. In 1939, Warsaw had a population of 1,289,000 people. When the Soviets entered the city in January 1945, only 153,000 people remained. In Berlin, 25,000 tons of Allied bombs had demolished 95 percent of the central city. One U.S. officer stationed in Berlin reported, “Wherever we looked we saw desolation. It was like a city of the dead.”

Background

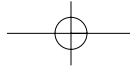
Two-thirds of the deaths in the war occurred in Europe, making the war there far bloodier than in Asia.

Winston Churchill looks at Nazi firebomb damage to the British House of Commons.



After the bombings, many civilians stayed where they were and tried to get on with their lives. Some lived in partially destroyed homes or apartments. Others huddled in caves and cellars beneath the rubble. They had no water, no electricity, and very little food. Hunger was a constant companion. With factories destroyed or damaged, most people had no earnings to buy the food that was available.

Although many remained in the cities, a large number of city dwellers fled. They joined the army of displaced persons wandering Europe following the war. These displaced persons included the survivors of concentration camps, prisoners of war, and refugees fleeing the Soviet army. Millions found themselves in the wrong country when the postwar treaties changed national borders. They jammed the roads trying to get home, hoping to find their families or to find a safe place.



Simon Weisenthal described the search made by survivors of the Holocaust:

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Across Europe a wild tide of frantic survivors was flowing. . . . Many of them didn't really know where to go. . . . And yet the survivors continued their pilgrimage of despair, sleeping on highways or in railroad stations, waiting for another train, another horse-drawn cart to come along, always driven to hope. "Perhaps someone is still alive. . . ." Someone might tell where to find a wife, a mother, children, a brother—or whether they were dead. . . . The desire to find one's people was stronger than hunger, thirst, fatigue.

SIMON WEISENTHAL, quoted in *Never to Forget: The Jews of the Holocaust*

Vocabulary

barter: to trade goods and services without money.

THINK THROUGH HISTORY

A. Identifying

Problems Why might it have been difficult to find democratic government leaders in post-Nazi Germany?

Misery Continues After the War Although the war had ended, misery in Europe continued for years. Europe lay ravaged by the fighting. Agriculture was disrupted. Most able-bodied men had served in the military and the women had worked in war production. Few remained to plant the fields. With the transportation system destroyed, the meager harvests often did not reach the cities. Thousands died as famine and disease spread through the bombed-out cities. In August 1945, 4,000 citizens of Berlin died every day. To get a few potatoes, people would barter any valuable items they had left. The first post-war winter brought more suffering as people went without shoes and coats.

Postwar Governments and Politics

Despairing Europeans often blamed their leaders for the war and its aftermath. Once the Germans had lost, some prewar governments—like those in Belgium, Holland, Denmark, and Norway—returned quickly. In countries like Germany, Italy, and France, however, a return to the old leadership was not so simple. Hitler's Nazi government had brought Germany to ruins. Mussolini had led Italy to defeat. The Vichy government had collaborated with the Nazis. Much of the old leadership was in disgrace. Besides, in Italy and France, many resistance fighters were Communists.

After the war, the Communist Party promised change, and millions were ready to listen. In both France and Italy, Communist Party membership skyrocketed. The Communists made huge gains in the first postwar elections. Anxious to speed up a political takeover, the Communists staged a series of violent strikes. Alarmed French and Italians reacted by voting for anti-Communist parties. Communist membership and influence then began to decline. And they declined even more so as the economies of France and Italy began to recover.

An Attempt at Justice: The Nuremberg Trials While nations were struggling to recover politically and economically, they also were trying to deal with Germany's guilt in the Holocaust. To make sure that such crimes would never happen again, the Allies put Nazis on trial. In 1946, an International Military Tribunal representing 23 nations put Nazi war criminals on trial in Nuremberg, Germany. In the first of the **Nuremberg Trials**, 22 Nazi leaders were charged with waging a war of aggression. They were also accused of violating the laws of war and of committing "crimes against humanity"—the murder of 11 million people.

Führer Adolf Hitler, SS chief Heinrich Himmler, and Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels had escaped trial by committing suicide. However, Marshal Hermann Göring, Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess, and other high ranking Nazi leaders had to face the charges.

