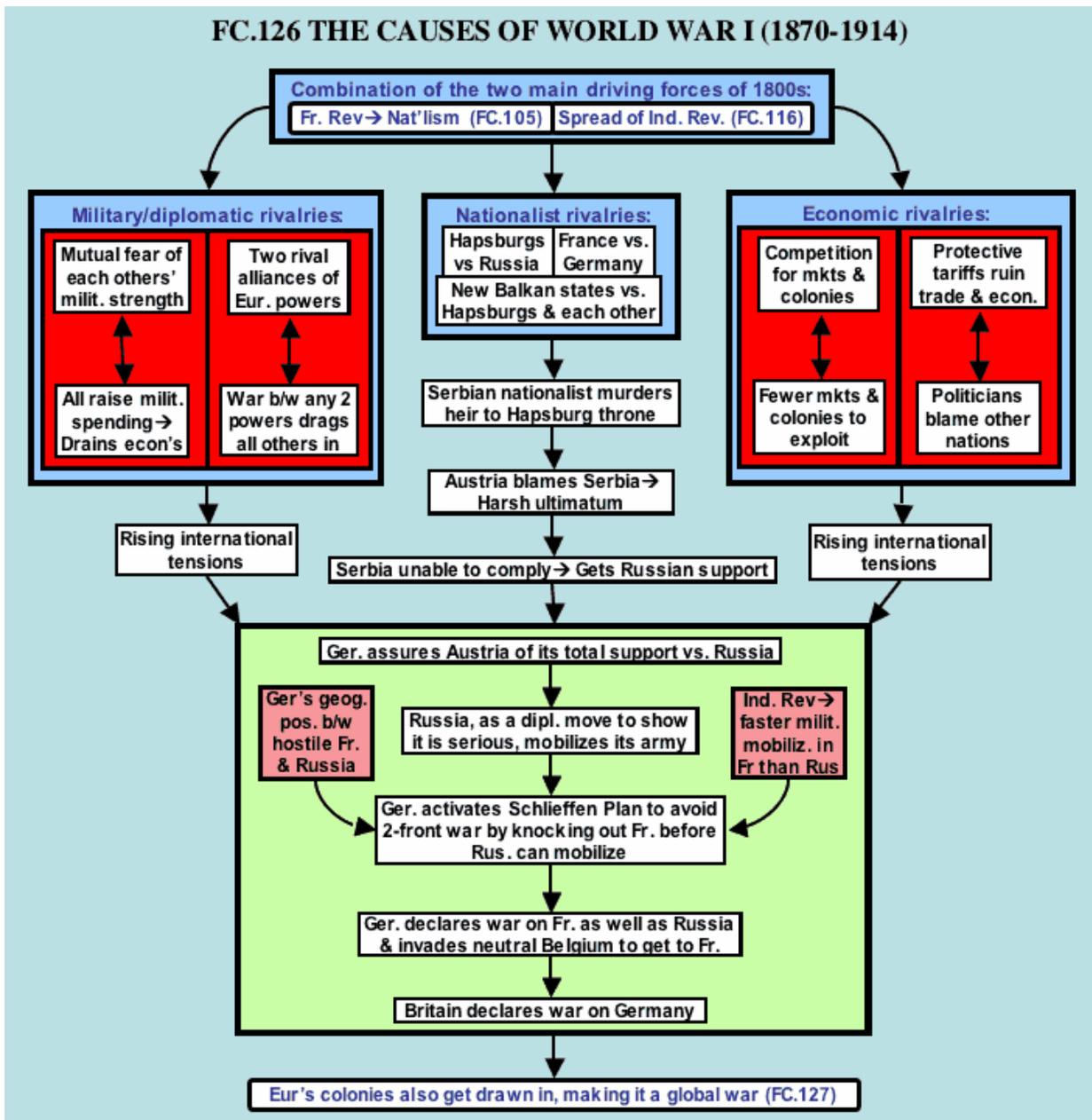


The Early 20th Century
The upheavals of the early twentieth century (1914-45)

War & revolution
Unit 19: War and revolution in Europe (1914-20)

FC126
The Causes and Outbreak of World War I

FC.126 THE CAUSES OF WORLD WAR I (1870-1914)



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“Yes, this delightful land which we inhabit and which nature caresses with love is made to be the domain of liberty and happiness...I am French, I am one of thy representatives!...Oh, sublime people! Accept the sacrifices of my whole being. Happy is the man who is born in your midst; happier is he who can die for your happiness.”—

Robespierre

“France will have but one thought, to reconstitute her forces, gather her energy, nourish her sacred anger, raise her young generation to form an army of the whole people, to work without cease, to study the methods and skills of our enemies, to become again a great France, the France of 1792, the France of an idea with a sword. Then one day she will be irresistible. Then she will take back Alsace-Lorraine.”— *Victor Hugo*

“The lights are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime.”— *Lord Grey*

Introduction

The century from 1815 to 1914 was one of the most peaceful in European history. This was largely because European powers were preoccupied with internal political events (i.e., liberal and nationalist movements) and economic developments (industrialization) which gave them the power and scope to expand their colonial empires without getting too much in each other's way. However, the same forces that kept Europe tranquil in the 1800's also carried the seeds for trouble in the first half of the 1900's, making it a time of war, revolution, and economic turmoil.

People often cite the assassination of the Austrian archduke, Franz Ferdinand, as the cause of World War I. This is true as an immediate, short-range cause, but his murder alone could not have triggered a global war. Rather, World War I was the product of two of the most powerful forces driving European civilization in the 1800's: nationalism and industrialization. Together and separately, they would create three factors that led to war: German unification, territorial rivalries, and economic competition.

Economic competition

The spread of the Industrial Revolution outside of Britain after 1850 expanded the consumer markets available for businesses to exploit. But it also expanded the number of producers competing for those markets, triggering more competition for what seemed to be a stagnant economy by the turn of the century. Intensifying this competition in each country were fierce nationalistic feelings fostered by an expanding public school system that preached its nation's superiority over other nations and the dangers they posed to it.

European nations did two things to protect themselves. First, they (especially France, Britain, and Germany) joined in the rush for overseas colonies. However, by 1900, most good places for colonization had been taken, just causing more competition for what few areas were left. For example, Germany and France had two bitter crises that nearly led to war over control of Morocco.

The second strategy was the use of protective tariffs (import taxes) to raise the cost of foreign goods and make the home nation's goods correspondingly more appealing to its consumers. Of course, other nations did the same thing. Prices went up, trade declined, and unemployment grew, causing internal unrest and turmoil. As a result, politicians looked for scapegoats and conveniently blamed other nations. This led to more tariffs, lower trade, rising unemployment, unrest, blame, and so on.

German unification

Nationalism created other problems. The unification of Italy and especially Germany upset the balance of power in central Europe, replacing many small and vulnerable states with two unified and aggressive nations. Germany's rapid rise as a political, economic, and military giant alarmed its neighbors, particularly France, still burning to avenge its humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. Nations reacted in two ways: the formation of alliances and military build-ups.

In the two decades since the Franco-Prussian War, Bismarck had masterfully juggled alliances to keep France isolated and Europe at peace. But Bismarck was fired in 1890 by the short-sighted and aggressive new Kaiser, Wilhelm II, who let Germany's alliance with Russia, which Bismarck had carefully nurtured for 30 years, lapse. France quickly seized the opportunity to ally with Russia. As in 1756 with Frederick the Great, the nightmare of a two front war fought on German soil loomed as an imminent threat.

Desperate for allies, Germany attracted Austria (Russia's vehement enemy) and Italy into what was known as the Triple Alliance. France lured Britain into its alliance, known as the Triple Entente, by playing on British fears of the growing German economy, navy, and colonial empire. With all the major powers aligned in one camp or the other, there was the serious danger that if two members of opposing alliances got into a war or crisis, all the other alliance members and their colonial empires would be dragged in, too. That is exactly what would happen in 1914.

The Industrial Revolution's rapid creation of new technologies was by no means confined to peaceful ends. New and improved weapons such as the machine gun, submarine, and steel clad battleship combined with nationalist pride and fear of other nations to trigger an arms race such as the world had never seen. As soon as one nation started building armaments, its rivals would do the same and try to outdo the first nation. This would only alarm the

first power, which would further increase its armaments, and so on. Each nation acted in what it felt was self-defense, but what other nations saw as aggression.

Therefore, France built up its forces to avenge the defeat of 1870 and to protect itself against German aggression. Germany armed itself to guard against French aggression and a two front war with Russia as well. The Russian army expanded to protect itself from German aggression. And the Austrian military grew to counter Russian moves into the Balkans. To make matters worse, Wilhelm II, despite Bismarck's advice, wanted a colonial empire to match those of Britain and France. This involved building a navy, which prompted Britain to build up its navy to keep ahead of Germany. Therefore, in addition to a military arms race, Germany found itself involved in an equally expensive naval arms race as well. In the end, this expensive arms race only weakened everyone's security and economies, added to mutual fears and suspicions, and led to a general expectation of war that became a self-fulfilling prophecy as nations prepared for that war.

Territorial rivalries

already abounded among the many competing states and peoples in Europe. Fueling those rivalries were strong nationalist feelings further intensified by the ideas of Social Darwinism and militarism (the belief that there was nothing more glorious than to fight and even die for one's nation). Writings of the nineteenth century abounded with militaristic sentiments, or ideas that could be easily misinterpreted to support such sentiments. One very influential philosopher who was not so simplistically aggressive as suggested by the following quotations was Georg Wilhelm Hegel, whose ideas heavily influenced such diverse thinkers as Marx and Lenin on the one hand, and Bismarck and Hitler on the other. Hegel saw war as the great purifier, making for

“...the ethical health of peoples corrupted by a long peace, as the blowing of the winds preserves the sea from the foulness which would be the result of a prolonged calm.”

“...world history is no empire of happiness. The periods of happiness are the empty pages of history because they are the periods of agreement without conflict.”

“World history occupies a higher ground...Moral claims which are irrelevant must not be brought into collision with world historical deeds or their accomplishments. The litany of private virtues—modesty, humility, philanthropy, and forbearance—must not be raised vs. them. So mighty a form [the state] must trample down many an innocent flower--crush to pieces many an object in its path.”

Another German philosopher whose ideas were oversimplified and misinterpreted was Freidrich Nietzsche.

“Ye shall love peace as a means to new war, and the short peace more than the long. You I advise not to work, but to fight. You I advise not to peace but to victory...Ye say it is the good cause which halloweth every war. I say unto you it is the good war which halloweth every cause. War and courage have done more great things than charity.”

Playing off these ideas was General von Bernhardi. His book, *Germany and the Next War* (1911), had such chapter titles as "The Right to Make War", "The Duty to Make War", "Germany's Historic Mission", and "World Power or Downfall" that fairly well summed up its thesis. Another German writer, Heinrich von Treitschke, like Hegel, glorified the state, but more brutishly saw its subjects as basically its slaves and declared war as the highest expression of Man.

“It does not matter what you think as long as you obey”

“...martial glory is the basis of all the political virtues; in the rich treasure of Germany's glories the Prussian military glory is a jewel as precious as the masterpieces of our poets and thinkers.

“...to play blindly with peace...has become the shame of the thought and morality of our age.”

“War is not only a practical necessity, it is a theoretical necessity, an exigency of logic. The concept of the State implies the concept of war, for the essence of the State is power...That war should ever be banished from the world is a hope not only absurd, but profoundly immoral. It would involve the

atrophy of many of the essential and sublime forces of the human soul...A people which become attached to the chimerical hope of perpetual peace finishes irremediably by decaying in its proud isolation..."

Psychologically and militarily, Europe was ready for war.

There were two regional "hot spots" in Europe in 1914. First, there were Alsace and Lorraine, which France desperately wanted back from Germany since the Franco-Prussian War. Second, there was the Balkans, destabilized by numerous Slavic nationalities, with Russia posing as their champion, wanted to break loose from the Hapsburg Empire. As serious as the situation in Alsace and Lorraine was, people saw the Balkans as a disaster waiting to happen, calling it the "powder keg of Europe" which would hurl the whole continent into war. They were right.

The Road to war (June-August, 1914)

On June 28, 1914, Gavrilo Princip, a young member of a Serbian terrorist group known as the Black Hand, murdered the heir apparent of Austria, Franz Ferdinand, and his wife in Sarajevo, Austria. Naturally, this created quite a stir in the papers, but few at that time saw it as important enough to lead to a general war. However, behind the scenes, all the forces of nationalist rivalries, economic competition, military buildups, and interlocking alliances were blowing this murder way out of proportion and driving events wildly out of control and toward war.

Nearly a month passed before events picked up. Although there was no firm evidence that Serbia, a Slavic state bordering Austria, had anything to do with the murder, Austria still blamed it for the murder since the Black Hand was a Serbian ethnic group operating from Serbia and trying to stir up the large Serb population, against Austrian rule. With German encouragement, Austria issued severe demands to the Serbian government on July 23, saying that failure to comply with its terms would lead to war. Compliance with its harsh terms would totally humiliate Serbia. However, Russia supported Serbia and, to show it was serious about the Serbian crisis, started mobilizing its armies.

In the past, this would have been a strong, although acceptable, way of exerting diplomatic pressure, since armies and diplomacy moved slowly, giving each side time to resolve a crisis before it was too late. However, times had changed from the leisurely pace of pre-industrial wars and had drastically reduced the margin of error within which kings and diplomats had to work. Two things specifically made Russia's mobilization unacceptable: Germany's geopolitical position and railroad timetables.

As stated above, Germany's geopolitical nightmare was a two-front war. Russia's alliance with France made that a very real possibility. Since Russia refused to cancel the mobilization order, and France would not reveal if it planned to get involved if war broke out, the Germans could only assume the worst, a two front war. That brings us to the Schlieffen Plan.

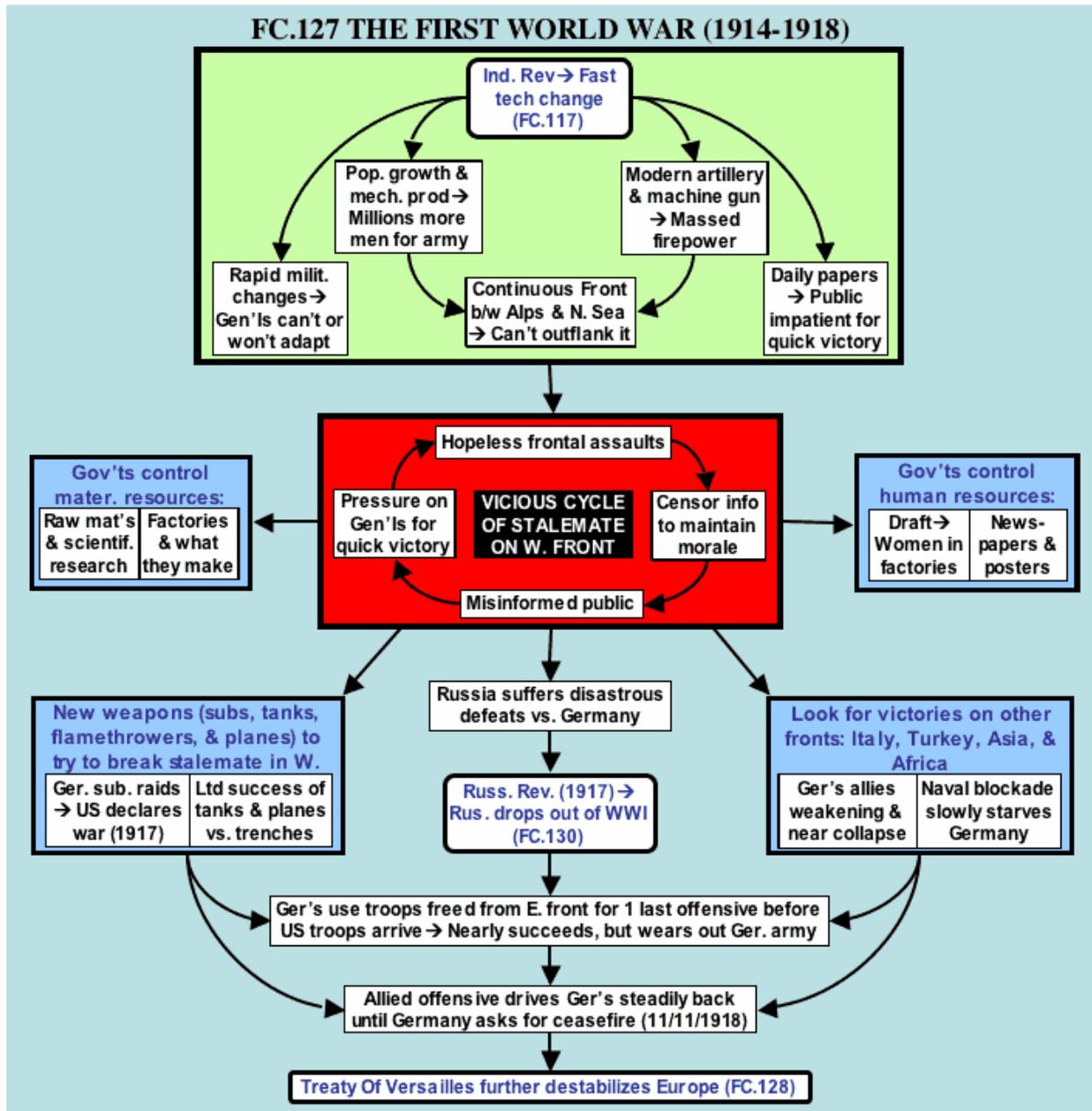
The Schlieffen Plan was Germany's strategy for turning a two-front war into two successive one-front wars. It assumed that pre-industrial Russia's armies would be slow to mobilize, thereby giving Germany enough time to concentrate its forces and deliver a knockout blow against France and then concentrate its efforts on Russia.

The key to, and problem with, this plan was the precise timing of railroad timetables necessary for the rapid mobilization of Germany's armies. With Russia already mobilizing, Germany felt compelled to put the Schlieffen Plan into action before it was too late. However, that required war with France, so Germany, with no apparent provocation, declared war on France as well as Russia. That left the question of what Britain would do, which brings us back to the Schlieffen Plan.

Germany's high command considered the terrain and string of French fortresses along its western border with France too difficult for launching a quick offensive. The best route lay through the open low country of Belgium. However, Belgium refused passage to German armies, and so Germany, driven by the strict timetable of the Schlieffen Plan, violated Belgian neutrality in order to crush France and stay on schedule. Britain, outraged by this act, declared war on Germany.

And so Europe, dragging its worldwide colonial empires in its wake, blundered into World War I. Not that everyone saw it in such negative terms. Crowds all over Europe greeted the news jubilantly. Most men saw their nation as superior to all others and expected a quick victory much like that won by Prussia in 1870. Each nation's army would occupy the enemy's capital by Christmas, which meant that anyone not enlisting now would miss out on all the fun and glory. Little did they suspect the scope of the disaster about to befall them over the next four years.

FC127 Total War (1914-1918)



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“At first there will be increased slaughter--increased slaughter on so terrible a scale as to render it impossible to get troops to push the battle to a decisive issue. They will try to, thinking that they are fighting under the old conditions, & they will learn such a lesson that they will abandon the attempt forever. Then...we shall have...a long

period of continually increasing upon the resources of the combatants...Everybody will be entrenched in the next war.”— *I.S. Bloch (1897)*

“You smug faced crowds with kindling eye Who cheer when soldier lads march by Sneak home and pray you'll never know The hell where youth and laughter go.”— *Siegfried Sassoon*

“We are ready, and the sooner the better for us.”— *German General von Moltke*

The war of movement (August-September, 1914)

When Europe went to war in 1914, many, although not all, people welcomed it as an opportunity for national glory. Soldiers, especially in Western Europe, also marched, or rather rolled, to war much more quickly than ever before. France alone, with its extensive network of railroads, had 7000 trains, some only eight minutes apart, moving troops to the front. Also, rapid population growth and mechanization from the Industrial Revolution, freed many more men than ever before for war.

Europe also marched to war better armed by far than any previous army in history. Germany seemed particularly armed to the teeth, thanks to the Kruppworks at Essen, Germany, a vast complex of 60 factories with its own police force, fire department, and traffic laws. One new weapon would especially change the face of war. That was the machine gun, which could fire 600 bullets per minute and stop any old-style human wave assaults dead in their tracks, literally. It was the machine gun that would put an end to the illusion of a quick victory in a war of movement--but not at first.

