

CHAPTER
15

Summary

CHAPTERS IN BRIEF *Years of Crisis, 1919–1939*

CHAPTER OVERVIEW *After World War I, new ideas and technologies changed old ways of thinking and living. The economic collapse called the Great Depression tested weak democratic governments in Europe. This crisis helped bring dictators to power in eastern Europe in the 1930s. Meanwhile, Japan, Germany, and Italy took actions that would soon plunge the world into another war.*

1 Postwar Uncertainty

KEY IDEA *The postwar period was one of loss and uncertainty but also one of invention and creativity.*

Two thinkers developed radical new ideas that challenged old ways of thinking. Albert Einstein revolutionized physics with his ideas about space, time, matter, and energy. He said that as moving objects neared the speed of light, space and time become relative. That means they change. His idea is the theory of relativity. Sigmund Freud's work changed the way people thought about the human mind. He said that much of human behavior was irrational—due to urges and desires buried in the unconscious mind of each person. Though resisted at first, Freud's ideas gained wide influence.

Looking at the destruction of World War I, many philosophers lost faith in reason and progress. One group of them was called existentialists. They argued that there is no universal meaning to the world. Each person must give it his or her own meaning through actions taken. They were influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher of the late 1800s. He said that reason, democracy, and progress were empty ideas. He urged people to adopt the values of pride and strength.

Some writers, like Franz Kafka, showed the horrors of modern life. His novels put people in threatening situations that they could not understand or escape.

Artists rebelled against traditional painting. They did not merely re-create realistic objects. Paul Klee used bold colors and distorted lines. Pablo Picasso founded a style called Cubism that broke objects into geometric shapes. Painters called surrealists showed a dreamlike existence outside of reality.

Composers created a new style of music. Some, like Igor Stravinsky, used unusual rhythms or harsh, rather than pleasing, sounds. African-American musicians in the United States developed a lively, loose form of popular music called jazz.

Society changed after World War I as well. Young people experimented with modern values. Women set aside earlier forms of dress, wearing new styles that were looser and shorter. Many women also began to work in new careers.

Technology brought about changes to society as well. Improvements to the automobile helped make cars more desirable and affordable. As a result, more and more people bought cars. They began to move to suburbs outside cities, using their cars to travel to work. The auto boom also gave a boost to some industries. Another change was the growth in air travel. American pilot Charles Lindbergh caught the world's attention when he flew alone across the Atlantic Ocean in 1927. In 1932, Amelia Earhart became the first woman to make the flight alone.

The radio developed during World War I. In the 1920s, large radio networks were built. They offered programs such as news, plays, comedies, and sports. Soon millions of people were entertained by radios in their homes. Millions more went to movie theaters to watch motion pictures. Movies were produced all over the world, especially in southern California.

2 A Worldwide Depression

KEY IDEA *An economic depression in the United States spread to the world and lasted a decade.*

After the war, European countries were in bad shape. European influence in world affairs was declining. The new republics that had formed out of the old empires of Europe often had shaky governments. Even nations that had had democracy for many years experienced problems. They had so many political parties that no one party could rule alone. There were so many governments formed that it was difficult to develop policies.

The situation was worst in Germany. The people felt little loyalty to the government, and the economy was weak. Prices rose sharply, and money lost its value. An American drew up a plan that

used American bank loans to help the German economy recover. By 1929, German factories produced as much as they had before the war.

World nations also took steps to try to ensure peace. France and Germany promised never to attack one another. Most countries of the world signed a treaty in which they pledged not to use war to gain their goals. There was no way to enforce the treaty, however, which made it weak.

The economy of the United States enjoyed a boom in the 1920s. But this growth hid problems. Workers were unable to buy all the goods produced, and when their purchases slowed, factories slowed production. Farmers faced falling food prices and slow sales. They were unable to repay loans and lost their farms. In 1929, stock prices in the United States plunged. The Great Depression was on.

The American Depression hit other countries. Nations raised tariffs—taxes on goods imported from other countries—to keep import prices high. They wanted to increase sales by local companies. But it all backfired. Trade between nations dropped, and unemployment shot up in many countries. The world suffered, including Latin America. As world trade went down, few countries bought the sugar, beef, and copper they produced.

Each country met the economic crisis in its own way. In Britain, a new multiparty government took over. It took steps that slowly improved the economy and cut unemployment. By 1937, production was up again. In France, after several governments lost support, moderates and Socialists combined to form a government. It passed laws to help workers, but companies raised prices to cover their costs. As a result, unemployment was still high.

In Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, the governments played active roles in the economy. They taxed people with jobs to have money to pay benefits to people without jobs. The governments also created jobs by hiring out-of-work people to build roads and buildings.

