

SS6H3: Explain conflict & change in Europe

a. Describe the aftermath of World War I: the rise of communism, the Treaty of Versailles, the rise of Nazism, and worldwide depression.

Allies – the victorious alliance of nations in World War I

armistice – a formal ceasefire

Central Powers – the defeated alliance of nations in World War I

communism – a sociopolitical model wherein all property is publically owned and workers are paid according to their abilities and needs

depression – in economics, a long-term, sustained downturn in economic activity

fascist – a political movement supporting strong, authoritarian government dictatorship

Vladimir Lenin – leader of the communist revolution in Russia during World War I

Nazism – a political movement in Germany, from the end of World War I through the end of World War II, which espoused totalitarian government, staunch nationalism, and racial supremacy

Soviet Union – a federation of communist countries in Eastern Europe, led by Russia, from the time of the Russian Revolution until its collapse in 1991 at the end of the Cold War

Treaty of Versailles – the 1919 treaty which formally brought World War I to an end

World War I – also known as the “Great War” or the “War to End all Wars,” a global conflict occurring between 1914 and 1918, primarily in Europe

- **World War I** – or the Great War as it was known in 1914 – was the first global conflict of its kind in the modern era. It began in Serbia with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand I of Austria-Hungary, who was there on a diplomatic visit with his wife. What followed was a regional war between Germany and Austria Hungary & Russia in Central and Eastern Europe. Preexisting defense pacts and political alliances in the region drew Western Europe into the conflict as well, particularly after German forces invaded Belgium and France. Each European empire's colonies throughout Africa, Asia, and the Americas – France and Britain's were the most extensive – were likewise obliged to take part in the war.
- Russian participation in **World War I**, and the war's unpopularity among the Russian people, contributed to the rise of **communism** in that country. A popular revolution against the rule of Czar Nicholas II Romanov, beginning in 1914, led to the Russian monarchy's overthrow and Russia's withdraw from World War I in 1917. A civil war ensued, resulting in the communist takeover of Russia by **Vladimir Lenin** and the nation's expansion and rebirth as the **Soviet Union** in 1922.
- The United States remained neutral throughout most of **World War I**, but did eventually enter the conflict on behalf of the **Allies** (Britain, France, Russia) in 1917. The U.S. was instrumental in the defeat of the **Central Powers** (Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire)

- An **armistice** was signed in 1918, and **World War I** officially came to an end in 1919 with the **Treaty of Versailles** (vair-sy'). The **Treaty of Versailles** would later lead to renewed conflict with Germany, however, as the terms of Germany's surrender (loss of lucrative territory, military occupation) were considered overly disciplinary and financially weak by its people.
- The rise of **Nazism** in 1919 came in direct response to the German public's outrage over the **Treaty of Versailles**. The Nazi movement gained hold in the early 1930s – as did **fascist** movements elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe – after the 1929 U.S. stock market crash triggered a worldwide **depression**. Strong leadership, the Nazis argued, and social policies that put the German people and German interests above all else were required to pull their nation out of economic disaster.

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b. Explain the rise of Nazism including preexisting prejudices, the use of propaganda, and events which resulted in the Holocaust.

Allies – the victorious alliance of nations in World War II

anti-Semitism – racial bias or prejudice against Jews

Axis – the defeated alliance of nations in World War II

concentration camp – general term for a Nazi-controlled detention center where Jews were detained, used as forced labor, and exterminated

ghetto – a cordoned off area of city where Jews were isolated from the rest of the German population

Adolf Hitler – chancellor of Germany and leader of the Nazi regime during World War II

Holocaust - the Nazi internment, forced labor, and extermination of nearly 11 million people during World War II, an estimated 6 million of whom were Jews

propaganda – information, usually misleading or biased, designed to promote a particular political ideology