In the opening weeks, the Schlieffen Plan went like clockwork. While stopping a French offensive, known as Plan 17, from driving eastward into Germany, the strong German right flank swept the French, British, and Belgian forces back toward Paris, covering up to 20 miles a day, an exhausting pace for infantry loaded with up to 60 pounds of equipment. In fact, that pace plus the German General von Moltke's weakening of the Western offensive in order to meet a Russian offensive unexpectedly materializing in the East may have doomed the Schlieffen Plan to failure. The French and British allies made their stand to save Paris along the Marne River, many troops being rushed to the front in Paris taxicabs. The allies stood fast and the German offensive ground to a halt. Then, somewhat spontaneously and out of simple survival instinct, the soldiers started digging trenches. The Schlieffen Plan and war of movement had failed. The age of trench warfare had begun along what would ever after be remembered as the Western Front.

The new face of war

Making trench warfare especially bad was the fact that the opposing trenches were generally only 500 yards or less apart. This kept soldiers in constant contact with the enemy and constantly immobilized in the mud trenches to avoid the danger above. This contrasted sharply with previous wars where armies would fight a battle, withdraw, and then regroup for several weeks or months before the next battle. This had given soldiers long breaks from the terrors of battle, a psychological safety net that kept them halfway sane. But that safety net no longer existed as soldiers stayed in constant contact with the enemy and became worn out from battle fatigue, producing a catatonic-like state known popularly as the "thousand yard stare".

Life in the trenches, even during relative lulls in the fighting, was a thoroughly wretched experience. It was hot in summer and especially cold in winter. It was also wet and muddy, giving the soldiers little or no chance to bathe, exposing them to infestations of rats, lice, disease, and infection. One of the worst of these infections was trenchfoot, caused by the soldiers' not being able to remove their socks and boots for long periods of time and often resulting in amputation of the infected foot or leg. The following excerpts from the novel, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, by Eric Maria Remarque, himself a veteran of the war, capture the misery of life in the trenches.

There are rumors of an offensive. We go up to the front two days earlier than usual. On the way, we pass a shelled schoolhouse. Stacked up against its longer side is a high double wall of yellow, unpolished brand-new coffins. They still smell of fir, and pine, and the forest. There are at least a hundred.

“That's a good preparation for the offensive,” says Muller astonished.

"They're for us," growls Detering.

"Don't talk rot" says Kat to him angrily.

"You be thankful if you get so much as a coffin," grins Tjaden, "they'll slip you a waterproof sheet for your old Aunt Sally of a carcass."

The others jest too, unpleasant jests, but what else can a man do?---The coffins are really for us. The organization surpasses itself in that kind of thing...

We are in low spirits. After we have been in the dug-outs two hours our own shells begin to fall in the trench. This is the third time in four weeks. If it were simply a mistake in aim no one would say anything, but the truth is that the barrels are worn out. The shots are often so uncertain that they land within our own lines. Tonight two of our men were wounded by them.

The front is a cage in which we must await fearfully whatever may happen. We lie under the network of arching shells and live in a suspense of uncertainty. Over us Chance hovers. If a shot comes, we can duck, that is all; we neither know nor can determine where it will fall.

It is this Chance that makes us indifferent. A few months ago I was sitting in a dugout playing skat; after a while I stood up and went to visit some friends in another dugout. On my return nothing more was to be seen of the first one, it had been blown to pieces by a direct hit. I went back to the second and arrived just in time to lend a hand digging it out. In the interval it had been buried

It is just as much a matter of chance that I am still alive as that I might have been hit. In a bomb-proof dugout I may be smashed to atoms and in the open may survive ten hours' bombardment unscathed. No soldier outlives a thousand chances. But every soldier believes in Chance and trusts his luck.

We must look out for our bread. The rats have become much more numerous lately because the trenches are no longer in good condition. Detering says it is a sure sign of a coming bombardment.

The rats here are particularly repulsive, they are so fat-- the kind we call corpse rats. They have shocking, evil, naked faces, and it is nauseating to see their long, nude tails.

They seem to be mighty hungry. Almost every man has had his bread gnawed. Kropp wrapped his in his waterproof sheet and put it under his head, but he cannot sleep because they run over his face to get at it. Detering meant to outwit them: he fastened a thin wire to the roof and suspended his bread from it. During the night when he switched on his pocket-torch he saw the wire swinging to and fro. On the bread was riding a fat rat.

At last we put a stop to it. We cannot afford to throw the bread away, because already we have practically nothing left to eat in the morning, so we carefully cut off the bits of bread that the animals have gnawed.

The slices we cut off are heaped together in the middle of the floor. Each man takes out his spade and lies down prepared to strike. Detering, Kropp, and Kat hold their pocket-lamps ready.

After a few minutes we hear the first shuffling and tugging. It grows, now it is the sound of many little feet. Then the torches switch on and every man strikes at the heap, which scatters with a rush. The result is good. We toss the bits of rat over the parapet and again lie in wait.

Several times we repeat the process. At last the beasts get wise to it, or perhaps they have scented the blood. They return no more. Nevertheless, before the morning the remainder of the bread on the floor has been carried off.

In the adjoining sector they attacked two large cats and a dog, bit them to death and devoured them.

Next day there is an issue of Edamer cheese. Each man gets almost a quarter of a cheese. In one way that is all to the good, For Edamer is tasty--but in another way it is vile, because the fat red balls have long been a sign of a bad time coming. Our forebodings increase as rum is served out. We drink it of course; but are not greatly comforted.

For days we loaf about and make war on the rats. Ammunition and hand-grenades become more plentiful. We even overhaul the bayonets--that is to say, the ones that have a saw on the blunt edge. If the fellows over there catch a man with one of those he's killed at sight. In the next sector some of our men were found whose noses were cut off and the eyes poked out with their own saw-bayonets. Their mouths and noses were stuffed with sawdust so that they suffocated. Some of the recruits have bayonets of this kind; we take them away and give them the ordinary kind.

But the bayonet has practically lost its importance. It is usually the fashion now to charge with bombs and spades only. The sharpened spade is more handy and many-sided weapon; not only can it be used for jabbing a man under the chin, but is much better for striking with because of its greater weight; and if one hits between the neck and shoulder it easily cleaves as far down as the chest. The bayonet frequently jams on the thrust and then a man has to kick hard on the other fellow's belly to pull it out again; and in the interval he may easily get one himself. And what's more, the blade often gets broken off.

Total War

Four factors, all arising from the Industrial Revolution, had totally changed the face of war. First of all, the Industrial Revolution provided enough men (thanks to population growth and the mechanization of many jobs) and firepower (especially the machine gun) to dig and fill opposing trench systems stretching from the Alps to the North Sea, a system several hundred miles in length. The result was the *continuous front* which neither side could outflank since it was hemmed in by mountains and sea. Unfortunately, the machine gun and faster loading rifle which made the continuous front possible also made the technology of defense superior to that of offense. There was no way that unshielded infantry could get across that murderous area of flying metal known as No Man's Land. That is not to say that people did not try. They did, and with disastrous results.

Third, most generals either did not understand the nature of this new type of warfare or felt they could not afford to accept it. After all, most of these generals, many of whom were quite old, had not been able or willing to keep up on the rapidly changing technological changes transforming warfare in recent years. It is often said that generals are always fighting the last war, and nowhere did this better apply than to the generals of World War I. Before we become too critical, however, it should be pointed out that at no time in history had warfare been so thoroughly revolutionized in so short a time. The machine gun and continuous front had created a whole new ball game, but no one had a rule book by which to play. And so for four years, the generals just fumbled around the best they could while soldiers continued to die.

The fourth factor, also resulting from the Industrial Revolution and complicating matters further, was the media, in particular the newspapers. Never before had the public back home been so well informed about the progress, or lack of it, in a war. The generals had promised a quick victory, and the public and press had a close eye on how well they were doing. In the more democratic countries of France and Britain the generals found themselves under severe pressure by the public and politicians to win the war decisively and quickly. This was especially true of France, since the German lines contained northern France along with the bulk of its industries, and the French public was clamoring to get it back.

All of these factors combined to create a tragic pattern of suicidal frontal assaults that would prolong the stalemate. The casualties would be so horrible that governments modified or censored news coming from the front. This

created a misinformed public and media that, thinking victory was within their grasp, would put more pressure on the generals for a quick victory. As a result, there would be more disastrous offensives more censorship to misinform the public, and so on.

Such offensives were usually conceived by generals behind the lines without any clear idea of what the front was really like. Preceding the attack for several days would be a massive bombardment that did a lot less damage than hoped for and which also told the enemy where the attack was coming. As soon as the shelling stopped, the troops went "over the top" into No Man's Land where the obstacles of barbed wire (left undestroyed by the bombardment) and craters (actually created by the bombardment) held them up so that the enemy machine guns (also unharmed since they had been taken to the dugouts below during the shelling) could cut them down. The men who suffered through this living hell often give us its most graphic and poignant descriptions.

"We listen for an eternity to the iron sledgehammers beating on our trench. Percussion and time fuses, 105's, 150's, 210's—all the calibers. Amid this tempest of ruin we instantly recognize the shell that is coming to bury us. As soon as we pick out its dismal howl we look at each other in agony. All curled and shriveled up we crouch under the very weight of its breath. Our helmets clang together, we stagger about like drunks. The beams tremble, a cloud of choking smoke fills the dugout, the candles go out."
— *Verdun veteran, 1916*

"the ruddy clouds of brick-dust hang over the shelled villages by day and at night the eastern horizon roars and bubbles with light. And everywhere in these desolate places I see the faces and figures of enslaved men, the marching columns pearl-hued with chalky dust on the sweat of their heavy drab clothes; the files of carrying parties laden and staggering in the flickering moonlight of gunfire; the "waves" of assaulting troops lying silent and pale on the tapelines of the jumping-off places

"I crouch with them while the steel glacier rushing by just overhead scrapes away every syllable, every fragment of a message bawled in my ear...I go forward with them...up and down across ground like a huge ruined honeycomb, and my wave melts away, and the second wave comes up, and also melts away, and then the third wave merges into the remnants of the others, and we begin to run forward to catch up with the barrage, gasping and sweating, in bunches, anyhow, every bit of the months of drill and rehearsal forgotten.

"We come to the wire that is uncut, and beyond we see gray coal-scuttle helmets bobbing about...and the loud crackling of machine-guns changes as to a screeching of steam being blown off by a hundred engines, and soon no one is left standing. An hour later our guns are "back on the first objective," and the brigade, with all its hopes and beliefs, has found its grave on those northern slopes of the Somme battlefield." —*Henry Williamson, age 19*

"Verdun transformed men's souls. Whoever floundered through this morass full of the shrieking and dying...had passed the last frontier of life, and henceforth bore deep within him the leaden memory of a place that lies between life and death." —*Verdun veteran*

The first day's butchery in an offensive, such as the 60,000 British who fell on the first day of the Battle of the Somme in 1916, should have been enough to convince the generals to call off the attack. But that would be admitting failure for all their months of plans and preparations. Therefore, the offensives continued, in some cases for months, with the casualties piling up into the hundreds of thousands. Each successive battle followed the same pattern and would continue that way until someone figured out how to solve the problems that the machine gun and continuous front had created. Until that day, it remained stalemate on the Western Front.

New fronts and new weapons

The continuing cycle of stalemate on the Western Front forced the warring powers to realize modern war is total war, demanding activities in all possible directions to sustain their own efforts and wear down those of the enemy. This led to efforts in five areas: control of material resources at home, control of human resources (including the media and morale), continued attempts to break through on the Eastern Front, the search for victory by opening new

fronts, thus making it truly a world war, and the search for victory through the development and use of new weapons.

Material and human resources on the home front

World War I devoured enormous amounts of material resources, forcing governments to closely control production and distribution of those resources. Blockaded Germany, in particular, had to ration food strictly. It also controlled mineral resources and even scientific research, which developed synthetic nutrients and ways to derive nitrates from the atmosphere for explosives. France also had to exert strong central control over production, since its industrial north was largely behind German lines, forcing it to rebuild much of its industry further south by 1918.

Human resources had to be controlled to ensure enough men for the front and a labor force for the strategic industries at home. With so many men gone to war, women entered the work place in unprecedented numbers, taking over many occupations previously reserved solely for men before the war, such as secretaries. After the war, when many husbands and fiancées did not return, many women stayed in the workplace, giving them more economic power and eventually the vote. To maintain morale, governments assumed more control of the media, limiting or distorting the information available to the press and public. Governments also actively tried to harness popular support for the war with brightly colored and illustrated posters that glorified the war effort and portrayed the enemy as less than human.

As the homefront became more of an integral part of the total war effort, governments saw enemy factories and civilians as legitimate war targets. In 1915, a German Zeppelin launched a bombing raid on London, killing several people. Although the damage from this raid was small by later standards, it pointed the way for much worse to come for civilians in wartime.

The Eastern Front

Allied hopes for a quick Russian victory in the East were quickly dashed in August 1914 when the Germans annihilated invading Russian forces at Tannenburg. (This was the first and only time allied forces set foot on German soil during the war.) Germany also bolstered Austria against the Russians in the south, causing a much looser version of the Western Front to evolve in the East, since the armies (except Germany's) were less mechanized and thus less successful in stopping a war of movement. The Russians were particularly poorly armed (many of them even without rifles), and their offensives against the German positions met with especially disastrous results. By 1917, Russia, bled white by the war, stood on the verge of revolution.

New Fronts

Each side also tried to divert and drain the enemy's strength by opening up new fronts. Turkey was the first new power to enter the war, in this case, on Germany's side. This threatened to cut off British and French supplies to Russia by way of the Black Sea and prompted a British offensive known as the Gallipoli Campaign. This was one of the worst run operations of the war. At least twice, the British generals had victory within their grasp, but chose to nap or have teatime rather than press their advantage, giving the Turks time to bolster their line. For several months, the allies were pinned down to the beaches until disease and casualties forced them to withdraw.

After this, the main British strategy against the Turks was to stir up and support rebellions. In that regard, one of the most celebrated figures of the war was T.E. Lawrence, known as Lawrence of Arabia, a charismatic figure who succeeded in organizing the Arabs and destabilizing the already decrepit Ottoman Empire. The British issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917, which promised a Palestinian homeland for the Jews in return for their help. This promise, in conjunction with conflicting promises to the Arabs, would be (and still is) the source of intense conflict in the Middle East.

Italy, despite being part of the Triple Alliance, joined France and Britain in order to take disputed lands from Austria. However, Austria managed to defeat Italy, making it more of a burden to Britain and France, who had to keep it supplied with guns, money, and fuel just to keep it in the war. Meanwhile, Bulgaria joined Germany and

Austria in order to take Macedonia from Serbia, which it accomplished quickly. Serbia's British and French allies responded by landing 500,000 men at Salonika, Greece, where they did nothing until 1918, earning it the title of Germany's "biggest internment camp."

Europe's African and Asian colonies were also dragged into the war, making it a truly global war. The British were able to seize Germany's African colonies except for German East Africa. In Asia, the Allies persuaded Japan to attack German holdings and spheres of influence in China. This gave Japan a foothold in China that it would expand in the 1930's, laying the foundations for World War II in Asia. Overall, despite mixed results, Germany's allies gradually weakened as the war dragged on.

There was also the naval front. In the years preceding the war, Germany had built a fleet second only to Britain's. In 1915, the two navies clashed at Jutland. It was an indecisive battle, with Germany getting a slight advantage. But the Kaiser, not wishing to damage his nice new navy, called it into port where the British kept it blockaded for the rest of the war. The blockade was soon extended to all German ports and slowly starved Germany to death.

New Weapons

Meanwhile, each side looked desperately for new weapons to solve the problem of the continuous front. Poison gas and flame-throwers, pioneered by Germany, became all too common and horrible features in trench warfare, but failed to achieve a breakthrough. After the war, the Geneva Convention outlawed both weapons as inhumane. However, two other weapons had a big future in warfare. One was the tank, which gained the allies at least limited success in breaking through enemy trenches. Despite their slowness (3 mph) and unreliability (only half making it to the starting line in their first major battle), tanks shielded allied troops, helping them cross No Man's Land with relatively few casualties.

The airplane, first used for observations of enemy lines, was adapted to combat use, being armed with a machine gun to shoot down other planes. At first, aerial warfare consisted mainly of individual combats (dogfights) between pilots. It was very limited, polite (at least by warfare's standards), and the most glorified aspect of World War I, a sort of chivalry in the skies. Even that changed by war's end, with the allies sending up hundreds of planes to sweep the skies and strafe and bomb the German lines, a strategy that would be developed with much more deadly effect for the next war.

The submarine was Germany's great equalizer in the naval war. While Britain ruled the waves after Jutland, German U-boats (submarines) could still lurk beneath the waves and prey upon allied shipping in retaliation for the blockade on Germany. However, some of the ships Germany sank were from the United States, technically a neutral power but actively trading much needed food and other supplies to France and Britain. While Germany felt justified in sinking any ships supplying its enemies, the United States saw these attacks on its ships as barbaric and unprovoked acts of aggression.

Germany eased up on its attacks for a while to keep America neutral. But in 1917, as the war effort got more desperate, U-boat raids resumed. Then the British intercepted and publicized the Zimmerman Telegram, in which Germany offered Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California to Mexico if it would attack the United States and divert its attention from the war in Europe. American public opinion was outraged, and the United States declared war on Germany in March 1917. That same month another ally, Russia, after three years of defeats and shortages, became engulfed in Revolution.

The end of the "war to end all wars" (1917-18)

Alexander Kerensky's moderate government that replaced the Czar, needing to look legitimate to the outside world, kept Russia in the war, which only weakened it further and led to its overthrow by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in November, 1917. The following March, Lenin signed the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, taking Russia out of the war while giving up Poland, Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, and Finland. This also freed one million German troops for the Western Front. The question was: Could the addition of the United States compensate for the loss of Russia?

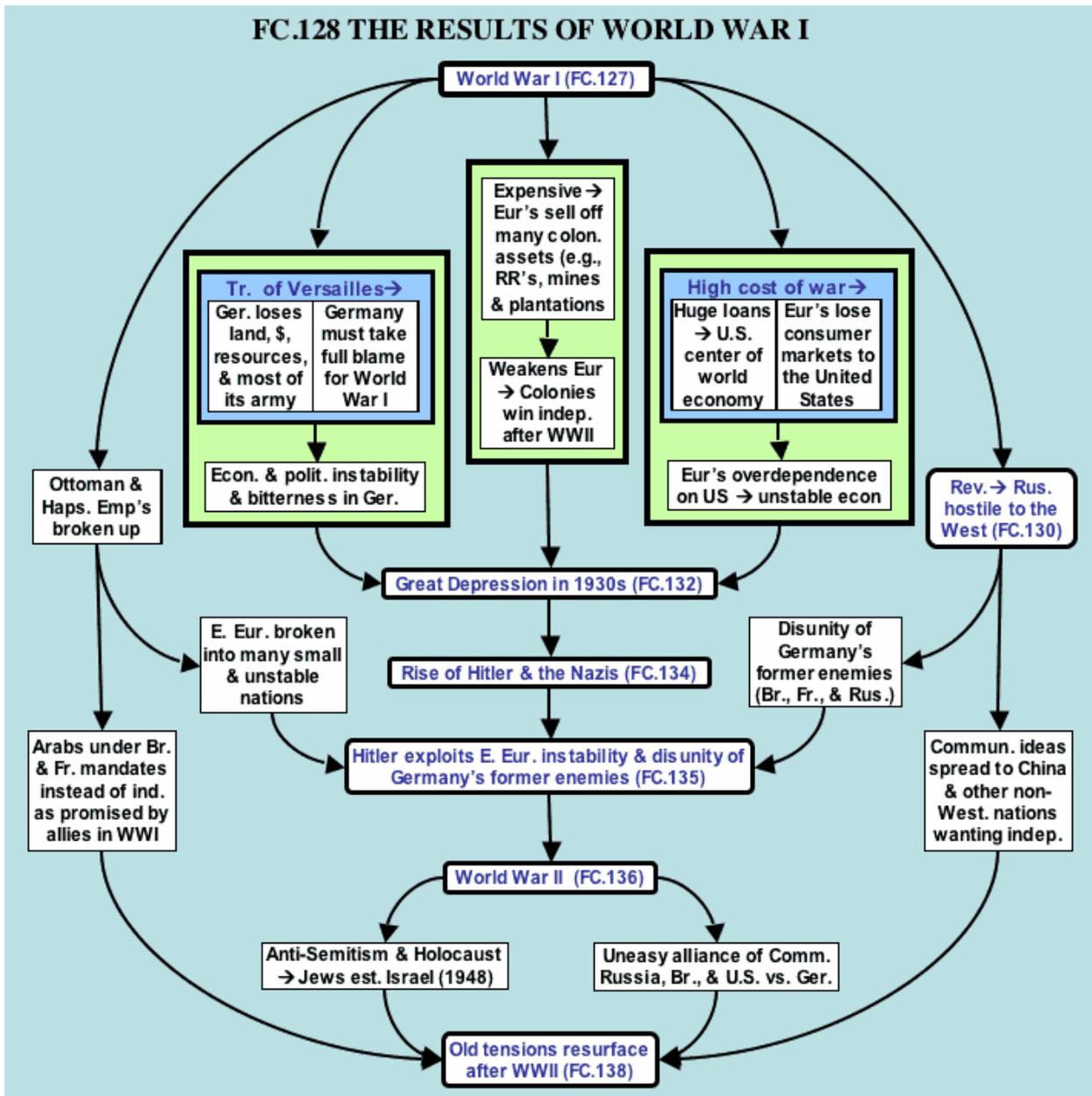
With virtually no standing army when it declared war in 1917, the United States needed a year to mobilize its industrial and military might. Therefore, in 1918, the war became a race to see who could first arrive on the Western Front in force: the newly mobilizing Americans or the Germans freed from the Eastern Front.