Of the 22 defendants, 12 were sentenced to death. Göring cheated the executioner by killing himself. The rest were hanged on October 16, 1946. Hans Frank, the "Slayer of Poles," was the only convicted Nazi to express remorse: "A thousand years will pass," he said, "and still this guilt of Germany

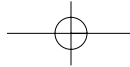
CONNECT to TODAY

Genocide in Rwanda

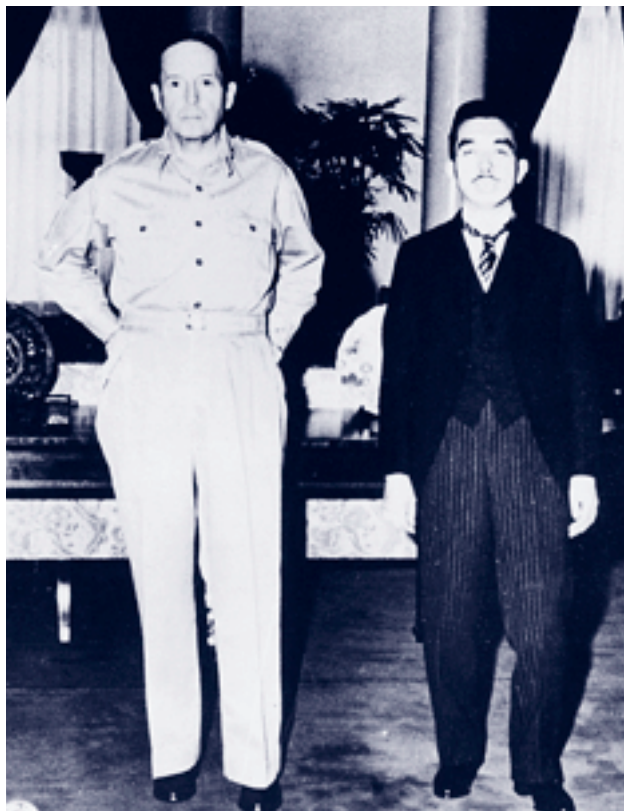
Genocide is a crime that human beings have committed against one another throughout history. In April 1994, the president of the East African nation of Rwanda died in a suspicious plane crash. The president was a member of the Hutu tribe. In Rwanda, the Hutu and Tutsi tribes have long hated and fought each other.

After the president's death, about 1 million Tutsis were slaughtered by the majority Hutus. In the end, Tutsi rebels ended the worst of the genocide.

The United Nations has set up an international war crimes tribunal to judge the worst acts of genocide. Yet, many criminals are still at large, and ethnic conflict in Rwanda continues.



Emperor Hirohito and U.S. General Douglas MacArthur look distant and uncomfortable as they pose for a photo. The photo was taken in the American Embassy in Tokyo on September 27, 1945.



will not have been erased.” The bodies of those executed were burned at the concentration camp of Dachau (DAHK-ow). They were cremated in the same ovens that had burned so many of their victims.

The Effects of Defeat in Japan

The defeat suffered by Japan in World War II left the country in ruins. Two million lives had been lost in the war. The country’s major cities had been largely destroyed by Allied bombing raids, including the capital, Tokyo. The atomic bomb had left Hiroshima and Nagasaki as blackened wastelands. The Allies had stripped Japan of its colonial empire. They even took away areas that had belonged to the Japanese for centuries.

The United States Occupies Japan Even after these disasters, some Japanese military leaders wanted to continue the fight. In a radio broadcast on August 15, 1945, Emperor Hirohito urged the Japanese people to lay down their arms and work together to rebuild Japan. “Should we continue to fight,” he declared, “it would only

result in an ultimate collapse . . . of the Japanese nation.” Two weeks after that broadcast, General Douglas MacArthur, now supreme commander for the Allied powers, accepted the Japanese surrender. He took charge of the U.S. occupation.

Demilitarization in Japan MacArthur was determined to be fair and not to plant the seeds for a future war. Nevertheless, to ensure that fighting would end, he began a process of **demilitarization**—disbanding the Japanese armed forces. He achieved this quickly, leaving the Japanese with only a small police force. MacArthur also began bringing war criminals to trial. Out of 25 surviving defendants, former Premier Hideki Tojo and six others were condemned to hang.