In the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt became president in 1932. He began a program that he called the New Deal. The government began large public works projects. This effort created jobs for millions. Businesses and farmers also got help from the government. The American economy got better but the recovery was slow.

3 Fascism Rises in Europe

KEY IDEA *Because of political and economic problems, Italy and Germany turned to dictators.*

In other countries, the economic crisis of the Great Depression led to the loss of democracy. There, millions of people turned to strong rulers to try to solve their economic problems. These tough leaders followed a set of beliefs called fascism. Fascist leaders were strongly nationalist. They believed in strength and power and built strong military forces. Fascist governments were controlled by one party, and that party was dominated by one leader. The leader was the nation's dictator. Fascist governments did not give any rights to their people.

Fascism arose in Italy because people there were angry that the treaty that came after World War I did not give them more gains in territory. Also, people with more money feared that unrest in Italy would result in a Communist government, as had happened in Russia. Benito Mussolini rose to power promising to revive the economy and armed forces of Italy. He used armed thugs who made threats to political opponents. The king of Italy was forced to let Mussolini lead the government.

Another Fascist arose in Germany. Adolf Hitler was the leader of the Nazi Party. He tried to take control of the government of Germany in 1923, but the attempt failed. He was sent to prison, where he wrote a book that summarized his ideas. Hitler believed that Germans were superior to all other people. He said that the Treaty of Versailles treated Germany unfairly, and that a crowded Germany needed the lands of eastern Europe and Russia. When the Depression hit Germany, the country was in terrible shape. Hitler was named leader of the German government but soon took the powers of a dictator. All those who opposed him were arrested. His economic program gave work to millions but took away their rights to organize into unions or to strike. He took control of all areas of life. He burned books that went against Nazi ideas and forced children to join Nazi groups. Hitler also launched attacks on Germany's Jews. Laws took away their rights. In November 1938, mobs destroyed thousands of Jewish-owned buildings and attacked Jewish people.

Dictators took control in other countries as well. Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania all had dictators—or kings who ruled like

dictators. Only Czechoslovakia remained as a democracy in eastern Europe.

4 Aggressors Invade Nations

KEY IDEA *As Germany, Italy, and Japan conquered other countries, the rest of the world did nothing.*

In the 1930s, the major democracies—Britain, France, and the United States—still faced serious problems at home. Dictators in Germany and Italy took advantage of this and began moving to gain territory. So, too, did Japan, now ruled by generals. These military leaders had taken power when the Depression struck. They planned to capture China as a part of a Pacific empire.

In 1931, the Japanese army captured Manchuria, a part of China. It was rich in coal and iron and as a result provided valuable resources for the Japanese economy. Other countries protested in the League of Nations but did nothing else. Japan ignored the protests and in 1933 pulled out of the League. It stayed in Manchuria, though. Four years later, Japan invaded China. The strong Japanese army swept Chinese fighters aside. It killed tens of thousands of Chinese in the city of Nanjing. Chinese forces—both the Nationalists of the government and Communist rebels—continued to fight Japan.

Italy's Mussolini wanted an Italian empire in Africa, and in 1935 he invaded Ethiopia. His troops won easy victory. Haile Selassie, the emperor of Ethiopia, pleaded to the League of Nations for help. The League did nothing.

Hitler made moves also. He broke the Versailles Treaty by rebuilding Germany's army. In 1936, he sent troops into an area of Germany that the treaty had forbidden them to enter. France and Britain again refused to stand up to Germany. This move won Hitler more support in Germany. That year, he signed an agreement with Mussolini and also with Japan. The three nations were called the Axis Powers.

In 1936, Spain erupted in civil war as the army revolted against a leftist government. Hitler and Mussolini sent aid to the army, which was backed by Spanish Fascists. The Soviet Union sent aid to the government. In 1939, the army won and Francisco Franco became Spain's Fascist dictator.

In March 1938, Hitler moved his troops into Austria. He made it part of Germany, breaking the Versailles Treaty again. France and Britain once more did nothing. The next year, Hitler demanded

that Czechoslovakia give up part of its land to Germany. The country refused, but Britain and France agreed to allow Germany to take the land. Hitler promised to respect the new borders of Czechoslovakia, but a few months later he took the entire country.

In the summer of 1939, Hitler made a similar demand of Poland. That nation also refused to give up land. Britain and France now said that they would protect Poland. But Hitler guessed they would not back this up. Meanwhile, he made an agreement with Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin in which the two countries promised never to attack each other.

Review

Clarifying

1. What ideas of Einstein and Freud challenged old ways of thinking?
2. How did technology change society after the war?
3. **Comparing and Contrasting** Compare the French approach to the Depression with the New Deal.
4. **Analyzing Causes and Recognizing Effects** What European nations came to be ruled by dictators, and why?
5. **Following Chronological Order** Describe the sequence of events in the 1930s that led to war.