At first, the Germans won the race and launched an offensive, attacking with smaller tactical units to punch holes in the enemy lines and drive them back bit by bit. Also, the attacks were not preceded by artillery bombardments that could warn the enemy where the attack was coming. This strategy succeeded in driving the allies back toward Paris. But, as in 1914, the allies, now bolstered by newly arrived American units, stopped the Germans at the Second Battle of the Marne.

Now the allies went on the offensive. Using the very tactics the Germans had just used, the growing numbers of fresh American troops at their disposal and large numbers of tanks to shield their soldiers crossing No Man's Land, they sent the Germans reeling back step by step toward Germany. At the same time, the British blockade was gradually starving the German homeland to the limits of its endurance.

At this point, all the pressures building elsewhere caved in on Germany, as its allies collapsed one by one: first Bulgaria, then Turkey, and finally Austria. Exposed to attack from the south and east, Germany finally asked for an armistice (ceasefire). On the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918, after one final flurry of artillery fire, the guns fell silent. Here and there, opposing soldiers met in No Man's Land to pay their respects to men who, like themselves, just happened to be wearing different uniforms, and then turned toward home. The First World War was over. However, its effects would be long-lasting and varied, including the Second World War a mere twenty-one years later.

FC128The Results of World War I



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Introduction

At 11:00 A.M., on November 11, 1918, World War I ended. The price it had exacted in lives and material was staggering: 37.5 million casualties, 8.5 million deaths, and \$300 billion (not adjusted for modern inflation) in damages. People referred to a "lost generation" that never survived to come of age and take their turn in leading their nations. And indeed, the leaders of the next war, World War II, were largely from the same generation that had blundered into World War I.

When the guns fell silent, there were jubilant celebrations by huge crowds expecting life to return to the normal conditions that had existed before the war. However, World War I was like a severe earthquake with devastating aftershocks, leaving the edifice of European economic and political power badly cracked and in no shape for another such jolt that might bring it tumbling down. The results of World War I were varied, far reaching, and interlocking. However, they followed five main lines of development: one of them being concerned with the effects on Europe's

colonies, two concerning Western Europe (economic effects and the Treaty of Versailles), and two concerned with Eastern Europe (the Russian Revolution and the collapse of the Hapsburg and Ottoman Empires).

Europe's colonies

World War I had been extremely expensive for the European powers. As a result, they sold many of their colonial mines and plantations for the cash needed to fight the war. This weakened Europe's colonial empires and set the stage for eventual liberation after the next big jolt to Europe's power: World War II.

Western Europe

was affected in two ways: the peace settlement and the economic cost of the war. First, there was the question of what sort of peace to impose on Germany. Among the leaders at the peace conference held at Versailles was President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, whose presence symbolized America's growing role as a major power in world politics. Wilson, whose country had suffered little from the war, wanted leniency for Germany along with national self-determination for all nations and a League of Nations to safeguard the international peace. However, many leaders had to justify the senseless carnage of the past four years to voters back home who wanted revenge for their sufferings of the past four years. This was especially true for France, on whose soil the war had been fought. Therefore, amid much bickering that settled nothing, the prevailing attitude that emerged was that someone must be made the scapegoat and pay for the war. And that someone was Germany.

The resulting Treaty of Versailles (1919) punished Germany materially and politically. Germany lost 13.1% of its pre-war territory, including Alsace, Lorraine, and the so-called Polish Corridor, a strip of land separating East Prussia from the rest of Germany. Its army was limited to 100,000 men and its navy to twelve ships. (The Germans scuttled their fleet rather than let it fall into British hands.) Germany could have no submarines, air force, heavy artillery, tanks, or even a professional general staff. It lost most of its merchant marine, one-quarter of its fishing fleet and a good part of its railroad rolling stock. Each year it had to build 200,000 tons of shipping for the victorious allies and also make deliveries of other commodities such as coal and telephone poles. The final indemnity forced from Germany amounted to \$32 billion (not adjusted for inflation). Germany also had to agree to the War Guilt Clause, according to which it accepted full responsibility for the war.

The German people were furious but, for the time being, helpless to do anything but sign the treaty. However, the Treaty of Versailles remained fixed in German minds as an injustice that must be avenged, especially since it destabilized their economy and helped lead to the Great Depression in the 1930's. This in turn opened the way for the rise of Hitler and the Nazis who started World War II.

Economically, World War I had been horribly expensive, both in its immediate cost to fight and its long-range effects on Europe's industries. In addition to selling colonial holdings, the allies had resorted to borrowing heavily, especially from the United States. By the war's end, European countries owed the United States \$7 billion. By 1922, it would be \$11.6 billion. Thanks largely to World War I, the center of world finance was shifting from London to New York City. However, the economic effects of the war went far beyond borrowing money.

For four years, European countries had been producing guns and ammunition instead of consumer goods. This had allowed other countries, the United States in particular, to take over many consumer markets from the Europeans who were preoccupied with the war. Not surprisingly, the Americans did not willingly give up these markets to the Europeans after the war. Because of this and the huge war debts, the United States became the premier economic power of the world, creating a heavy dependency on the American economy. This, combined with German instability, made the world economy vulnerable to a worldwide depression when the American economy crashed in the 1930's. And, as discussed above, that would help lead to the rise of the Nazis and World War II.

Eastern Europe

World War I also catalyzed the Russian Revolution along with the collapse of Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire in South-eastern Europe. In each case, these events would destabilize their respective regions and lead to future conflicts.

The break-ups of the Ottoman and Hapsburg Empires created problems in two ways. In accordance with the principle of national self-determination, the Hapsburg Empire was broken up into four new democratic nation states: Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, while Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Finland were formed from parts of the old Czarist empire. In addition there were still the various Balkan states whose squabbles had triggered World War I in the first place. While democratic in form, these new nations generally had little economic strength or history of democracy (both requiring a healthy middle class) on which to base strong democracies. Therefore, Eastern Europe was a patchwork of unstable states, providing Hitler ample opportunity for aggression that would start the Second World War. This instability along with World War I also provided fertile ground for growing anti-Semitic feelings that caused growing numbers of Jews to move to Palestine.

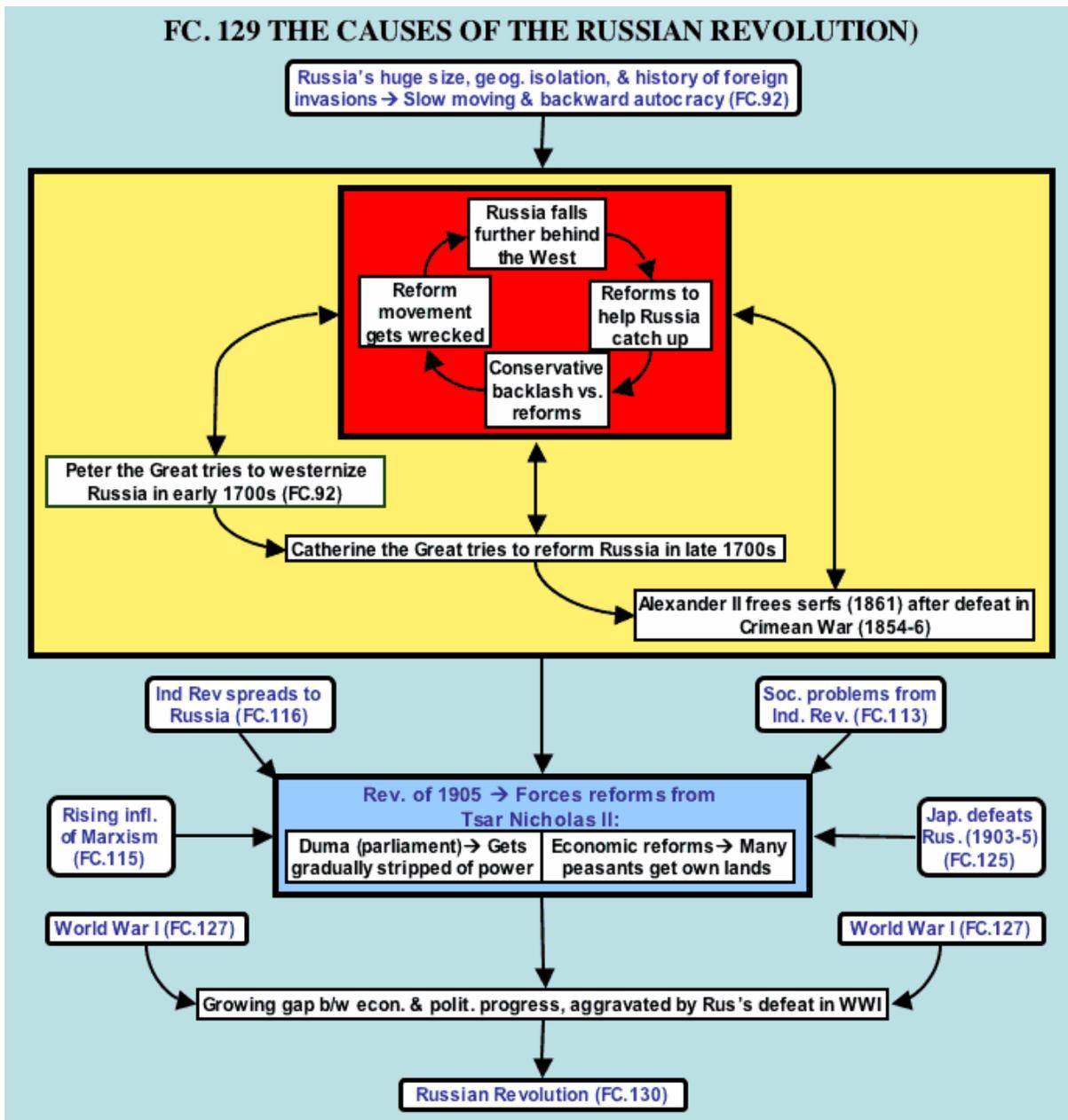
The break-up of the Ottoman Empire also profoundly affected the present day situation in the Middle East. The Arabs, instead of gaining their freedom for helping the allies against the Turks, as they were led to believe would happen, passed under French and British control as mandates to be prepared for independence in the future. This created a good deal of bitterness, made worse by the Balfour Declaration (1917) which had promised the Jews a homeland in Palestine for helping the allied cause. The influx of Jewish settlers into Palestine after Nazi persecution during World War II only made that bitterness worse in the Cold War period following the defeat of Germany.

The Russian Revolution which replaced a corrupt Czarist Russia with a strong communist state, the Soviet Union, created problems in two ways. First, the hostility it generated between itself and the capitalist democracies of the West undermined any joint efforts to contain future German aggression. With the old Triple Entente threatening Germany from east and west broken, Hitler could feel free to expand eastward in the 1930's, thus providing another catalyst for the Second World War.

World War II would eventually cause a reunion of the old alliance of Russia and the West to crush the Nazis. However, it was an uneasy alliance that would come apart in the Cold War after 1945. The Russian Revolution would also lead to the spread of communism to China and other non-industrialized nations, contributing still further to the tensions of the Cold War.

As the 1920's progressed, the world seemed to be settling down to the normalcy longed for so much since 1914. Russia withdrew into itself to complete its revolution. Germany, propped up by American loans, seemed to have stabilized. And Europe overall seemed to have recovered its prosperity and maintained control of its colonies. However, World War I unleashed unseen forces that would surface with cataclysmic effect to trigger a worldwide depression and World War II.

FC129Background to the Russian Revolution



[FC129](#) in the [Hyperflow of History](#);
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Causes and background

One of the most startling and far-reaching results of the First World War was the Russian Revolution. Not only did it affect the largest nation on earth, it also had a huge impact on the rest of the world, helping lead to both World War II and the Cold War following it. While World War I may have triggered this Revolution, its roots go much further back into its history and geography in two ways.

First of all, Russia's flat and open terrain made it vulnerable to invasions that forced the Russian Czars to develop a strong absolutist state in self-defense. Second, Russia's huge size, northerly location, and isolation from Europe kept Russia cut off from the mainstream of political, economic and technological developments taking place in Western Europe. Therefore, Russia's geography and history made it a slow moving, autocratic, and backward giant that was constantly falling behind the more advanced societies in the West.

This triggered a vicious cycle of reforms to catch up with the West, a conservative backlash against the reforms, Russia falling further behind the West, more reforms, and so on. Unfortunately, not all Russians felt the West was worth copying. This led to a conservative backlash that would wreck the reforms, causing Russia to fall further behind, and so on. Peter the Great in the early 1700's, Catherine the Great in the later 1700's, Alexander I in the early 1800's, and Alexander II in the mid 1800's' all tried, or at least espoused, the cause of reform which led to conservative backlashes and the cycle repeating. That struggle is still going on in Russia today.

By the 1890s Russians could no longer ignore the forces of industrialization transforming the rest of Europe and leaving it further and further behind. Therefore, reformers targeted Russia's repressive government that used secret police to track down socialist dissidents, its backward social structure that kept the peasants in virtual, if not legal, serfdom, and its equally backward economy just starting to industrialize. Two other factors also pushed Russia toward change. One was the rising popularity of socialism. A more immediate catalyst for change was Russia's humiliating defeat in a war with Japan (1903-5) that dramatized Russia's backwardness.

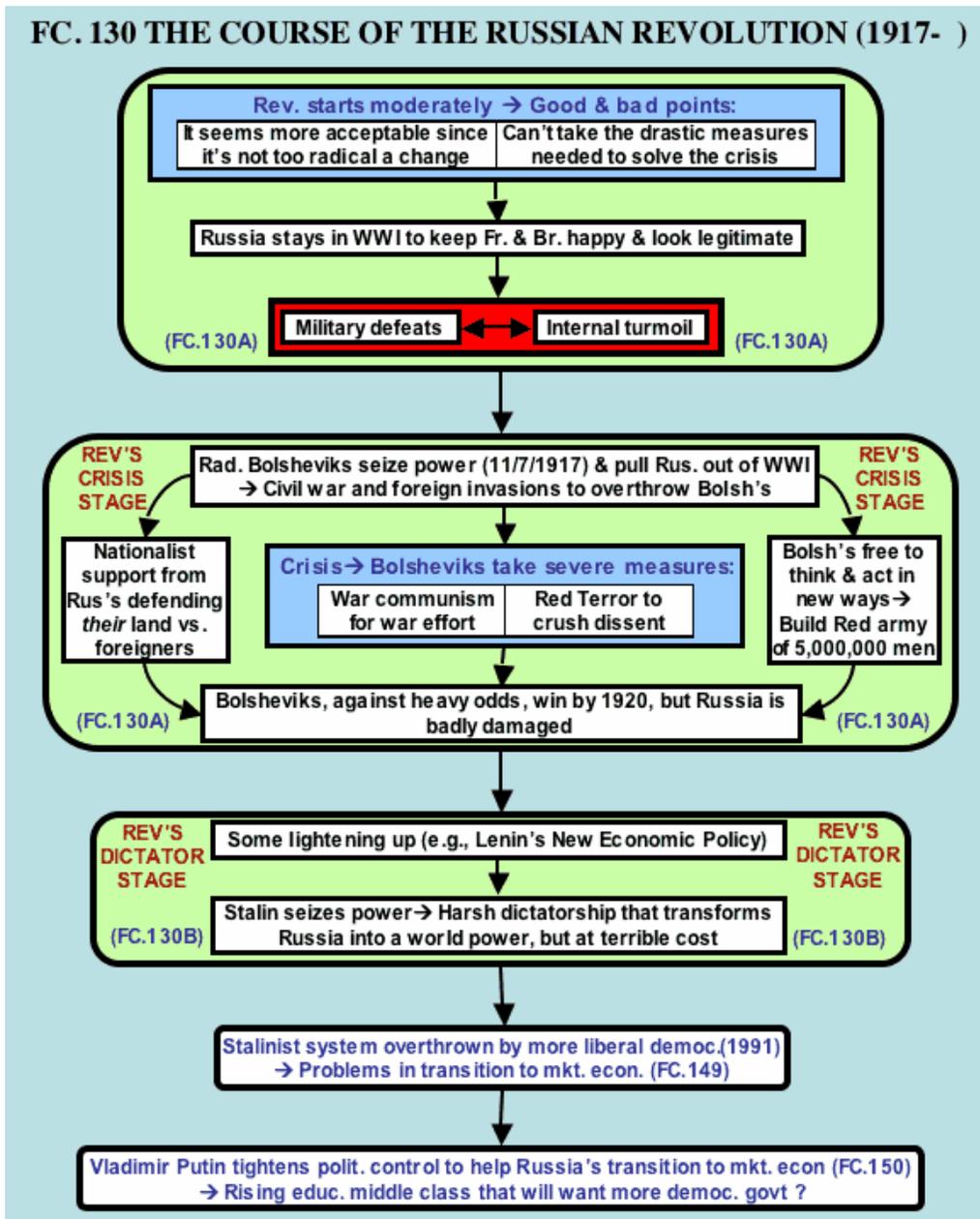
All this set off the Revolution of 1905, which took Czar Nicholas II by surprise and forced him to agree to both political and economic reforms. The main political reform was the establishment of a *Duma* (parliament), which attempted to turn the Czar's absolute government into a constitutional monarchy. However, once the revolution settled down, the czar did all he could to crush and eliminate the Duma. Nevertheless, the Duma, however limited in power, persisted in being a voice for reform even as political repression reasserted itself.

At the same time, substantial economic reforms were taking place. The Czar's chief minister, Peter Stolypin, pushed through reforms that distributed land to some two million peasants. This gave peasants an incentive to produce more, and, by World War I, 75% of Russia's crops were going to market, with 40% of those crops going abroad. This, combined with Russia's political repression, created a gap between its economic progress and political backwardness. All that was needed was a catalyst to trigger a full-scale revolution. That catalyst was World War I.

Many Russians, like other Europeans, greeted war jubilantly in 1914, sure that they would win a quick and glorious victory. In fact, Russia was poorly prepared for war. Its troops, although brave, were barely trained, poorly equipped (many not even having rifles), and incompetently led. Their war minister boasted of not having read a new book on military tactics in twenty-five years. As a result, Russian armies met with one disaster after another. Aggravating the situation was the Czar, Nicholas II, a weak willed man who was controlled by his wife, the Tsarina. She herself was German born and of suspect loyalty as far as many Russians were concerned. She was also under the spell of Rasputin, a drunken, semi-literate Siberian peasant posing as a monk. He did have the apparent ability to control the bleeding of the crown prince, who was a hemophiliac, along with an apparent hypnotic power over women. While scandal reigned at court (at least until Rasputin was murdered), Nicholas took personal command of the war effort, with catastrophic results.

FC130 The General Course of the Russian Revolution

FC. 130 THE COURSE OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION (1917-)



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Introduction

As indicated in the discussion of the French Revolution, there is a logical and long-range pattern that revolutions follow. Therefore, understanding the pattern of past revolutions can help us anticipate events in current revolutions, more specifically the final stages of the process now taking place in Russia and China. One word of caution, however: these are likely trends, not absolute certainties. Outside events (e.g., a major war) and other historical forces unique to Russia and China respectively, could divert events in a very different direction from what is indicated here. Still, this pattern generally holds up and should serve as a guide in how we deal with nations still undergoing this process. That being said, following is a comparison of the French Revolution, which after 82 years finally reached a stable democratic form of government by 1871, and the Russian Revolution, which after 92 years is presumably in its final stage of evolution toward democracy.