The general then turned his attention to democratization—the process of creating a government elected by the people. In February 1946, MacArthur and his American political advisers drew up a new constitution. It changed the empire into a parliamentary democracy like that of Great Britain. The Japanese accepted the constitution. It went into effect on May 3, 1947.

MacArthur was not told to revive the Japanese economy. However, he was instructed to broaden

land ownership and increase the participation of workers and farmers in the new democracy. Absentee landlords with huge estates had to sell land to tenant farmers at reasonable prices. Workers could now create independent labor unions. Still bitter over Pearl Harbor, Americans did not provide much aid for rebuilding Japan. The United States did send 2 billion dollars in emergency relief. This was a small amount, however, considering the task that lay ahead.

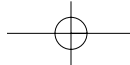
U.S. Occupation Brings Deep Changes

The new constitution was the most important achievement of the occupation. It brought deep changes to Japanese society. In 1945, the Japanese had agreed to surrender. They insisted, however, that “the supreme power of the emperor not be compromised.” The Allies agreed, but now things had changed. A long Japanese tradition had viewed the emperor as a god. He was also an absolute ruler whose divine will was law. The emperor now had to declare that he was not a god. That admission was as

THINK THROUGH HISTORY

B. Making

Inferences How would demilitarization and a revived economy help Japan achieve democracy?



Costs of World War II: Allies and Axis			
	Direct War Costs	Military Killed/Missing	Civilians Killed
United States	\$288.0 billion*	292,131**	—
Great Britain	\$117.0 billion	271,311	60,595
France	\$111.3 billion	205,707***	173,260†
USSR	\$93.0 billion	13,600,000	7,720,000
Germany	\$212.3 billion	3,300,000	2,893,000††
Japan	\$41.3 billion	1,140,429	953,000

*In 1994 dollars.
**An additional 115,187 servicemen died from non-battle causes.
***Before surrender to Nazis.
†Includes 65,000 murdered Jews.
††Includes about 170,000 murdered Jews and 56,000 foreign civilians in Germany.

SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Charts

- Which of the nations listed in the chart suffered the greatest human costs?
- How does U.S. spending on the war compare with the spending of Germany and Japan?

THINK THROUGH HISTORY

C. Analyzing

Causes Why did the Americans choose the British system of government for the Japanese, instead of the American system?

shocking to the Japanese as defeat. His power was also dramatically reduced as he became a constitutional monarch. Like the ruler of Great Britain, the emperor became largely a figurehead—a symbol of Japan.

The new constitution guaranteed that real political power in Japan rested with the people. The people elected a two-house parliament, called the Diet. All citizens over the age of 20, including women, had the right to vote. The government was led by a prime minister chosen by a majority of the Diet. A constitutional bill of rights protected basic freedoms. One more key provision—Article 9—stated that the Japanese could no longer make war. They could only fight if attacked.

In September 1951, the United States and 48 other nations signed a formal peace treaty with Japan. The treaty officially ended the war. With no armed forces, the Japanese also agreed to continuing U.S. military protection for their country. Six months later, the U.S. occupation of Japan was over. Relieved of the burden of paying for the occupation, Japan's economy recovered more quickly. With the official end of the war, the United States and Japan became allies.

In the postwar world, however, enemies not only became allies. Allies also became enemies. World War II had changed the political landscape of Europe. It weakened some nations and strengthened others. The Soviet Union and the United States had come out of the war as allies. Nevertheless, once the fighting was over, the differences in their postwar goals emerged. These differences stirred up conflicts that would shape the modern world for decades.

Section 5 Assessment

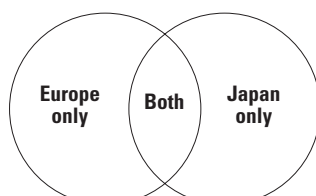
1. TERMS & NAMES

Identify

- Nuremberg Trials
- demilitarization

2. TAKING NOTES

Using a Venn diagram like the one below, compare and contrast the aftermath of World War II in Europe and Japan.



3. ANALYZING CAUSES

Why do you think that many Europeans favored communism directly following World War II?

THINK ABOUT

- World War II destruction
- pre-World War II governments
- economic concerns

4. THEME ACTIVITY

Economics Draw a political cartoon from a Japanese absentee landlord's or industrialist's point of view on MacArthur's postwar economic reforms. Remember that MacArthur is an American making important changes in a country that is not his own.