World War II – a global conflict occurring between 1939 and 1945

- Disappointment with the outcome of World War I, lack of confidence in Germany's post-war leadership, and economic disaster resulting from a worldwide depression all contributed to the rise of Nazism. **Adolf Hitler's** election as the German chancellor in 1933 brought with it a policy of state-sponsored **anti-Semitism**. Nazi **propaganda** victimized the Jewish people of Central Europe as being responsible for the punishment of the Treaty of Versailles, and accused them of the financial collapse which brought about Germany's economic struggles in the post-war years. Party members and Nazi sympathizers were encouraged to boycott Jewish businesses, segregate Jewish people within German society, pass laws which forbade certain civil rights and privileges to Jews, and publically burn Jewish literature and religious sites. This anti-Jewish hysteria and persecution concluded in the roundup, imprisonment, and extermination of European Jews, known as the **Holocaust**

- The major events of the **Holocaust** took place against a backdrop of **World War II**. The event which triggered Western Europe's declaration of war against Nazi Germany was Hitler's invasion of Poland: a British and French ally with the continent's largest Jewish population at the time. Many of the **ghettos** and **concentration camps** established by the Nazis were not in Germany itself but in its surrounding conquered territories, like Poland.
- Hitler and the **Axis** (Germany, Italy, Japan) were ultimately defeated at the end of **World War II**; however, the **Allied** victory did not come before nearly 11 million people lost their lives in the **Holocaust**, some 6 million of whom were Jews.

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- c. Explain how German reunification contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union and led to the end of the Cold War.**

Cold War – a state of political hostility between countries without an outright declaration of war

Berlin – the capital of Germany

Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) – the official name of West Germany during the Cold War

German Democratic Republic (GDR) – the official name of East Germany during the Cold War

Communist Bloc – communist states of Central and Eastern Europe during the Cold War

iron curtain – a term coined by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill describing the divide between the West and East (especially the Soviet Union)

Berlin Wall – a 91-mile wall surrounding West Berlin from 1961 through 1989

German reunification – the reintegration of West and East Germany into a single nation in 1990

- Without a common enemy to unite them, relations between the capitalist, democratic West and the communist, authoritarian East began to break down after World War II. Both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., having risen to geopolitical “superpower” status as a result of the war, sought to set the course for world affairs in the years that followed. This period is known as the **Cold War**.
- The **Cold War** was a battle of wills and sociopolitical beliefs. Unlike the openly-declared hostilities of the first two World Wars, the **Cold War** was characterized by political propaganda, threats, and smaller-scale skirmishes, but it stopped short of full-scale military engagement. Nowhere in Europe were **Cold War** tensions quite so emotional as in Germany.
- Immediately following Germany's defeat in World War II, steps were taken to ensure that Germany would never again pose a military threat to the peace and stability of Europe. The nation was divided into four separate occupation zones. The three westernmost zones were occupied by American, British, and French forces; the easternmost zone was occupied by Soviet troops. This same division was also carried out in Germany's capital, **Berlin**. Overtime, the three western zones were merged into one, known as West Germany (officially the **Federal Republic of Germany or FRG**), while the Soviet portion of the country became East

Germany (officially the **German Democratic Republic or GDR**.) The four occupation zones in **Berlin** were also consolidated, becoming West Berlin and East Berlin.

- Government and society in the FRG (and West Berlin) were recast in the image of the West: capitalist and democratic. The GDR (and East Berlin), meanwhile, mirrored the Soviet Union's other occupied territories: communist and authoritarian. East Germans were only permitted to travel within the **Communist Bloc**; however, those who could make it to West Berlin could fly out of East Germany to freedom. Knowing this, and in an effort to stop the outpouring of highly skilled East Germans emigrating to the West, the East German government erected a massive, fortified, 91-mile long wall around West Berlin. This wall came to symbolize the "**iron curtain**" which divided the East and West throughout the Cold War.
- Communist influence over the economic decisions and internal politics of Eastern Europe persisted throughout the Cold War. It was not until the 1980s that Soviet power began to diminish, at which point many Eastern bloc nations began abandoning communism.
- Communism's death came in 1989 with the destruction of the **Berlin Wall**. The wall stood for nearly three decades, not only as a literal divide between West and East Berlin but also as a symbolic divide between the differing beliefs of the East and West. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, democratic ideals spread into communist territories and weakened communist political control.
- With the Soviet Union no longer capable – politically or financially – of maintaining a presence in East Germany, the FRG and GDR were reunified into a single German state in 1990. One year later, the Soviet Union itself was dissolved and the Cold War came to an end.