Forces leading to revolution

Both countries shared three elements that helped lead to war:

- 1) Both regimes were burdened by heavy debts incurred from wars. In France's case, this was the debt incurred by its support of the American Revolution. For Russia, this was the even higher cost in lives and money suffered during the first three years of World War I.
- 2) In each country, there was a growing gap between economic progress and social and political stagnation. For the French this was the continued prominence and privileges of the noble class as opposed to the more liberal ideas and progressive economic practices of the middle class. For Russia, this largely came from the peasantry, whose economic progress from Peter Stolypin's agrarian reforms contrasted with the repressive rights and privileges of the nobles. In each case new political ideas aggravated these frustrations. In France these were the ideas of Enlightenment philosophes such as Rousseau and Voltaire. In Russia it was Marxism.
- 3) Both countries had weak leaders who let events get quickly out of control. In France and Russia respectively, these were Louis XVI and Nicholas II.

The early stages of revolution

Both revolutions started out with moderate regimes that kept one or more of the old regimes' policies to maintain the look of continuity and legitimacy. In France, that government was the National Assembly, which kept the king as a figurehead and honored the royal debt. In Russia, it was the Duma, which kept Russia in World War I. In both cases these policies just worsened the situation, leading to more unrest. Further aggravating both situations was the fact that replacing an old system with a completely different one (whether in politics, business, or sports) typically sees things deteriorate further before they improve. Unfortunately, the high expectations for rapid improvement did not give the new regimes the time they needed to turn things around.

The crisis stage of revolution

Faced with growing unrest at home and military defeats abroad (the French having rashly declared war on Austria and Prussia in 1792), the moderate governments in France and Russia saw the rise of more radical factions supported by the urban working classes, which alarmed foreign powers and spurred them to intervene before the respective revolutions got out of control. Such intervention (by the First Coalition in France's case and Russia's erstwhile allies in World War I) in the short run just destabilized France and Russia further, which led to more military defeats, more support for the radicals, and so on.

In each case, this was the crisis stage of the revolution, where extreme radicals seized power and imposed harsh dictatorial rule to deal with the current emergency. In France it was the Jacobins, supported by the Sans Culottes, who imposed emergency economic measures, a universal draft, and the reign of terror. Similarly, Russia saw the Bolsheviks, supported by the working class soviets who imposed war communism to deal with the economic crisis and the Red Terror, which they consciously copied from the French Revolution's Reign of Terror.

Conservative retrenchment and the dictator stage

In both revolutions, final victory and exhaustion from the crisis stage led to a brief conservative retrenchment to help their respective peoples recover. In France this was the period of the somewhat loose and corrupt Directory (1785-99). In Russia, this was Lenin's New Economic Policy that allowed a degree of free enterprise to return so the economy could recover.

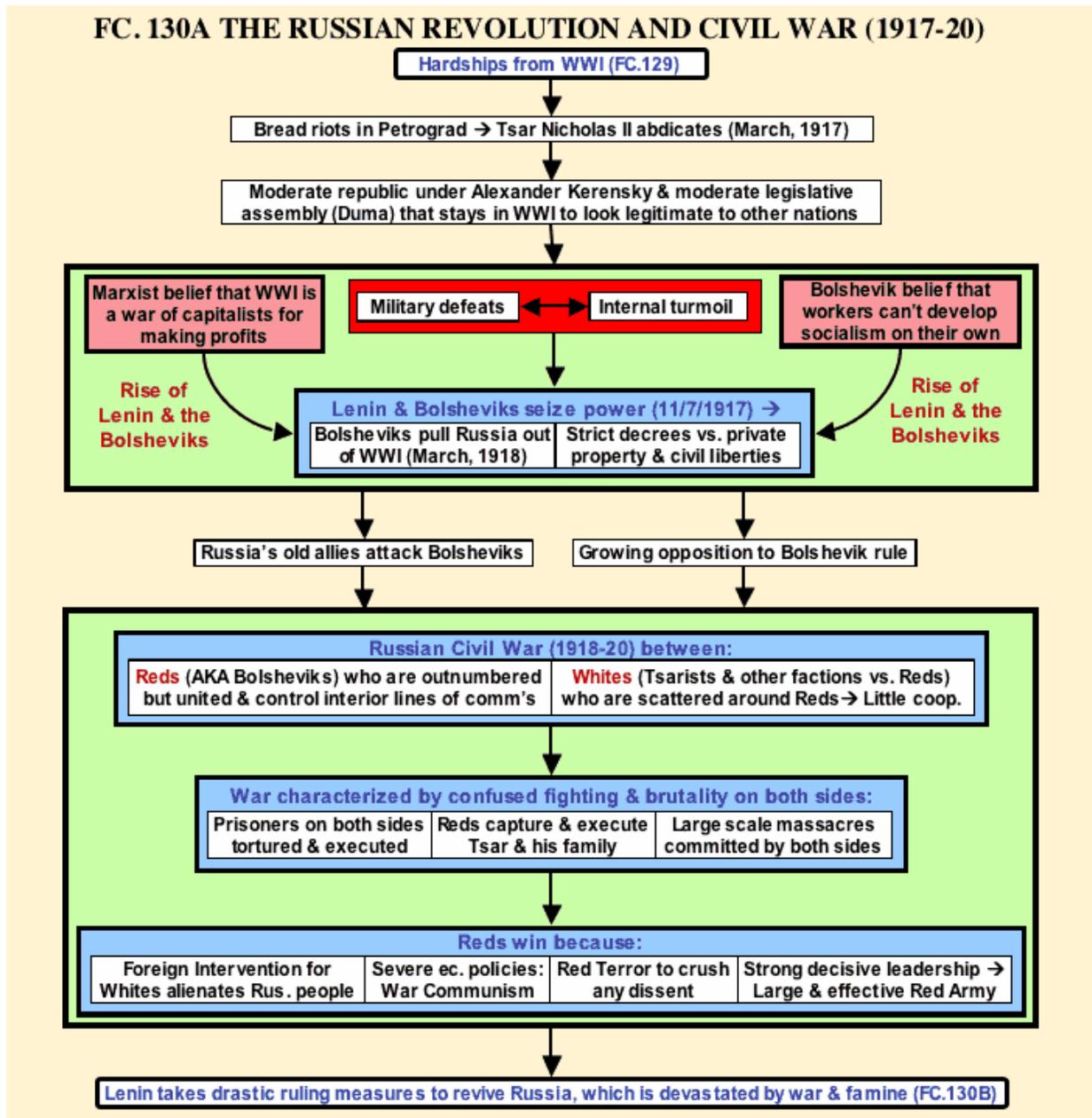
However, the overthrow of the Directory by Napoleon Bonaparte and Stalin's rise to power after Lenin's death in 1924 led to ruthless dictators who masked their repressive regimes with the revolutionary ideals they supposedly represented. Although Napoleon was finally defeated and Stalin won World War II and kept power till his death in 1953, both dictators effectively ruined their respective countries with their harsh policies.

Gradual evolution toward stable economy & democracy

Therefore, Russia has taken longer in its evolution toward democracy than France did, because it took another thirty-five years for Russia to finally collapse beneath the weight of the Stalinist system. Despite this, Russia has continued to follow a path similar to France's. After Napoleon France would undergo two more revolutions (in 1830 and 1848) and abortive attempts at democracy that would lead to a second dictatorship, this time under Bonaparte's nephew, Napoleon III. Unlike his uncle, Napoleon III was much less aggressive in his foreign policy, focusing on France's economic and industrial development. As a result, when Napoleon III fell from power in 1870 during the Franco-Prussian War, he left behind a strong economy and politically active and savvy middle class that ensured the stability of France's Third Republic.

Likewise, Russia would see the overthrow of communism in 1991 and the establishment of a republic. However, as with France in 1830 and 1848, Russia's economy was a shambles and it had virtually no middle class with which to sustain a viable democracy. Since then, Vladimir Putin has taken charge and, much like Napoleon III, has ruled with a firm hand while promoting economic growth. Presumably the middle class emerging from that growth will establish a stable democracy sometime in the future.

FC130A The Russian Revolution and Civil War (1917-20)



[FC130A](#) in the [Hyperflow of History](#);

Covered in multimedia lecture [#1801](#).

“We are not carrying out war vs. individuals. We are exterminating the Bourgeoisie as a class. We are not looking for evidence or witnesses to reveal deeds or words vs. the Soviet power. The first question we ask is to what class does he belong, what are his origins, upbringing, education or profession? These questions define the fate of the accused. This is the essence of the Red Terror.”— *M. Y. Latsis*

The 1917 Revolution and Bolshevik triumph.

Not only was Russia bleeding from war, it was also starving. This situation sparked bread riots in Petrograd (renamed that from the German St. Petersburg) in March 1917. Day after day the riots escalated as the government failed to respond decisively to the crisis. Many soldiers joined the demonstrators, Nicholas abdicated his throne, and the *Duma* set up a moderate republic under Alexander Kerensky.

The Russian Revolution followed a course very similar to that followed by the French Revolution. For one thing, its first government, like France's National Assembly, was a moderate government that tried to maintain respectability by following many of the old monarchy's policies. The most ruinous of these policies was its commitment to stay in the war against Germany. This merely intensified the turmoil and anarchy that the war had already generated, which led to more defeats, and so on. The more radical elements agitated for more sweeping changes to undermine the government's power while exploiting its tolerance and weakness.

The most important of these groups was the radical Marxist party known as the *Bolsheviks*. (meaning "majority" although they only represented a minority of Russian socialists, let alone the population). Their leader, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, was a hardened revolutionary and prolific writer, whose career had involved avoiding the Czar's secret police, spending time in a prison camp, and publicizing Marxism through his writing while in exile. Ironically, when revolution broke out, the Germans sneaked him into Russia, hoping he would destabilize Russia and knock it out of the war. He did that and much more.

When Lenin arrived in Petrograd, he immediately set to work to organize a revolution that would overthrow Kerensky. The steady deterioration of Russia from the prolonged war effort played into his hands, and the Bolshevik program, summarized in the slogans "Bread, peace, and freedom" and "All power to the Soviets" won many followers, especially among the *soviets* (workers' councils organized in the factories). Finally, on November 7, 1917, the Bolsheviks made their move. Having already seized key strongpoints such as bridges, railroad stations, and telegraph offices, they easily overthrew Kerensky's government.

Lenin acted quickly in both domestic and foreign policies. In foreign affairs, as he had promised, Lenin pulled Russia out of World War I by signing away large territories in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March, 1918. Russia's allies were furious since this freed one million German soldiers for the Western Front. They also feared and hated the Bolsheviks for their claim that they would overthrow Capitalist society. Therefore, the allies, especially Britain and the United States, landed troops in Russia to try to overthrow the Bolshevik government.

Facing strong opposition at home and abroad, much like the Jacobins had in 1793, Lenin followed strict domestic policies. Private property was abolished, industries and banks were nationalized, and the press, briefly free under Kerensky, was once again strictly censored. This combination of internal resistance and foreign intervention led to civil war.

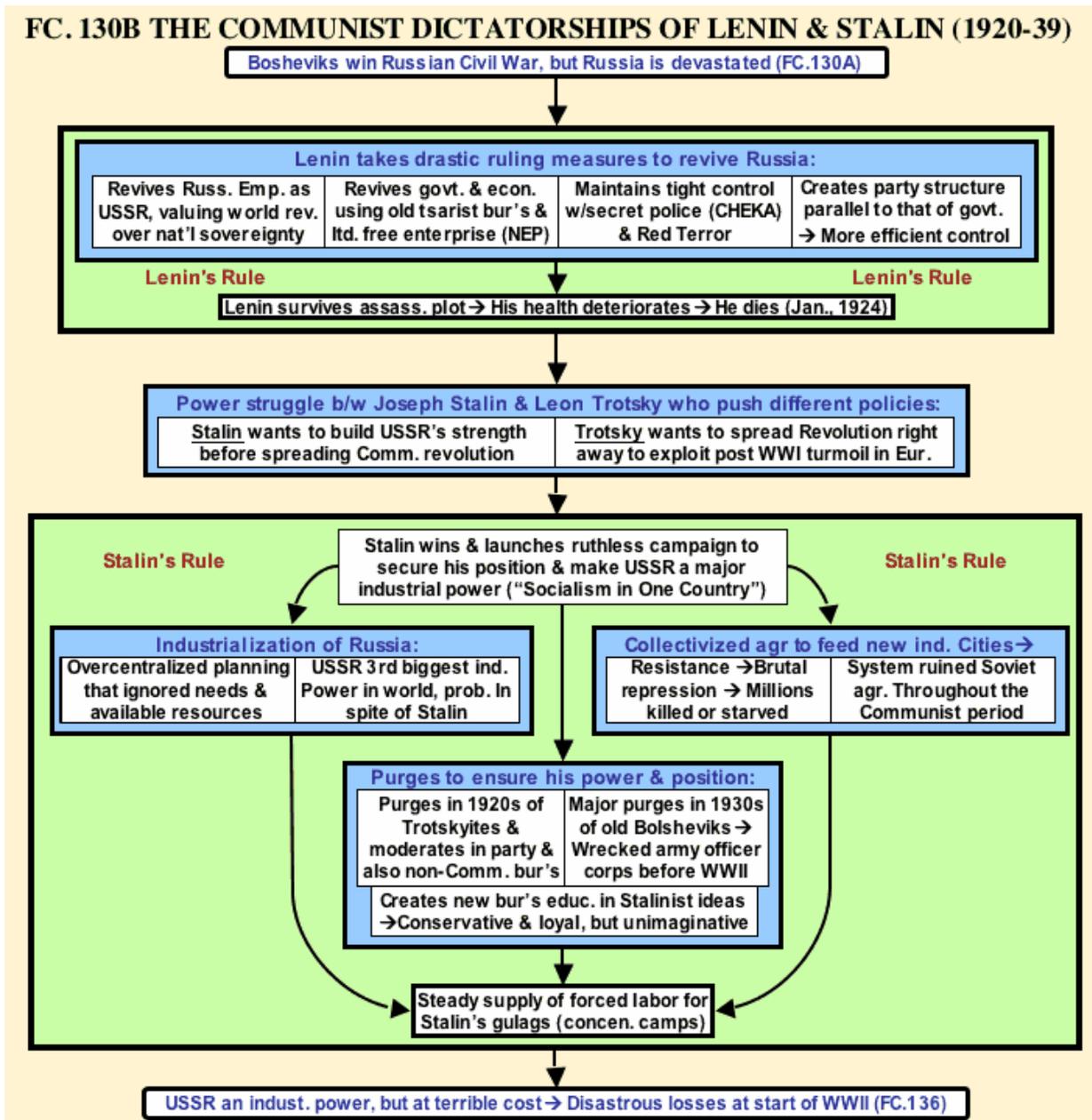
The Russian Civil War (1918-20).

At first the Bolsheviks (also known as the Reds), like the Jacobins in the French Revolution, were heavily outnumbered by their enemies (the Whites) and controlled only about 10% of Russia. That was mainly around Moscow, which they had switched to their capital since it was inland and harder for invaders to reach. The fighting was very confused and brutal, with massacres on both sides. However, the Bolshevik leader, Leon Trotsky, starting with a few units of militia known as the Red Guard (similar to the National Guard in the French Revolution) built the Red Army into a strong and effective force of 5,000,000 men.

Desperate for experienced leaders, he forced old royalist officers into service. To ensure their efficiency and loyalty Trotsky held their families hostage and used a system of political advisors, *Commissars*, similar to the French Revolution's representatives on mission. Trotsky's methods were successful, and by 1921, he had cleared Russia of the foreign invaders and crushed the Whites.

FC130B The Communist Dictatorships of Lenin & Stalin (1920-39)

FC. 130B THE COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIPS OF LENIN & STALIN (1920-39)



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Lenin's Rule

After the devastation of World War I, the Revolution, and Civil War, Russia was a total wreck. Factories were in ruins and half the working class gone, either dead or returned to the farms. Millions had died, mainly from the famine and disease accompanying war. Two million more, mostly nobles, middle class, and intellectuals, had emigrated to other countries. Now it was up to Lenin to restore some degree of prosperity and order. There were four main policies he followed, one that loosened his control for the time being and three that tightened his control.

Lenin eased up a bit with his New Economic Policy (NEP), which allowed some degree of free enterprise to encourage higher production by the peasants. While Lenin had little choice but to let free enterprise return, he could also justify NEP in Marxist terms since, according to Marx, Russia would have to evolve through a capitalist phase before it was ready for Socialism. For several years in the 1920's, Lenin's Russia saw widespread experimentation

in the arts and social engineering as well as economics. Cubist and futuristic art flourished. Avant-garde theater featured acrobats as well as heavy political messages. The family was also under attack as a bourgeois institution with women as the oppressed working class. Therefore, women gained equal rights and pay as well as access to easier divorces and legalized abortions. Some young communists even saw free love and public nudity as revolutionary acts of liberation from bourgeois values. Older Bolsheviks frowned on such acts, but tolerated them in the spirit of creating a new socialist society. Lenin made similar concessions in government, giving tsarist bureaucrats and technical experts more authority in running the government and factories since most communists were uneducated and untrained in the technical expertise needed to run a country.

However, this is not to say that Lenin relinquished any political control over Russia. For one thing, the old non-Russian provinces of the tsarist empire were brought back under tighter control, the rationale being they needed Russia's help in establishing a socialist paradise more than they needed national independence, which would be irrelevant once the workers' revolutions had swept the globe. Of course, to these subject peoples, this new Soviet Union looked suspiciously like the empire of tsarist Russia.

Lenin exerted greater control over local governments through the Communist Party. One problem he had from the earlier days was that the local soviets had seized control of local governments. Although the Bolsheviks themselves had used the slogan, "All power to the Soviets" and could do little to control the soviets during the crisis of the civil war, Lenin was determined to eventually get tighter control on local matters. What he did was create a party structure parallel to that of the government. The local party officials were much more tightly controlled than the soviets and correspondingly more efficient in carrying out Lenin's directives. As a result, control of the Communist party was as important for the rulers of the Soviet Union as was control of the government as a means for ruling the country.

Finally, Lenin, like Marx, felt the workers could not achieve true revolutionary consciousness on their own, but needed a strong centrally directed party of Marxists to lead them to socialism. Therefore, he had to resort to what he called "Proletarian dictatorship" to ensure the workers got what they deserved. However, this was not rule by the working class, but rather rule by the Communist party with working class members in it. Of course, Lenin strictly ruled the party, thus theoretically making his will that of the party and the people. Enforcing "proletarian dictatorship" and the "Red Terror" was the CHEKA (the All Russia Extraordinary Commission for Combating, Counterrevolution and Sabotage). This was Lenin's secret police, except that it was much larger, more effective, and deadly than the Czar's secret police had ever been.

The harsh and autocratic nature of the Soviet system that emerged was influenced by several factors. First, there was the dictatorial nature of Lenin's personality that largely determined the course of the revolution. Second, there was a certain continuity from the tsars' absolutist regime to Communist rule. Finally, many more Communists had joined the party during the revolution and civil war than before 1917. As a result, they saw the revolution in military terms as a sort of brotherhood in arms, and it assumed a military aspect with party members wearing military uniforms and using military jargon for political offices and concepts.

However, before Lenin could enact a thorough program of reform in the Soviet Union, he died in 1924. He was a brilliant leader and sincere revolutionary who oftentimes ignored human feelings in pursuit of his Communist revolution. His harsh measures must be seen in light of the harsh conditions that demanded them if the Revolution were to survive. Lenin is remembered as the father of the Revolution, but his early death left to his successor, Stalin, the job of carrying out the real revolutionary transformation of Russia.

Stalin's revolution (1924-40).

Lenin's death led to a power struggle between Leon Trotsky, the creator of the Red Army during the Russian Civil War, and Joseph Stalin. Stalin was one of the few real working class members of the Communist party's upper ranks. The name Stalin, meaning "man of steel", reflected his willingness to take on jobs no one else wanted, gathering a lot of power into his hands in the process. He was also a cold and ruthless politician who managed to squeeze out the more intellectual Trotsky. Not content with a mere political victory, Stalin's agents later tracked down Trotsky in Mexico and murdered him in 1940.

While Trotsky had wanted to focus on spreading the Communist revolution worldwide, Stalin wanted to concentrate on building up the Soviet Union internally first. He felt a need for a revival of the revolutionary spirit since many Communists thought Lenin's NEP had steered Russia away from a true socialist society. His first step was to purge the moderate wing of the party that still wanted to continue Lenin's policies. Among his victims were the middle class and non-Communist bureaucrats and technicians that Lenin had relied upon to keep the state and economy working. While this was popular with the more radical Communists, it also deprived Stalin of the very people he needed to develop Russia's industries. Stalin then launched a campaign to build the Soviet Union into a great power. His program had three parts: the transformation of the Soviet Union into an industrial power, collectivization of the farms in order to support the populations in the new industrial cities, and a purge of any elements Stalin suspected of disloyalty.

Stalin's industrialization was carried out in a series of Five Year Plans where the government set projected goals for economic growth. However, the first Five Year Plan (1928-32) in particular was as much political rhetoric as economic planning, which seriously hampered efforts to meet its goals. For one thing, human and material resources were not adequately figured into the plan, causing constant confusion and work stoppages. However, at least officially, each of Stalin's Five Year Plans more than met their goals. How much of this was the truth, Stalin lying to the world, or nervous officials lying to Stalin is hard to say. There were harsh penalties, even executions, for officials failing to meet their quotas, thus providing strong incentives to meet their quotas by padding their figures or even sabotaging each other's efforts.

Whole new cities and even lakes appeared where none had existed before, many of them named after Stalin himself. Oil production trebled, while coal and steel production rose by a factor of four times. Stalin also established a massive system of public schools and universities to provide a literate (and more easily brainwashed) work force as well as engineers for his factories. By 1940, the Soviet Union had an 85% literacy rate and was the third largest industrial power in the world behind only the United States and Germany.

However, this was done at a price. For one thing, Stalin concentrated on heavy industries, such as steel, electricity, and heavy machinery, and consequently ignored the production of basic consumer goods, including even housing, for his people. He also used virtual slave labor by taking millions of peasants and others whom he saw as threats to his regime and using them in building his massive canal, hydroelectric dam, and factory projects. Thus millions died for Stalin's dream of an industrial state.

Collectivization of the agriculture was mainly a means to an end: to produce enough food to support an urbanized industrial society. Marxist doctrine forbade private property, and Stalin, wanting as much centralized power as possible, used this principle to gather the farms into giant state-run operations. In theory, organizing the farms along the lines of industrial factories should increase productivity enough to support the Soviet Union's new industrial cities. However, there were several flaws with this. First of all, such a scheme demanded a level of mechanization far beyond the Soviet Union's capacity, which, at that time, still had 5.5 million wooden plows in use. Also, Stalin failed or refused to recognize that people work harder if they feel they are working for themselves instead of a landlord, even if that landlord is the state. Since many peasants had gained possession of their own land before and during the Revolution, collectivization met with strong resistance from these landholders, known as *kulaks*, and that led to untold troubles.

Stalin saw the kulaks as traitors to the Revolution and launched an all out campaign against them. Police and soldiers surrounded villages and hauled the peasants off to collectives, labor camps (which provided slave labor for Stalin's industrial projects), or mass executions. Collectivization was also a disaster for Soviet agriculture and its people. Peasants burned their own grain and butchered their livestock to keep them out of government hands. That and the disruption caused by Stalin's harsh policies led to widespread famine that killed millions more. Any gains Soviet agriculture may have made were probably in spite of Stalin, not because of him. This brings us to the third feature of his regime, the Stalinist terror.

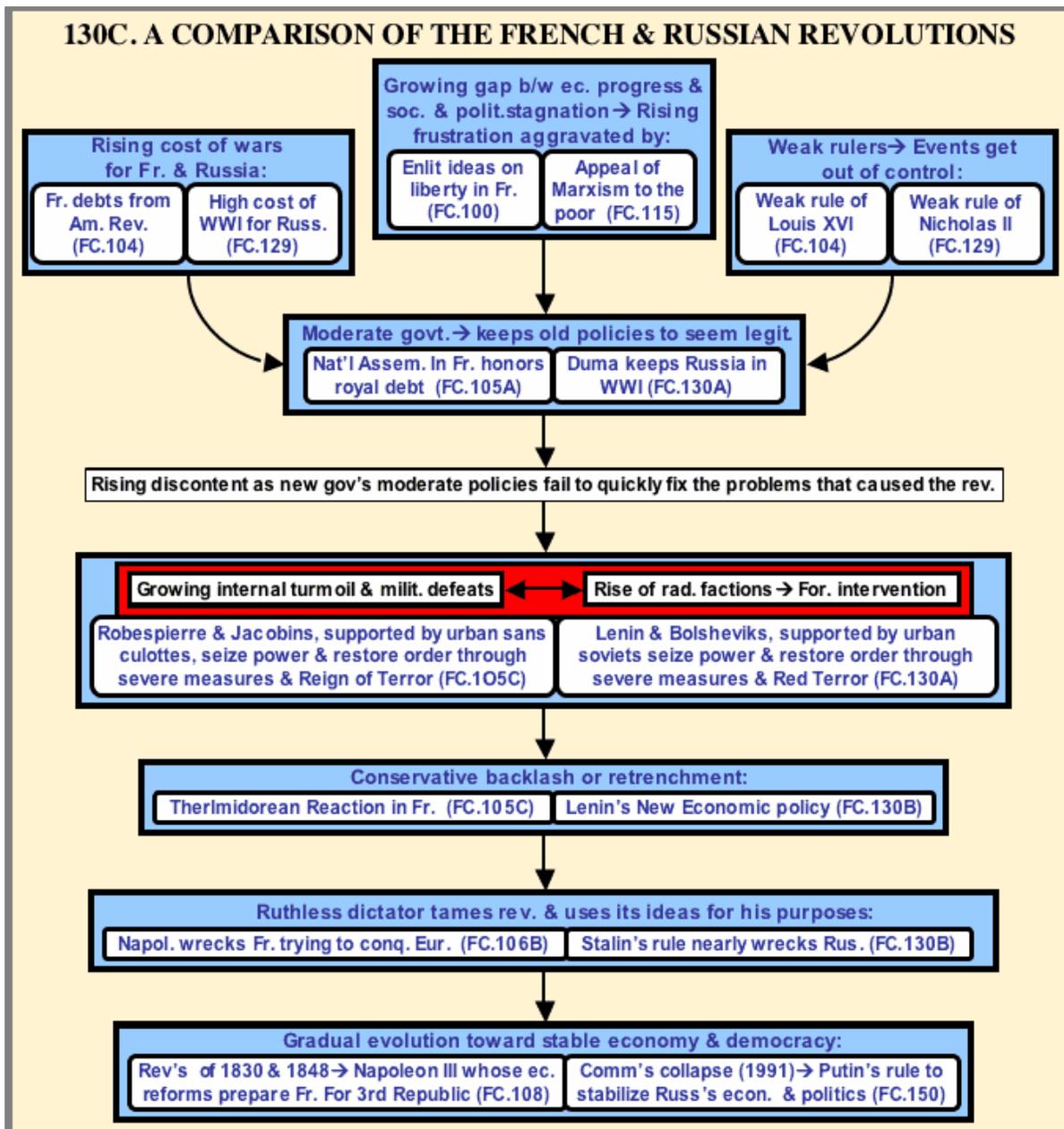
Stalin was an extremely paranoid man who easily imagined both that anyone not meeting his expectations of performance was a traitor to the state and that anyone exceeding his expectations was an ambitious conspirator against him. In 1936 Stalin purged a wide range of people whom he saw as traitors or threats to his regime: government officials, military officers, old Bolsheviks, and teachers in addition to kulaks and inefficient factory managers.

The trials of these people were an absolute farce, where the accused were forced to read contrived confessions of their alleged crimes against the state before being sent to Stalin's labor camps, providing much of the slave labor needed for Stalin's industrial projects. However, the purges did great harm to Russia. Besides stifling initiative and poisoning society with an element of fear, they also eliminated most of the Red Army's top officers, replacing them with men who were inexperienced and subservient to Stalin. Russia would pay a terrible price for this in World War II.

Those replacing the bureaucrats and engineers eliminated by Stalin's purges were young men from working class backgrounds educated in the new schools and universities established by Stalin. Instead of the radical and somewhat independent-minded Bolsheviks in military uniforms agitating for more revolutionary reforms, Stalin now had an elite corps of educated engineers and bureaucrats loyal to him and more concerned with technical matters and industrialization than factional politics, Marxist ideology, and loyalty to a fighting Marxist brotherhood. Instead of uniforms and eccentric cultural ideas, they wore suits and attended classical concerts and ballets. They were the products of the revolution, but they were hardly revolutionary themselves, being prone to conserving the gains made by their party rather than pushing toward new frontiers. Stalin's two successors, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, both came from this generation and reflected its more conservative tendencies. The revolution had come full circle.

Regardless of the cost, the 1930's saw the Soviet Union emerge as a major power, which seemed all the more remarkable since the rest of the world was mired in the Great Depression. This provided great publicity for Communism when resurgent Russia was compared to the ailing capitalist world. Communist membership grew in the western democracies, while a number of poorer countries adopted their own five-year plans in imitation of Stalin's "socialist miracle". All of these underscored the fact that the 1930's were a time of great economic hardship, which led to rising political tensions and eventually World War II.

FC130CA Comparison of the French and Russian Revolutions



[FC130C](#) in the [Hyperflow of History](#).

Introduction

As indicated in the discussion of the French Revolution, there is a logical and long-range pattern that revolutions follow. Therefore, understanding the pattern of past revolutions can help us anticipate events in current revolutions, more specifically the final stages of the process now taking place in Russia and China. One word of caution, however: these are likely trends, not absolute certainties. Outside events (e.g., a major war) and other historical forces unique to Russia and China respectively, could divert events in a very different direction from what is indicated here. Still, this pattern generally holds up and should serve as a guide in how we deal with nations still undergoing this process. That being said, following is a comparison of the French Revolution, which after 82 years finally reached a stable democratic form of government by 1871, and the Russian Revolution, which after 92 years is presumably in its final stage of evolution toward democracy.

Forces leading to revolution

Both countries shared three elements that helped lead to war:

- 1) Both regimes were burdened by heavy debts incurred from wars. In France's case, this was the debt incurred by its support of the American Revolution. For Russia, this was the even higher cost in lives and money suffered during the first three years of World War I.
- 2) In each country, there was a growing gap between economic progress and social and political stagnation. For the French this was the continued prominence and privileges of the noble class as opposed to the more liberal ideas and progressive economic practices of the middle class. For Russia, this largely came from the peasantry, whose economic progress from Peter Stolypin's agrarian reforms contrasted with the repressive rights and privileges of the nobles. In each case new political ideas aggravated these frustrations. In France these were the ideas of Enlightenment philosophes such as Rousseau and Voltaire. In Russia it was Marxism.
- 3) Both countries had weak leaders who let events get quickly out of control. In France and Russia respectively, these were Louis XVI and Nicholas II.

The early stages of revolution

Both revolutions started out with moderate regimes that kept one or more of the old regimes' policies to maintain the look of continuity and legitimacy. In France, that government was the National Assembly, which kept the king as a figurehead and honored the royal debt. In Russia, it was the Duma, which kept Russia in World War I. In both cases these policies just worsened the situation, leading to more unrest. Further aggravating both situations was the fact that replacing an old system with a completely different one (whether in politics, business, or sports) typically sees things deteriorate further before they improve. Unfortunately, the high expectations for rapid improvement did not give the new regimes the time they needed to turn things around.

The crisis stage of revolution

Faced with growing unrest at home and military defeats abroad (the French having rashly declared war on Austria and Prussia in 1792), the moderate governments in France and Russia saw the rise of more radical factions supported by the urban working classes, which alarmed foreign powers and spurred them to intervene before the respective revolutions got out of control. Such intervention (by the First Coalition in France's case and Russia's erstwhile allies in World War I) in the short run just destabilized France and Russia further, which led to more military defeats, more support for the radicals, and so on.

In each case, this was the crisis stage of the revolution, where extreme radicals seized power and imposed harsh dictatorial rule to deal with the current emergency. In France it was the Jacobins, supported by the Sans Culottes, who imposed emergency economic measures, a universal draft, and the reign of terror. Similarly, Russia saw the Bolsheviks, supported by the working class soviets who imposed war communism to deal with the economic crisis and the Red Terror, which they consciously copied from the French Revolution's Reign of Terror.

Conservative retrenchment and the dictator stage

In both revolutions, final victory and exhaustion from the crisis stage led to a brief conservative retrenchment to help their respective peoples recover. In France this was the period of the somewhat loose and corrupt Directory (1785-99). In Russia, this was Lenin's New Economic Policy that allowed a degree of free enterprise to return so the economy could recover.

However, the overthrow of the Directory by Napoleon Bonaparte and Stalin's rise to power after Lenin's death in 1924 led to ruthless dictators who masked their repressive regimes with the revolutionary ideals they supposedly represented. Although Napoleon was finally defeated and Stalin won World War II and kept power till his death in 1953, both dictators effectively ruined their respective countries with their harsh policies.

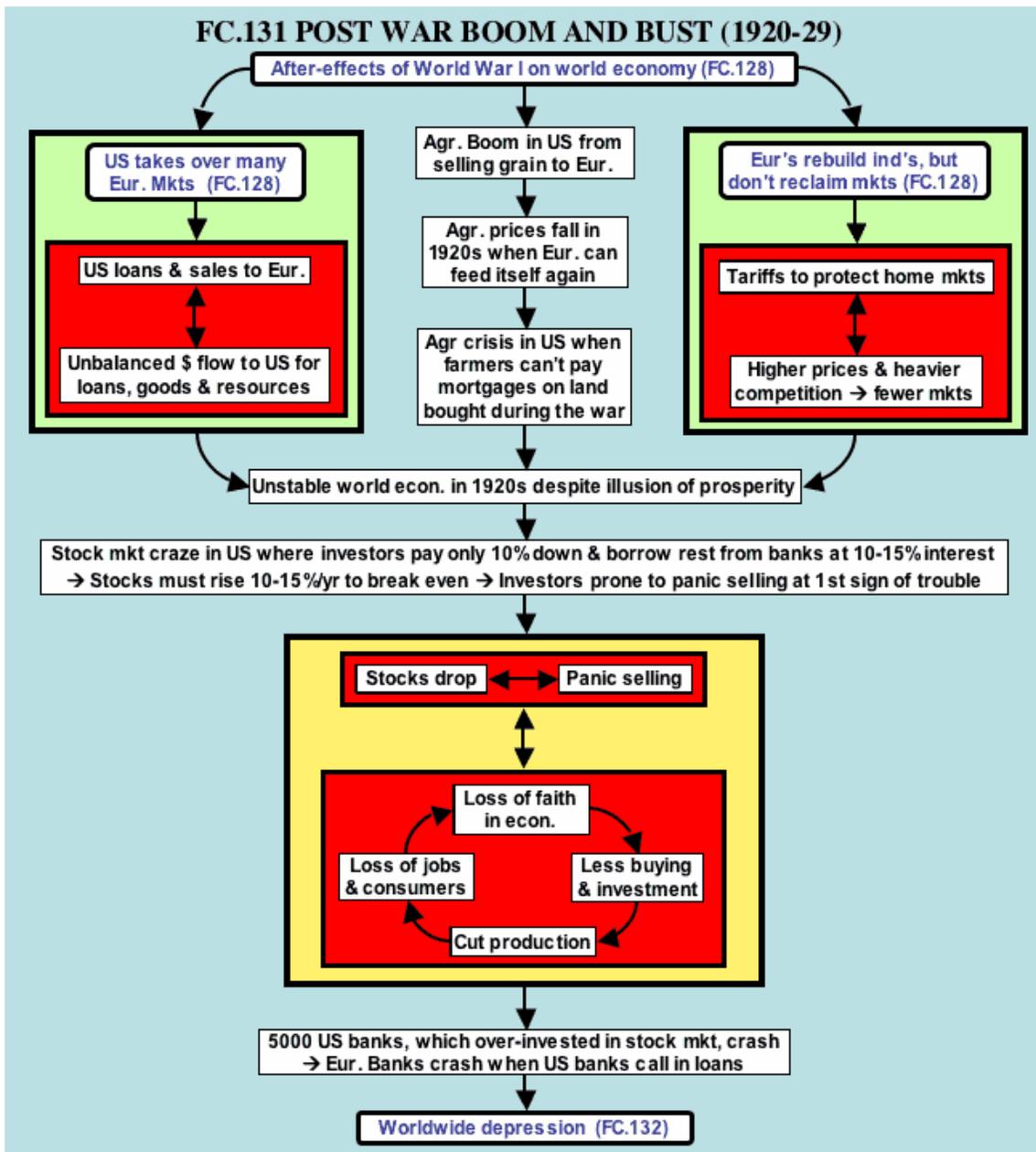
Gradual evolution toward stable economy & democracy

Therefore, Russia has taken longer in its evolution toward democracy than France did, because it took another thirty-five years for Russia to finally collapse beneath the weight of the Stalinist system. Despite, this, Russia has continued to follow a path similar to France's. After Napoleon France would undergo two more revolutions (in 1830 and 1848) and abortive attempts at democracy that would lead to a second dictatorship, this time under Bonaparte's nephew, Napoleon III. Unlike his uncle, Napoleon III was much less aggressive in his foreign policy, focusing on France's economic and industrial development. As a result, when Napoleon III fell from power in 1870 during the Franco-Prussian War, he left behind a strong economy and politically active and savvy middle class that ensured the stability of France's Third Republic.

Likewise, Russia would see the overthrow of communism in 1991 and the establishment of a republic. However, as with France in 1830 and 1848, Russia's economy was a shambles and it had virtually no middle class with which to sustain a viable democracy. Since then, Vladimir Putin has taken charge and, much like Napoleon III, has ruled with a firm hand while promoting economic growth. Presumably the middle class emerging from that growth will establish a stable democracy sometime in the future.

Depression, Fascism, & world warUnit 20: **Depression, Fascism, and world war (1920-45)**

FC131Post War Boom and Bust (1920-29)



[FC131](#) in the [Hyperflow of History](#);
Covered in multimedia lecture [#1243](#).

The illusion of prosperity

The 1920's have been popularly seen as a decade of political stability and economic prosperity. Indeed, Germany did settle down, and seemed to stabilize after 1923, new democracies were established in Eastern Europe, and prosperity did seem to return. A whole barrage of new technological breakthroughs and products signaled this: affordable mass-produced automobiles, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, cellophane, radios, talking movies, and commercial air travel to name a few. But in reality, the 1920's presented largely an illusion of prosperity, for beneath the surface were three serious problems, all arising from World War I and undermining the stability of the world economy.

The first problem largely stemmed from the nature of American dominance of the world economy in the 1920's compared to previous British dominance in the 1800's. The British had maintained a fairly balanced cash flow in

world trade since they had to buy raw materials with much of the money they made from selling manufactured goods. This prevented too severe a drain of cash from other countries, thus assuring Britain more stable markets. In contrast, the United States was not only an industrial power selling manufactured goods in markets it had claimed from Europe during the war; it also had its own vast natural resources. Therefore, little money had to leave the United States to buy the raw materials needed to manufacture its products. This created an unbalanced cash flow from the rest of the world to the United States. As a result, European nations, still recovering from the war, needed loans, which they got from American banks. This sent even more money to the United States in the form of repayments and interest, just making an even more unbalanced cash flow, and so on.

The second problem had to do with Europe's recovery from World War I. European industries did revive to their old pre-war levels of production by 1925, but they failed to reclaim their old markets from the United States or create new markets to compensate for the losses. As a result, the intense economic competition between nations that had largely caused World War I continued after it. Therefore, nations still maintained high tariffs, which raised prices, cut world trade, and further weakened the world economy.

Finally there was an agricultural crisis in the United States. This was the result of dramatic expansion of farmland in order to meet the food demands of the European countries during the war. However, European agricultural production revived after the war, causing overproduction. Grain prices plummeted, and American farmers went into debt, many of them losing their farms when they were unable to maintain mortgage payments on their newly expanded farms. Therefore, although America's industries seemed to be thriving, its agricultural sector, still a large part of its population and economy, was in trouble.

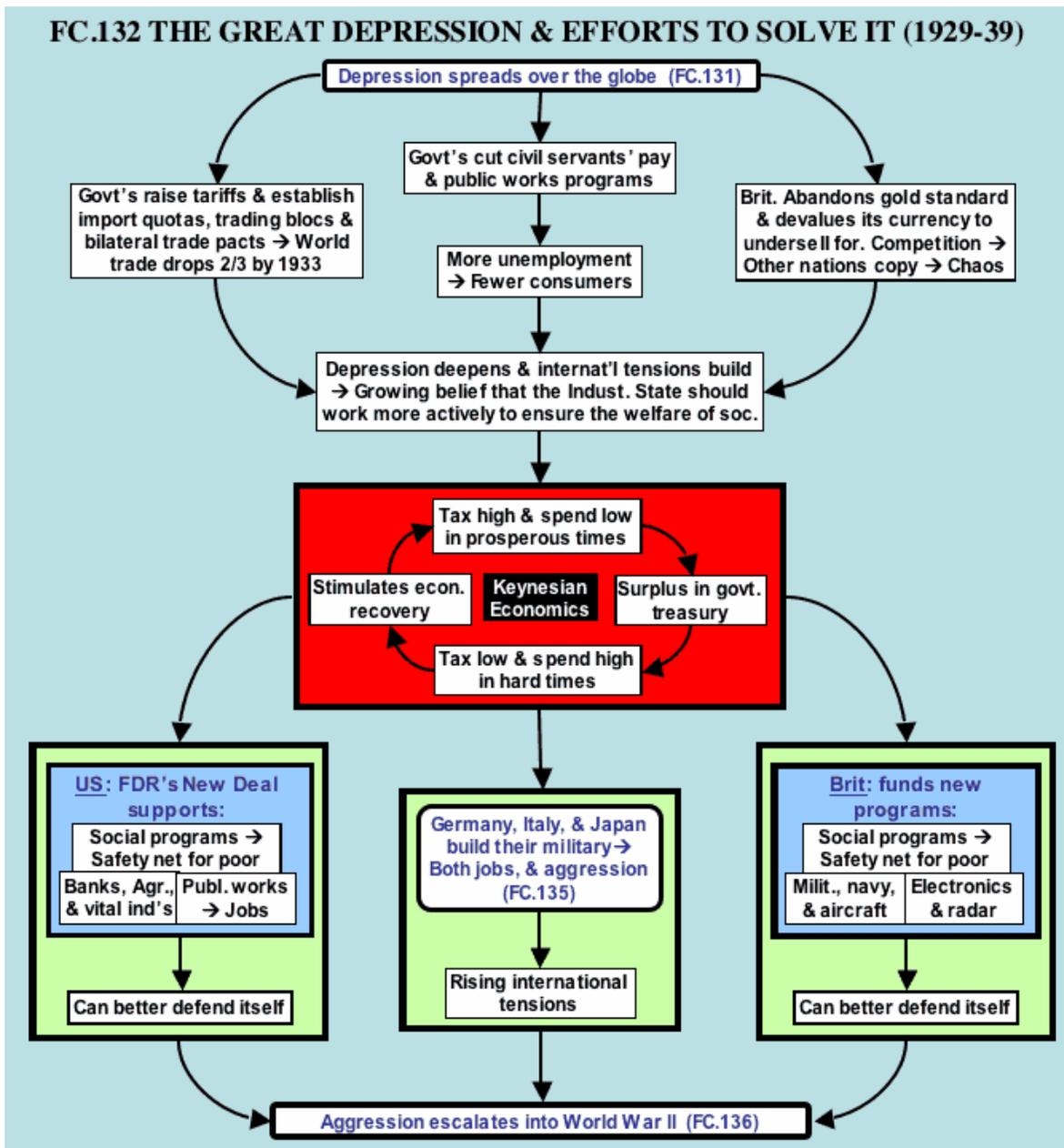
The Crash

Ironically, while all of these problems led to an unstable world economy, they also created an illusion of prosperity. This was especially true in the United States where investing in the stock market had become a virtual national sport. However, the American stock market in the 1920's had a fatal flaw, since investors only had to pay as little as 10% cash for their stocks. Banks financed the balance at 10-15% interest. This made it easy to buy stocks, so the stock market rose at an unprecedented rate in the late 1920's. But this also meant the market must rise 10-15% per year for investors to break even after accounting for their loans plus interest. This created an increasingly uneasy atmosphere as investors worried about how much the already inflated value of stocks could rise. For those realistic enough to pay attention, there were danger signs for the economy in the fall of 1929. In October, the market crashed.

Much of what happened was a classic case of panic psychology running wildly out of control. When some investors started selling stocks, this left other investors in debt to the banks nervous about stock prices falling, something they could not afford. Therefore, when some of them started selling, stock prices fell more, which caused more panic selling, even lower prices, and so on. In a matter of hours, millions of investors were ruined, with some stocks falling \$75 per share. It got worse. By November 1, investors had lost \$40 billion, and by November 13, the stock market had lost half of its value.

This spilled over into the rest of the American economy, causing an overall lack of faith in the future, which led to a decline in investment and buying. Therefore, production was cut, which cost workers their jobs, further undermining faith in the economy, and so on. This only hurt the stock market, which then fed back into the cycle of economic decline. By 1932, industrial production in the United States had fallen by half, national income by 75%, and the value of some stocks from \$100 to \$.50 per share. This led to the collapse of 5000 American banks, many of which had over-invested in the stock market. These banks called in loans from Europe, whose economies were already unstable and overly dependent on American loans. The result was a worldwide depression spreading from America and Europe to the rest of the world that was tied into their economies.

FC132The Great Depression (1929-39)



[FC132](#) in the [Hyperflow of History](#).

Efforts to solve the Depression

As the Depression spread and deepened, governments desperately sought ways to revive, or at least protect, their ailing economies. One tactic was to raise tariffs and establish import quotas, trading blocs, and bilateral trade pacts. However, by 1933, this had helped cut world trade to one-third of its 1929 level. Another policy was to reduce government spending by cutting public works programs and civil servants' salaries. But this only created more unemployment and fewer consumers to revive the economy.

A third tactic, started by Britain, was to go off the gold standard and then devalue the British currency, which now had no gold backing it up. The idea was to make other nations' currencies and goods more expensive in comparison to Britain's and thus make the cheaper British goods more appealing to British and foreign customers. However, other countries followed Britain's lead, so nothing was gained, and everyone's currencies were devalued and less stable. Therefore, the Depression deepened even more and international tensions grew.

Keynesian economics: a new view of the state's role in the national economy

As the situation worsened, there emerged a growing realization that the *laissez faire* economics of the nineteenth century was no longer working and that governments must take a more active role in reviving their national economies and looking after the welfare of their citizens. Among the more innovative theories along that line was that of John Maynard Keynes, a British economist whose Keynesian Economics has been one of the most influential economic theories of this century.

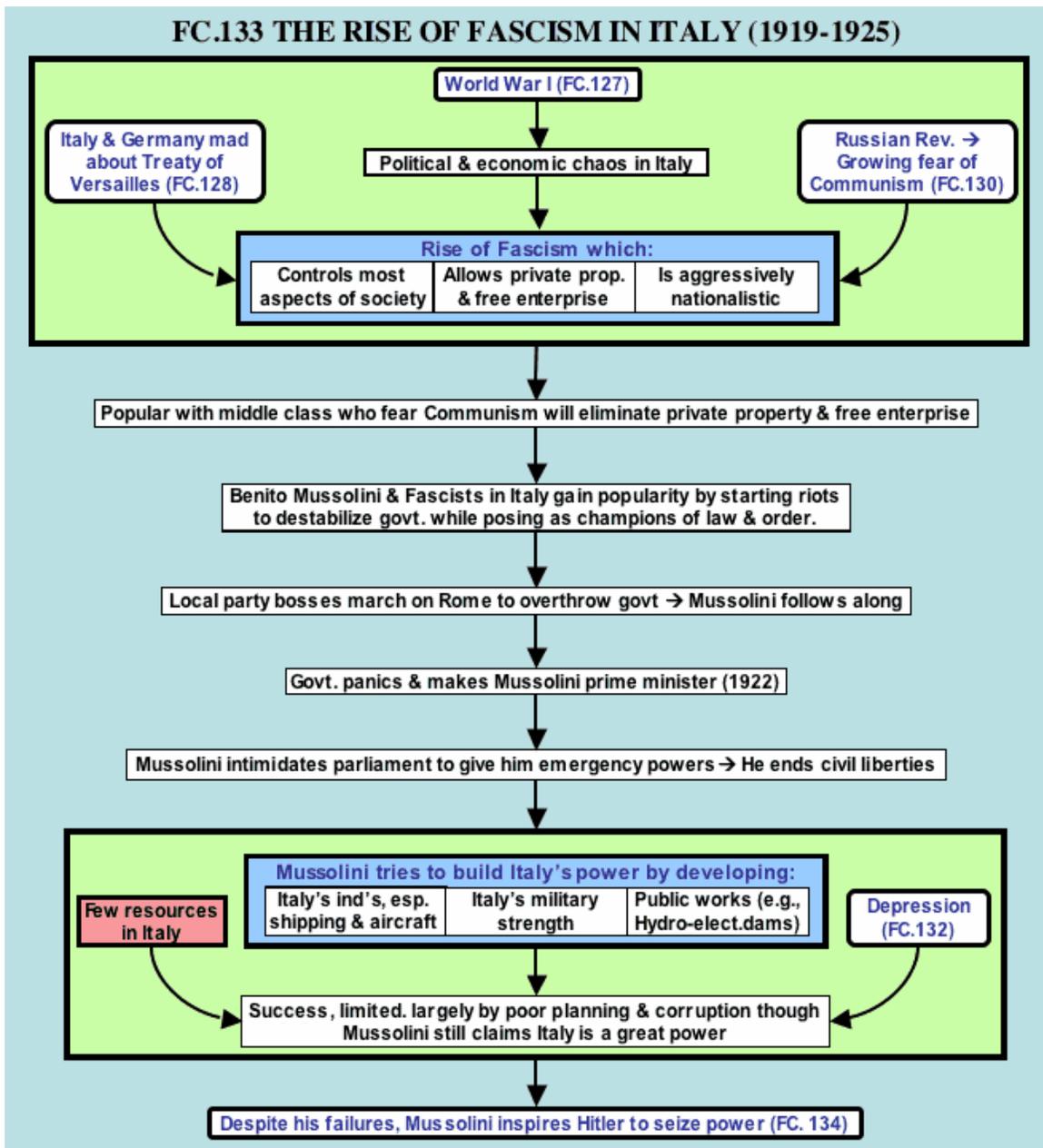
The problem as Keynes saw it was that during a depression businesses need sales in order to provide jobs to families, while families need jobs to get the money to provide businesses with sales. However, neither individual businesses nor families have the resources to help themselves or each other out of the downward spiral of depression. Keynes saw the modern industrial state as the only institution with the power and resources to help both businesses and families and to revive a national economy.

However, the state's role is not to respond to changing economic conditions in the same way as a business or family would. Rather, it should act in an almost contrary way in order to maintain stability. Therefore, the state should tax high and spend low in prosperous times in order to build up treasury surpluses. Then, during times of economic hardship, governments would tax low and spend their surpluses to provide jobs for families in such things as public works programs. The money earned from those jobs would lead to increased sales for businesses and an overall revival of the economy. Governments would then go back to taxing high to restore their surpluses in anticipation of the next economic downturn.

While governments generally did assume larger roles in trying to solve the Depression, they did it in different ways. The United States, under Franklin Delano Roosevelt, set up the New Deal, which supported vital industries, banks, agriculture, and public works to provide jobs and stimulate the economy. It also set up a social safety net, Social Security, which provided relief for the aged and unemployed. Later, this would be expanded into a virtual retirement fund, although that was not its original purpose. Britain reversed its earlier austerity policy of cutting government salaries and public works, and funded new industries such as shipping, electricity, and, later, armaments as the clouds of World War II loomed on the horizon. In both cases, the United States and Britain were in better positions to act when war came.

More fascist governments, such as Germany, Italy, and Japan, followed more aggressive and militant policies. Nazi Germany and, to a lesser extent, Italy embarked on rapid rearmament programs that provided jobs, but poured money into weapons industries that are unproductive unless they are used in the one thing for which they are suited: war. Japan was especially hard hit by the Depression since it had virtually no natural resources and had lost the trade needed to buy them. This situation prompted a military takeover of the government and an invasion of China to secure a food and resource base. In both Europe and Asia, these events were already undermining the collective peace and laying the foundations for World War II.

FC133 Benito Mussolini and the Rise of Fascism in Italy (1919-25)



[FC133](#) in the [Hyperflow of History](#);

Covered in multimedia lecture [#1266](#).

“Books are good. Muskets are better.”— *Fascist slogan*

Introduction: the response to Communism

World War I and the Treaty of Versailles apparently solved nothing and satisfied no one. Although the Western democracies, such as France and Britain, were regaining some stability and prosperity, no one else was. Ethnic and territorial disputes arose among the new democracies in Eastern Europe. The Bolsheviks in Russia threatened to spread their revolution and overthrow Capitalism. And Italy and Germany, the one a "winner" and the other a loser in the war, were both bitter about the Treaty of Versailles and anxious to reverse its verdict.

These conditions gave rise to *Fascism*, the belief in a totalitarian dictatorship controlling nearly all aspects of the state: government, army, press, schools, etc. However, unlike the Soviet model of Communism, it allowed free

enterprise and private property, thus appealing to the business-oriented middle class since it gave them economic security. Finally, Fascism was also intensely nationalistic and aggressive in its foreign policy.

Mussolini and the rise of Fascism in Italy

The first successful Fascist takeover was in Italy under Benito Mussolini. He was born in 1886 in the rough hill country of North Central Italy. His mother was a devout Catholic and schoolteacher, while his father was an atheist and anarchist who liked to smash ballot boxes on Election Day. Benito himself was a troublemaker who had a bad habit of knifing his classmates. As a young adult, he fled to Switzerland to avoid the draft and was converted to socialism there. In 1904, he returned to Italy and served his time in the army in return for a pardon. He then became the editor of several socialist newspapers in which he advocated both political assassination and pacifist resistance to a war with Turkey, calling the national flag a rag fit to be planted on a dung heap. When World War I broke out, he first advocated neutrality, and then, probably after accepting French bribes, called for Italian involvement on the Allied side.

Italy made a poor showing in the war and paid a heavy price for it. Government expenditure during the war was twice its expenditure for the whole period 1861-1913. As a result the economy was in shambles and the country was plagued with unemployment, inflation, riots, strikes, and brigandage. It was then that Mussolini first joined and soon became leader of the Fascist Party, which stood for upholding claims of veterans and the nationalist interests of Italy while crushing any anarchist elements in the country. Ironically, the Fascists did more to promote anarchy than anyone else in Italy at that time. Mussolini would send out his gangs of thugs, the Blackshirts, to riot against Communists and other groups while claiming his men were protecting the peace.

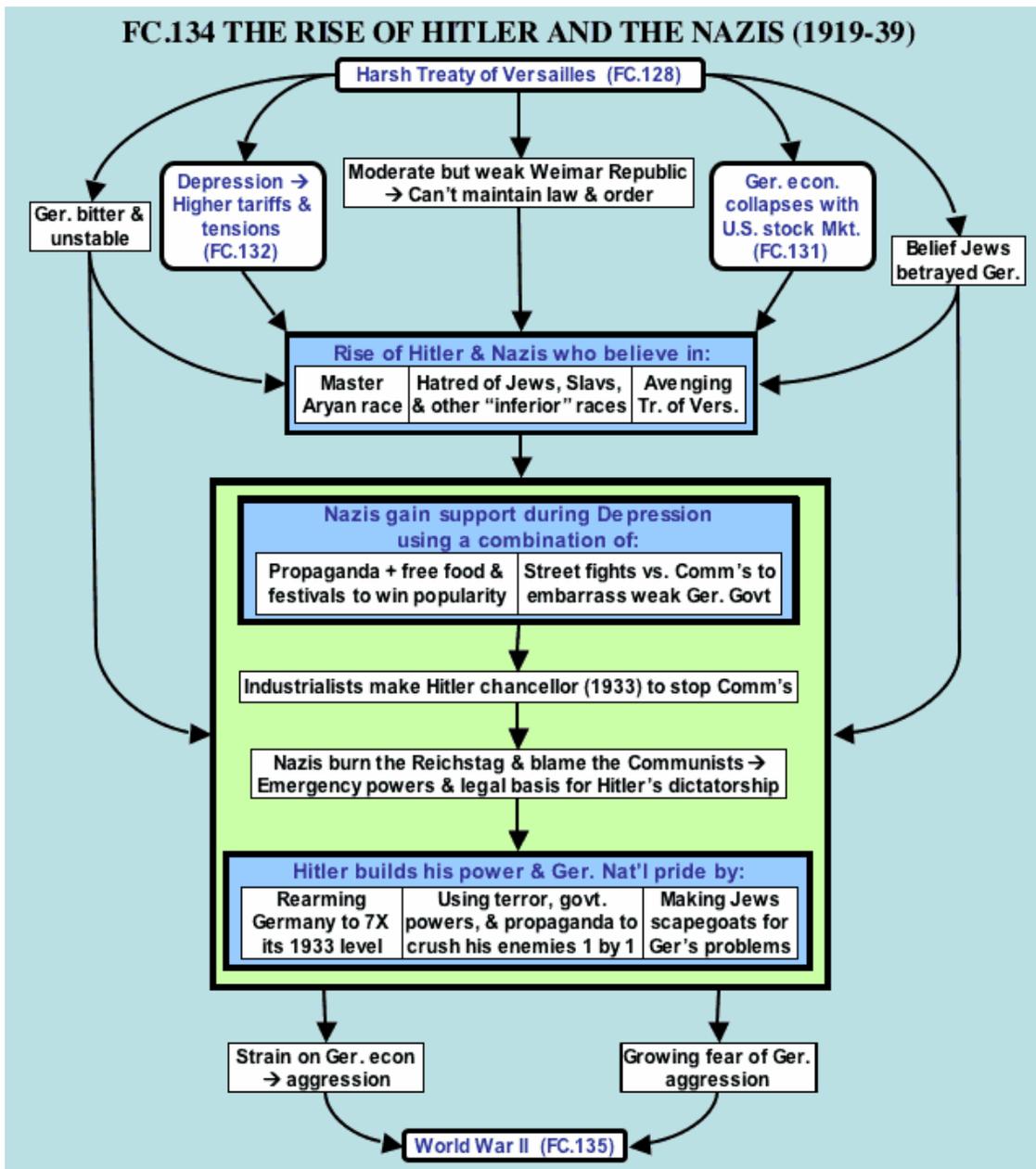
Oddly enough, Mussolini's strategy of spreading chaos in the streets while posing as the champion of law and order who could save Italy started paying off. Even without the Blackshirts' antics, Italy needed law and order, and many people, especially the middle class who feared the Communists, looked to the Fascists as the answer to Italy's problems. In October 1922, they made their move.

It was actually the local party bosses who started a series of riots that stormed various city halls and forced concessions from local governments. This encouraged them to march on Rome and seize control of the national government. Benito himself was hesitant to take part, but when the Ras went ahead without him and it looked as if they might succeed, he put himself at the head of the march as if it were his idea all along. The march itself was a fiasco, getting bogged down in a massive traffic jam, but it scared the government enough to offer Benito the power to form a new government, which he did with typical bombast and bluster. Then, through intimidation and rigged elections, Benito tightened his grip on Italy. He bullied the Italian Parliament into giving him emergency powers that allowed him to shut down other parties, censor the press, and end other civil liberties. By 1925, Italy was a fascist dictatorship.

The riots and strikes did settle down after Mussolini took power, but little else went right for Italy and the Fascists. Mussolini claimed he made the trains run on time, but that was a gross exaggeration, as was just about every other claim he made. He did try to build up Italy's aircraft, shipping and power industries, but the Depression and Italy's lack of natural resources, along with poor planning and corruption, severely limited any economic progress. Mussolini's big dream was to make Italy a major power, thus reviving the Roman Empire. Here again, little progress was made, although Benito made wildly inflated claims about Italy's military strength.

Whatever his failures as a national leader, Mussolini appeared to be a shining example of Fascist strength when compared to the more timid democracies in Europe, and was a hero to other aspiring Fascist leaders of the day. Among these was a struggling German politician by the name of Adolph Hitler.

FC134 Adolf Hitler and the Rise of Nazism in Germany (1919-39)



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“The driving force of the most important changes in this world have been found less in scientific knowledge animating the masses but rather in a fanaticism dominating them and in a hysteria which drives them forward.”—
Adolph Hitler

Introduction

The most ominous development after World War I and one of the primary causes of World War II was the rise of Adolph Hitler in Germany. The Treaty of Versailles helped lead to this in five ways. First, there was the common belief that Germany had been betrayed, since the Armistice had been signed before allied troops had reached German soil. Germans, looking for scapegoats, blamed bankers, Catholics, and especially the Jews. Second, the Treaty of Versailles angered the German people and destabilized Germany both economically and politically. Third, the Weimar Republic, which succeeded the Kaiser's monarchy, was moderate, but weak, and thus let matters get out of hand. Fourth, the German economy's over-dependence on American loans caused it to collapse with the

Stock Market Crash in 1929. Finally, the Depression, especially with the renewed raising of tariffs, created tense international relations. All these provided the conditions for Hitler to seize power.

Adolph Hitler was born in 1889 in Braunau, Austria. His early ambition was to be an artist, but he failed to gain entrance into Vienna's main art academy. Drawing upon strong anti-Semitic sentiments already in Vienna, Hitler blamed the Jews for conspiring to keep him out. He got by as an artist for soap and deodorant ads, having few expenses, since he was neither married, drank alcohol, or smoked. In 1913, having failed to get into the Austrian army, he crossed into Germany. Then came World War I.

Hitler served in the German army with distinction, was wounded twice (once by poison gas) and decorated for bravery. Being a loner, he actually enjoyed the war and the comradeship of the army, since it gave him a sense of belonging. Therefore, he felt especially disappointed and betrayed when Germany surrendered in November 1918. The Treaty of Versailles the next year merely added to this bitterness. Not surprisingly, he conveniently blamed the Jews for Germany's plight.

After the war, Hitler served as a reservist, spying on political parties to make sure they did not add to the chaos then besetting Germany. One such party was the National Socialist, or Nazi, Party. This right wing group attracted Hitler with its racist ideas about a master Aryan race and the so-called "inferior" races, such as the Slavs and especially the Jews who must be destroyed. Hitler became the Nazis' seventh member and soon afterwards its leader. He also found a new talent, speech making, which attracted large audiences and funds to the new party's treasury.

As disturbing as the Nazi ideas were, they were nothing new or original to European culture. Persecution and hatred of the Jews went back to the Middle Ages where they were often resented as moneylenders, accused of such things as the execution of Christ and conspiring with the Devil to cause the Black Death, and subjected to expulsion from their homelands and at times even massacres. Even such a revered figure as Martin Luther said the Jews should be deprived of their property and that:

“...their synagogues or schools be set on fire, that their houses be broken up and destroyed...and they be put under a roof or stable, like the Gypsies... in misery and captivity as they incessantly lament and complain to God about us.”

The idea of an Aryan super-race was also rooted in German philosophy, in particular Friedrich Nietzsche, whose idea of a new superior type of human ("ubermensch") was easily taken out of context and narrowly applied by the Nazis to the German people:

“A daring and ruler race is building itself up...The aim should be to prepare a transvaluation of values for a particularly strong kind of man, most highly gifted in intellect & will. This man and the elite around him will become the 'lords of the earth'” —*The Will to Power*

Ordinarily, such ideas would have little appeal in normal prosperous times. However, conditions in Germany after World War I were anything but normal or prosperous. Political strife rocked the country as extremists from both the right and left. Notably the Communists, fought for power. Another problem came as the government printed vast amounts of money to support a strike against occupying French troops trying to force Germany to pay its huge indemnity. However, Germany's inability to back up its currency led to a wildly uncontrolled cycle of inflation. As a result, a single turnip would cost 50 million marks and people literally burned money for fuel, carted it around in wheelbarrows, and shoveled it out of bank vaults.

Given these conditions, it is hardly surprising that many Germans were drawn to the idea of themselves as a super-race that had been treacherously betrayed by "inferior" enemies from within and without. Therefore membership in the Nazi party grew rapidly in the early 1920s, prompting Hitler to try to overthrow the government in 1923. His *Putsch*, as it was called, was a total disaster, but the resulting trial earned Hitler a good deal of publicity as a national hero defending German honor against domestic violence and foreign humiliation. While in prison for nine months, he wrote *Mein Kampf* ("My Struggle"), which outlined his political beliefs and strategies for seizing power.

While its racist ideas were just rehashed versions of older ideas, *Mein Kampf* did provide a blueprint for modern politics through the use of radio, posters, mass rallies, lies, and catchy slogans which appealed to the emotions

without really telling anything of substance in order to manipulate the political process. Nazism was a negative philosophy that thrived on Germany's miseries. However, by the mid 1920's, the illusion of prosperity and the apparently fading hostility toward Germany caused Nazi membership to stagnate.

All that changed in the 1930's, as other two effects of World War I created conditions favoring the Nazis. For one thing, the Depression with its higher tariffs raised international tensions, which Hitler could exploit to gain popularity. Also, the war had created an unstable economy that was overly dependent on financial support from the United States. Therefore, the stock market crash in 1929 dragged Germany down with the American economy. By 1932, six million Germans were unemployed, which played right into Hitler's hands. This time he would use the democratic process to gain power and then use that very democratic process to destroy itself.

The Nazis reacted to these conditions in two ways. First, Nazi thugs, known as Brownshirts in imitation of Mussolini's Blackshirts, started riots with opposing groups, especially Communists, while blaming them for the disorder, embarrassing the government for failing to keep order and portraying themselves as the defenders of the peace. Second, they bolstered their popularity with free food and festivals, making them look like nice concerned Germans, and by staging huge mass rallies to display their popular support.

In late 1932, rich German industrialists, prompted by fear of a Communist takeover, pressured the government to make Hitler chancellor (prime minister), hoping they could control him while he contained the Communists. Little did they suspect that this was just the beginning for Hitler.

From chancellor to dictator (1933-38)

Once in power, Hitler worked to increase his own power and German national pride in three ways: destroy any possible rivals to his position, rearm Germany, and launch a campaign of violence against the Jews. In the months following his becoming chancellor, he skillfully used his government powers, propaganda, lies, and brute force to divide his enemies and then destroy them one by one. Needing a majority in the *Reichstag* (German parliament), Hitler immediately called for new elections, hoping his new position as chancellor would win the Nazis more seats. In order to scare people into supporting them, the Nazis burned the *Reichstag* building and blamed the Communists. The resulting hysteria allowed Hitler to suspend civil rights and arrest the Communist leaders, thus gaining the Nazis more seats in the *Reichstag*.

Now it was time to eliminate the *Reichstag* and the democratic process along with it. Hitler planned to do this by passing the Enabling Act, which would give him legislative and executive power for four years, plenty of time to get a stranglehold on power in Germany. With the Brownshirts outside threatening violence, the law easily passed, giving Hitler the legal framework in which to establish a dictatorship.

In the following months, Hitler used a combination of threats to opposing leaders, alluring promises to their followers, and brute force to eliminate his enemies. One by one they fell: the Social Democrats (with a strong labor backing), the Catholic Center Party, and the German Nationalists (ultra-conservatives who were forced to merge with the Nazi Party). Next came the press and universities, institutions with many educated people who saw through Hitler's lies and might be able to mobilize public opinion against him. In each case, Hitler formed a comprehensive national association that all members of that profession were required to join if they were to keep working. Of course, Nazi officials headed these new organizations, which gradually strangled freedom of speech and thought in Germany.

With Germany firmly under his heel, Hitler moved to gain firm control of his own party. His main rival, Ernst Rohm, was the head of the powerful Brownshirts, the para-military gang of thugs the Nazis used for violence and intimidation. Many army officers and industrialists feared Hitler would replace the army with the Brownshirts, while Hitler himself feared Rohm's power. Therefore, he won the support of the army and industrialists while serving his own interests by having Rohm and his associates murdered in the so-called "Night of the Long Knives." (It is widely believed that Hitler himself pulled the trigger in Rohm's murder.) The Brownshirts were dissolved and replaced by the much more efficient and deadly black-shirted Storm Troopers, commonly known as the *Schutzstaffel* or SS. From now on they would be the main agents of the Nazi Terror.

In August, 1934, President Hindenburg, symbol of the old Prussian order with which Hitler had been careful to associate himself, died. To symbolize the dawn of a revolutionary new order and the 1000-year reign of the Third Reich, Hitler demanded a loyalty oath from the army, not to Germany, but to himself. From now on Germany was to be Hitler, and Hitler was to be Germany.

The growing darkness

Hitler's second goal was the rearmament of Germany. He did this through a massive arms build-up (in direct defiance of the Treaty of Versailles) and public works projects (such as highways for moving armies from front to front). At least in the short run this did provide jobs and prosperity and restore pride in Germany. However, in order to fund all this, the Government budget grew seven times from 1932 to 1938, with 74% of that budget for the military. This put a growing strain on the German economy, which helped lead to German aggression and World War II.

Finally, Hitler attacked the Jews, whom he imagined had kept him out of art school and betrayed Germany in the war. His Nuremberg Laws in 1935 subjected Jews to an ever-growing number of restrictions and acts of violence. The climax of this stage of persecution was the *Kristallnacht*, or Crystal Night (11/9-10/38), named after the shattered windows of Jewish merchants' shops that were looted that night. Using an incident in Paris between a Jew and German diplomat, the Nazis instigated this wave of violence against Jews across Germany. Nazi-led gangs looted Jewish owned shops, brutally beat their owners, and then rounded them up for the growing number of concentration camps springing up in Germany.

Many Jews, including Albert Einstein, left Germany, costing it many of its brightest minds. The horror stories they took with them led to growing fears of Nazi aggression and eventually World War II. They also took with them talents that the Nazis could have used but claimed were part of a worldwide plot to pollute science and destroy civilization. Einstein's theory of Relativity was especially singled out by one Nazi writer as being:

“directed from beginning to end toward the goal of transforming the living —that is the non-Jewish-- world of living essence, born from mother earth and bound up with blood, and bewitching it into spectral abstraction in which all individual differences of peoples and nations, and all inner limits of the races, are lost in unreality, and in which only an unsubstantial diversity of geometric dimensions survive which produces all events out of the compulsion of its godless subjection to laws.”

Wilhelm Mueller, in his book, *Jewry and Science*, claimed the worldwide acclaim given to Einstein for his theories was really only rejoicing over *“the approach of Jewish world rule which was to force down German manhood irrevocably and eternally to the level of the lifeless slave.”*

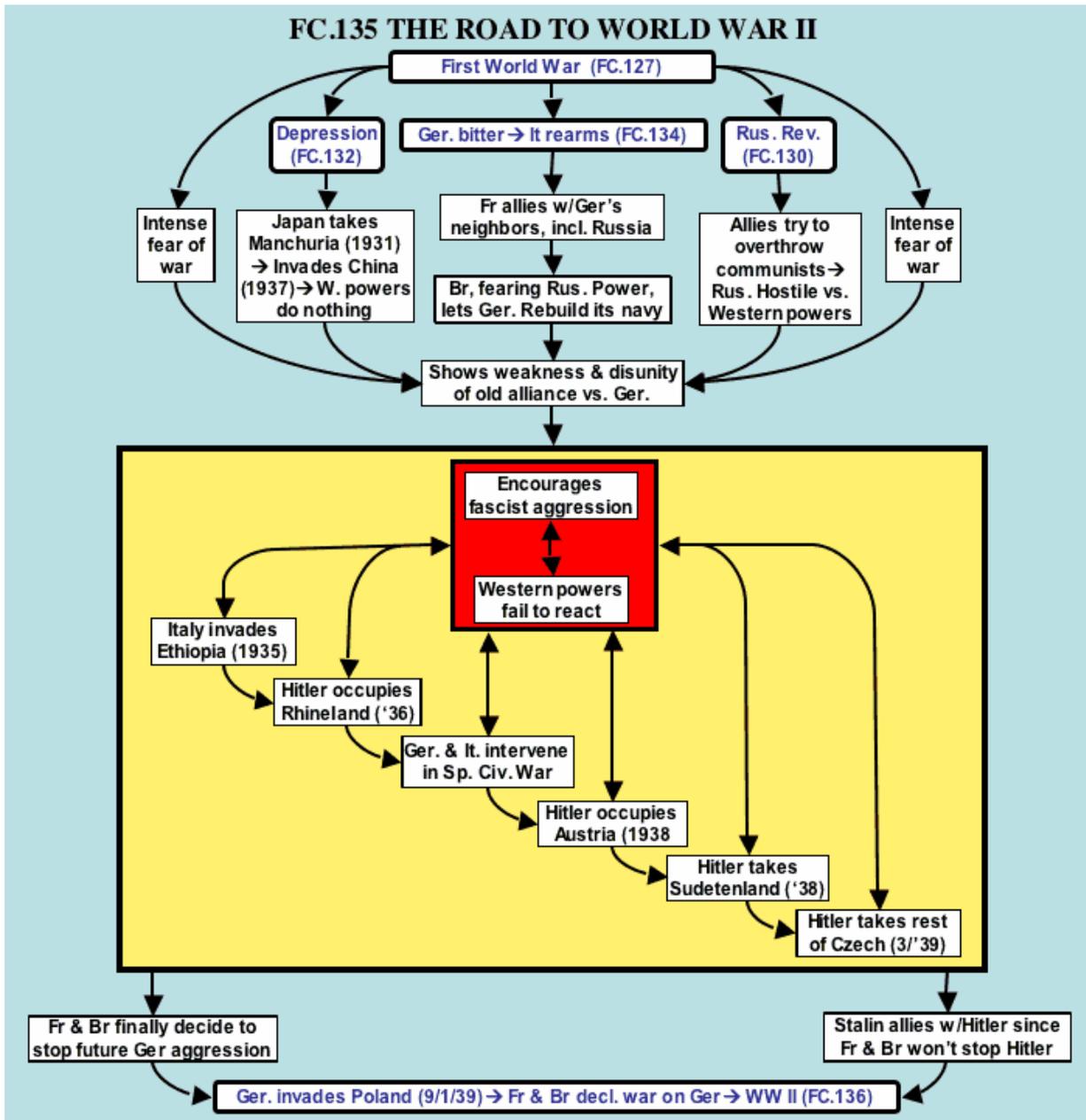
“...the Jew conspicuously lacks understanding for the truth...being in this respect in contrast to the Aryan research scientist with his careful and serious will to truth...Jewish physics is thus a phantom and a phenomenon of degeneration of fundamental German physics.” —Nazi, Prof. Philipp Lenard

From 1905 to 1931, ten German Jews won Nobel Prizes in science. Hitler would kill six million more.

Conclusion

Why did Germany go along with this madness? A combination of factors gives at least a partial answer. First, Hitler was a master of dividing and attacking his enemies one by one. He would win over people with tempting promises while eliminating their, leaving them helpless before him. He also effectively used lies and propaganda to deceive the public and turn them against helpless scapegoats, such as the Jews, making people relieved they were not under attack *at that time* and not seeing what was happening until it was too late to save themselves. Finally, Hitler's programs did restore national pride and relieve some of the Depression's misery. Little did they realize the price they and the world would have to pay for this temporary bit of comfort.

FC135 The Road to World War II (1919-39)



FC135 in the [Hyperflow of History](#);
Covered in multimedia lecture [#1281](#).

Introduction

By far, the most destructive aftershock of World War I was World War II, coming a mere 20 years after the Treaty of Versailles. While the rise of the Nazis in Germany in the 1930's generally took center stage, events elsewhere, some of them as far away as East Asia, also contributed to the outbreak of war. Three main factors, all resulting from World War I, would lead to war: the Treaty of Versailles, the Great Depression, and the Russian Revolution.

France, Britain and the Treaty of Versailles

Along with leading to the rise of the Nazis, the Treaty of Versailles had quite different results on France's and Britain's relations with Germany and each other. Since they shared a long land border with Germany and had suffered a great deal in the war, the French were much more nervous about a resurgent Germany and wanted to keep its power limited. Therefore, in 1935, when Hitler announced that Germany would rearm (they had been doing so secretly for two years), France signed a series of defensive pacts with Germany's neighbors to contain any future aggression by Hitler. Among these pacts was one with the Soviet Union, which France saw as the primary counterweight to German power.

Britain, however, feared Stalin as much as it did Hitler, and signed a naval pact with Germany giving it the right to build a surface fleet 35% as big as Britain's and a submarine fleet as large as Britain's. While Britain apparently did not feel threatened by this, France did. Consequently, the two powers rarely cooperated effectively during the series of crises that occurred in the late 1930s, providing just the sort of disunity and lack of cooperation Hitler wanted.

Aggravating the situation was a sort of shell shock among the British and French caused by the horrible memories of World War I. Just as they had been too eager to go to war in 1914, now they were overly cautious and willing to appease aggressors in order to avoid a war. Unfortunately, dictators such as Hitler thrived on such weakness. Just as the lesson of 1914 was that too much aggression can lead to war, the lesson of 1939 would be that war can just as easily result from appeasement and giving in to aggression.

The Depression and the Far East (1931-41)

The Depression also had unsettling effects outside of Germany. Among other things, it seriously hurt Japan, whose economy depended heavily upon trade to pay for resources and food for its burgeoning population. As tariffs went up and the Depression deepened, Japan grew desperate for resources. This desperation led to a military takeover of the government, somewhat reminiscent of the Fascist dictators in Europe. In 1931, the Japanese seized Manchuria from China on the flimsy pretext of setting up the "independent" state of Manchukuo under Japanese "protection." China protested to the League of Nations, but the League had no power of its own to act against aggression, especially if that aggression were half a planet away. Therefore, Japan kept Manchuria and a foothold in China.

Even before this, China was already deeply mired in its own problems. European and Japanese aggression in the late 1800's had helped lead to turmoil in Chinese society and government. In 1912, a revolution replaced the last Chinese emperor with a republic under the western educated Sun Yat Sen. However, China's experiment in democracy floundered, and, after Sun Yat Sen's death, Chinese politics disintegrated into a three-way struggle for power between the Nationalist government's leader, Chiang Kai-shek, various independent warlords in the countryside, and the Communists led by Mao Zedong.

The Japanese seizure of Manchuria presented the Chinese government with a dilemma: fight Japan right away or crush the Communists and warlords first and then face the Japanese with a united front. Chiang Kai Shek, being strongly anti-Communist, decided to unify China first. For several years he waged intensive warfare against the Communists whom he badly damaged, but failed to destroy. However, Chiang's generals, anxious to turn against Japan, forced him to ally with Mao against the common enemy. Japan, fearing a united China, told the Nationalists to join it against the Communists or it would take "all the steps necessary to assure peace." In July 1937, it "assured" that peace by invading China.

The Chinese army was no match for the more mechanized Japanese forces, which relentlessly and brutally swept across the eastern seaboard of China. Cities were bombed and strafed mercilessly, while their populations were massacred with uncontrolled ferocity. Reeling from these losses, the Chinese switched to a strategy of trading space for time by retreating into the vast interior of China. This drew the advancing Japanese forces further and further inland and stretched their lines to the limit. The war now settled down to a costly stalemate that burnt, bled, and bent China, but could not break it.

As a result, the Japanese decided to look elsewhere for easier conquests. In 1939, they briefly turned north against the Soviet Union. However, defeat at the hands of Soviet forces in a short but sharply fought conflict plus a surprise

pact by Japan's ally, Hitler, with Stalin to carve up Poland, convinced Japan to go elsewhere. Therefore, it turned to easier and more lucrative conquests in South East Asia. This involved attacking the colonies of France, Britain, and Holland, all of who were too preoccupied with the war then raging in Europe to effectively stop Japan.

This also brought Japan face to face with the United States. When the United States threatened economic sanctions against the Japanese if they did not pull back, Japan launched a surprise attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands (12/7/1941). From the American perspective, this was the beginning of the Second World War in the Pacific, although the Chinese and others saw it as starting in 1937 with the Japanese invasion of China. Either way, the war in Asia was on.

Ironically, Japan's decision to turn south rather than north may have saved the allied cause in World War II. If Hitler had kept his Japanese allies informed on his intentions to attack Russia in 1941, they could have tied down enough Soviet forces in the Far East to deny Stalin vital reinforcements that would be a significant factor in the ultimate Russian victory against Germany. And, of course, a German victory against Russia would have seriously altered the course of World War II and subsequent history.

The Russian Revolution and Soviet Union

That leaves Russia, the other big power that should have been opposed to the Fascists. Unfortunately, relations with the Western powers were poisoned by bitterness over Allied intervention during the Russian Civil War and the deep ideological differences between capitalism and communism. As a result, there was no concerted action between Russia and the West against Fascist aggression. All these factors, the disunity between France and Britain, Russian hatred and distrust of the West, and the unchecked aggression of Japan in the East combined to expose the weakness and disunity of the former alliance against Germany.

The cycle of aggression and the road to war in the 1930's

As a result, the weakening of the old alliance triggered a vicious cycle of encouraging Fascist aggression which the Western democracies failed to react to, thus causing more aggression, and so on. This pattern was sadly played out several times in the 1930's before the West finally took its stand.

It started in 1935 when Hitler announced that Germany was going to rearm itself in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles. (Actually he had been secretly expanding German forces since 1933.) We have already seen how Hitler announced Germany's rearmament in 1935. Since he justified this with the principle of national self-determination, Britain and France did nothing to stop him. This merely encouraged more aggressive actions. Consequently, in 1935, Mussolini sent Italian forces into Ethiopia, using only the weakest of excuses to cover this blatant act of aggression. When the League of Nations threatened economic sanctions against Italy, Mussolini said a boycott on oil (which would have crippled his war machine) would mean war with the League's members. The League, without any real force to back it up, fell for this bluff. Britain wanted to stand up to Mussolini. However, France, still angry about Britain's naval pact with Germany and hoping to stay on good terms with Italy as a counterweight to growing German influence in Austria, refused to support Britain. As a result, Ethiopia fell as the world just stood by and watched.

Therefore, in 1936 Hitler defied the Treaty of Versailles again by moving German forces back into the Rhineland, the demilitarized part of Germany. This especially agitated France, who wanted British backing but received none. Since German rearmament was just starting, the German generals leading the troops into the Rhineland were under secret orders to turn back if they met any French resistance. They met no such resistance. Once again, Hitler got his way.

The aggression continued when the dictators, including Stalin got the opportunity to intervene in the Spanish Civil War. In 1931, unrest had led to the overthrow of the corrupt monarchy still ruling Spain. At first, a fairly liberal and democratic government took power. But, without a strong middle class and economy, riots and turmoil resurfaced. In 1936, the Fascist Falangists, led by General Franco, seized power and started the Spanish Civil War.

Any civil war is a terrible thing, but Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union chose to intervene and make the war in Spain much worse. Hitler and Mussolini backed the Fascists, known as the Nationalists. Stalin threw his support behind the Republicans, also known as Loyalists, who had many socialists and communists in their ranks. The result was a disaster for Spain, as terrorists from both sides murdered civilians and leaders from the opposition, and the German air force practiced the new tactics of aerial bombardment on Spanish towns.

The most famous of these atrocities, immortalized by the Spanish painter, Picasso, was the bombing of the Spanish town of Guernica, where over one-third of its population of 7000 were killed or maimed just because they were in the way. While that was a mere fraction of the millions that would die from aerial raids in the Second World War, it shocked the world since it was documented on film and also because it symbolized a sinister new turn in modern warfare. In the end, the Fascists won again as the Western democracies just watched from the sidelines. The question was: how much further could Fascist aggression go unchallenged? Hitler seemed determined to find out.

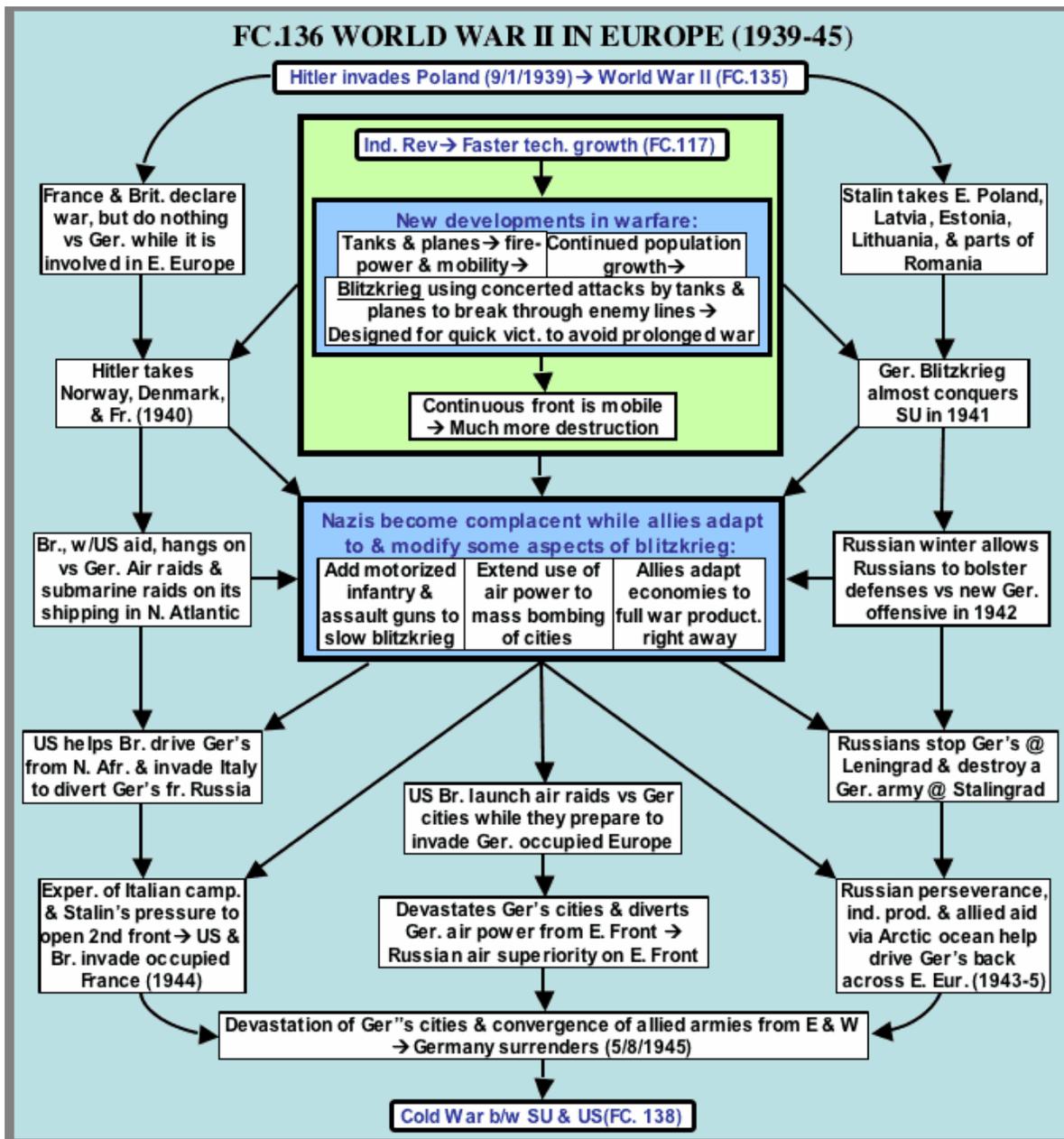
Hitler, further encouraged in his contempt for the Western democracies, next moved on to an even bolder objective: the *Anschluss* (unification) of Austria with Germany. Hitler, himself being of Austrian birth, claimed the Austrians were Germans whose drive to achieve national self-determination was being stifled by being kept separate from the rest of Germany. Whether right or wrong, this logic helped paralyze France and Britain into inaction once again. Therefore, Austria became part of Germany in 1938 whether the Austrians liked it or not.

The next target of Nazi aggression was the Sudetenland, a part of Czechoslovakia with a large German population along with much of the country's industry and defensive fortifications. Raising the cry of national self-determination once again, Hitler threatened war with anyone who got in his way. A conference between Britain, France, Italy, and Germany met at Munich where the Fascist dictators bullied and persuaded France and Britain to agree to the Nazi takeover of the Sudetenland. Convinced, or at least wanting to believe, that this was all Hitler wanted and that he also wanted peace, they gave in to him once more, without even consulting their Czech allies. They figured this was all Hitler wanted.

In March 1939, Hitler swallowed up the rest of Czechoslovakia without French or British resistance. This had two effects. For one thing, France and Britain were now finally convinced that Hitler would not stop on his own and were determined to stand up to him the next move he made. Unfortunately, at the same time, Stalin was convinced that France and Britain would do nothing to stop any further Nazi aggression in Eastern Europe. Therefore, he signed a pact with Hitler (August, 1939) that would carve up Poland between them.

On September 1, 1939, believing Britain and France would do nothing to stop him, Hitler invaded Poland. Two days later, France and Britain declared war on Germany. A mere twenty years after the end of the First World War, the Second World War had begun.

FC136World War II in Europe (1939-45)



[FC136](#) in the [Hyperflow of History](#).

“What General Weygand called the Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this Island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the light of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, "This was their finest hour".”— *Winston Churchill, British prime minister*

“If you're going through hell, keep going.”— *Winston Churchill*

World War II was the single most destructive war in history, claiming over 60,000,000 lives and untold material damage. In contrast to 1914, most soldiers in 1939 had a better sense of the seriousness of modern war and marched off with grim resolve rather than enthusiasm. The war in Europe can be seen as happening in two phases: the

German blitzkrieg (1939-41) and the allied response and counterattack (1942-45). Technological and tactical innovations were central to each phase and affected events on both the Eastern and Western fronts.

Blitzkrieg (1939-41)

As in World War I, many generals at the start of World War II were planning to fight the last war rather than the next, hardly taking into account the changes in warfare over the last twenty years. France, in particular, operated with a World War I siege mentality, relying on a giant enclosed concrete trench, the Maginot Line, which covered much, but not all, of its border with Germany. However, the German generals had a very different perspective. Having lost the last war, they were more determined to find a new way to win the next one. In their minds, that way was *blitzkrieg* (lightning war).

Blitzkrieg was largely the brainchild of Heinz Guderian, a German tank expert who convinced Hitler that the future of warfare lay with tanks and airplanes, not immobile lines of trenches. Instead of spreading tanks along the front as infantry support, Guderian's idea was to amass his *panzer* (tank) divisions at strategic points and blast through that part of the line. The German airforce, the *Luftwaffe*, would bomb and strafe the enemy behind their lines, further demoralizing and disrupting them. Meanwhile, infantry would consolidate their hold on the gaps blown open by the *panzers*. This would force the enemy back to a new position that was already weakened and threatened by the *panzers* and *Luftwaffe* wreaking havoc in their rear.

Blitzkrieg did not do away with the continuous front, since the manpower and firepower needed to fill a continuous front were more available than ever. What it did accomplish was to make the continuous front mobile, thereby pulverizing everything in its path. As a result, the fighting was not confined to a narrow static front, as in World War I. Rather, it swept across all of Europe in a broad swathe of destruction. Also, Blitzkrieg was designed for attaining short decisive victories that would avoid the prolonged type of warfare that had worn Germany out in World War I. At first it took its enemies by surprise and allowed the Nazis to overrun their enemies in both Eastern and Western Europe very quickly.

In the East, the German blitzkrieg easily overran western Poland while Stalin took the rest. Then, while Hitler was pre-occupied with defeating France and Britain in the west, Stalin invaded Finland and took the Baltic republics of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania (lost since World War I) as well as part of Romania. These events, along with Hitler's long-standing hatred of Russia, prompted a planned invasion of Russia, which was delayed by having to help Mussolini in the Balkans and North Africa. When it did get going in June 1941, the German attack met with incredible success, quickly inflicting tremendous casualties and driving almost to the gates of Moscow. Only the onset of winter temporarily stopped the German advance and bought the Russians time to recover.

In the West, Hitler also met with startling success as the German army rapidly overran Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Holland and France by June 1940. Not until they reached the English Channel did the Nazi advance halt and give Britain renewed life. The ensuing Battle of Britain was the first major battle ever decided primarily by air power, as the *Luftwaffe* first bombed British airfields and then concentrated on Britain's cities to clear the way for an invasion of Britain. However, the British grimly held on until Hitler abruptly broke off the raids to turn his attention to the invasion of Russia. Britain's war effort was also bolstered by increasing aid from the United States, which would join the war by the end of 1941. Thus, as 1942 dawned, Germany was faced with two new and formidable enemies: the United States and Soviet Union.

The allied response and counter-attack (1942-45)

However, the benefits reaped by the German blitzkrieg would be short-lived, largely because, while the Germans became complacent and overconfident from their early successes, the allies were urgently adapting to and modifying blitzkrieg to neutralize the German advantage. They did this in three ways. First, they adapted their economies completely to war production. While the Russians were moving entire industries east of the Urals out of Hitler's reach, the United States was building a massive military-industrial complex that by 1944 was more than twice as productive as all its enemies combined. By contrast, Hitler, not wanting to alienate the German industrialists, delayed putting Germany on a full wartime economy until 1943, by which time it was too late.

Secondly, the allies, especially the British and Americans, expanded the use of air power from mainly ground support for tanks and infantry, as the Germans used it, to building large long-range bombers for massive bombing of German cities. Finally, both sides modified their tank divisions by adding mobile assault guns and motorized infantry. This, plus the higher production levels the allies maintained, largely neutralized the German blitzkrieg, slowing it down to a war of attrition that heavily favored Germany's enemies on both fronts.

In the east, the Nazi offensive resumed in 1942 with the coming of spring, advancing eastward until the Russians made their stand in Stalingrad where the Germans found blitzkrieg was totally unsuited for the house to house fighting of urban warfare. The intense fighting there bogged down the German war machine until the Russians could build their forces for a counter-attack that cut off and destroyed the entire German Sixth Army in February 1943. After that, Russian perseverance and industrial production, helped by supplies from the allies via the Arctic Ocean, slowly drove the Germans back across Eastern Europe.

On the Western Front, the allied effort, increasingly bolstered by American military and industrial might, also met with success, driving the Germans from North Africa and Sicily and invading Italy in 1943. The next year, drawing upon their experiences in Italy, the British and Americans used their overwhelming air and firepower to open a second major front in France.

All this time, the British and Americans had also been launching massive long-range bombing raids on German cities. They used this strategy since they had no major foothold on the continent from which to fight the German army directly until 1944. Although it is still argued whether the allied bombing raids did substantial damage to German war production, which had been largely decentralized away from its cities and the bombing raids, they certainly devastated Germany's cities, demoralized its population, diverted German air power away from the Russian front, and wore down German air defenses, thus giving the allies critical air superiority by the time they were ready to invade France and liberate Western Europe from the Nazis.

By the end of 1944, Germany's war effort was collapsing as American and British air raids devastated its cities from above and allied armies converged from east and west. Finally, in May 1945, Russian forces took Berlin, bringing an end to Hitler's regime and the war in Europe.

THE WAR IN DETAIL

Germany triumphant (1939-41)

When the Germans invaded Poland in September 1939, their concept of Blitzkrieg, ran almost flawlessly. The *panzers* burst through gaping holes in the Polish lines while Stuka dive-bombers spread terror and destruction along the front and well behind it. Polish cavalry brigades launched valiant but hopeless assaults against Guderian's tanks, which mowed them down mercilessly. When Warsaw stubbornly fought the Germans to a standstill, the *Luftwaffe* came in for round the clock bombing raids until the city finally succumbed.

Meanwhile, France and Britain had declared war on Germany two days after the invasion of Poland, but had done little except sit and wait in what was known as "sitzkrieg" or the Phony War. This gave Hitler the time and initiative to prepare and launch an attack at a time and place of his choosing. He first invaded Denmark and Norway, thus securing his iron ore supply and a long irregular coastline from which to launch submarine raids.

It was not until May 1940 that the showdown with France and Britain came. The Allies expected a repeat of the Schlieffen Plan where the Germans would sweep through the Low Countries into France. The final German plan took advantage of these expectations by launching a diversionary attack into Holland and Belgium that drew the Allied armies north to meet them. However, the real attack came through the supposedly impassable Ardennes Forest between Belgium in the north and the Maginot Line in the south along France's eastern border.

Once again, German plans went like clockwork. The Germans smashed through the lightly guarded French lines in the Ardennes. While the *Luftwaffe* wreaked havoc in the French rear, Guderian's tanks raced toward the sea to close the trap that would cut the Allied forces in the north off from the rest of their forces in the south.

Panic seized the French troops who were being relentlessly strafed by the *Luftwaffe* and pursued and even passed up by the *panzers* (who were in too much of a hurry to stop and take prisoners). Panic also seized Allied High Command, which was virtually paralyzed by this sudden turn of events. Even German Headquarters was uneasy about its plans going too well and wanted Guderian to stop to let his infantry catch up. But Guderian saw first hand the total chaos and panic that ruled the Allies and kept going. He reached the sea in ten days, having gone further than the German army had gone during the whole four years of World War I.

Meanwhile, Allied defensive lines in the north were collapsing around the seaport of Dunkirk. In a desperate bid to rescue their army, the British launched a most unlikely flotilla of military and civilian craft: destroyers, tugboats, river barges, and even pleasure craft. Braving the dive-bombing Stukas and German shore artillery, they managed to get to and extricate most of the British and French forces pinned against the beach. Britain would live to fight another day.

The remaining French forces in the south formed a new battleline where they bravely fought on. But it was too little too late as Paris fell, and France finally surrendered in June 1940. The surrender was signed in Napoleon III's railroad car, the same car where the Allies forced the Germans to sign the Armistice in 1918. The Battle of France was over. The Battle of Britain was about to begin.

Britain's prime minister at that time was Winston Churchill, a leader of indomitable courage who gave the British spirit a defiant edge during these dark times. As in the past, the British realized that an invasion of Britain (codenamed Operation Sea Lion) required control of the sea. But for the first time in history, that also required control of the air. Therefore, the Battle of Britain was largely determined by air power. The first clashes came over the Channel, and the German pilots, who had more experience from fighting in Spain, Poland, and France, at first did quite well. Then the *Luftwaffe* started concentrating on knocking out the Royal Air Force (RAF) and its bases in order to clear the way for invasion.

In this phase the British had several advantages. First of all, the German fighter planes only had 20 minutes fighting time over Britain after allowing for fuel to get across the Channel and back. In contrast, British pilots had full tanks for fighting. Secondly, the fighting over Britain meant that only British pilots who were shot down and survived could be rescued to fight again, while surviving German pilots became prisoners. Third, the British had a new technology, radar, which let them spot German planes as they were being launched and concentrate their forces against them. Finally, the British had gotten hold of a copy of Enigma, the German decoding machine. This proved to be a decisive element throughout the war since the allies were often able to intercept and prepare for supposedly secret German plans.

This still did not make it easy. Although they suffered heavy losses, German pilots were good and their superior numbers exacted a toll on the RAF through aerial fights and bombing raids on British airfields. Bit by bit, the RAF was being worn down by casualties, battle fatigue and damage to its airfields. Ironically, what saved the RAF and Britain was Hitler's decision to bomb British cities.

Initially, Hitler did not want to concentrate on Britain's cities. However, on August 24, some of his bombers lost their way and accidentally bombed London. Churchill retaliated by launching an air raid on Berlin, which infuriated Hitler and caused him to turn the *Luftwaffe* loose on London and other cities. This gave the RAF the break it needed to recover its strength.

Thus began the Blitz, nine months of daily bombing raids. At first the raids came by day. But the RAF, now under less pressure, was able to inflict heavy damage on the enemy. Therefore, the Germans soon limited their raids to nighttime when their planes were harder to spot. Since the British could do little against these raids, civilians huddled in their cellars or flocked to the subways for safety. Surprisingly enough, there was little panic. The Blitz became a way of life interwoven with the more normal activities carried on in the daytime. And so, night after night, month after month, the British grimly hung on against these assaults on their cities.

Things looked particularly bleak for Britain in the spring of 1941. In addition to air attacks on their cities, the British also had to contend with German U-boats preying on their shipping in the North Atlantic. They answered this threat to their lifeline by developing sonar to detect German submarines and better depth charges and convoys with naval escorts to combat them.

Meanwhile, the United States, although officially neutral, was becoming increasingly concerned about Britain's survival against the Nazis. President Roosevelt brought America closer to direct involvement through the Lend Lease Act, which provided vital aid to the British in their hour of need. By the end of 1941, Roosevelt's policies and the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor would bring the United States into the war. However, it was events further east that proved to be Hitler's ultimate undoing. On June 22, 1941, he invaded Russia, thus ending the Blitz and giving Britain new life.

The Eastern Front (1939-1944)

In the East, Stalin had taken his share of Poland according to his pact with Hitler, and then swallowed up the Baltic Republics of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Next he attacked Finland, which put up a spirited defense that held the vastly superior Soviet forces at bay for several months. In the end, the Finns were overwhelmed and forced to cede part of their land to Stalin.

Stalin's growing power in the East increasingly alarmed Hitler who had intended from the beginning to destroy Russia. Hitler set his attack for May 1941, but events elsewhere delayed his plans. Mussolini, sensing an opportunity for Italian glory, invaded both Yugoslavia and North Africa, got bogged down by stiff resistance, and called on Germany to bail him out. Hitler was furious, but he sent in troops who overran the Balkans, drove the British out of Crete with a daring paratroop operation, and then drove the British back toward Egypt in North Africa. The delay this caused in Hitler's preparations to invade Russia may have been the critical difference that allowed the Russian winter to stop the German advance on Moscow and eventually defeat the Nazis.

The invasion of Russia was probably Hitler's biggest mistake, although at first it did not seem that way. Much of his mistake was being overconfident from his recent victories and not preparing the sort of force the invasion of Russia would require. Stalin, still trusting in his pact with Hitler, refused to heed warnings of an impending German attack. When the attack, codenamed Operation Barbarossa, came, it hit a Soviet army whose officer corps was decimated by the recent purges and Stalin's insistence on personally authorizing all actions any of his generals took. As a result, Guderian's *blitzkrieg* inflicted staggering losses on the Russians and drove deep into the Soviet Union in the opening months. Then the Russian winter set in, stalling the German offensive just 20 miles from Moscow. German soldiers, unequipped and unprepared for these subzero conditions, suffered horribly while their equipment broke down. Meanwhile, the Russians launched offensives of their own that nearly destroyed much of the German forces.

The German offensive revived with the spring thaw in 1942. The Germans advanced against Leningrad in the north and Stalingrad in the south. The siege of Leningrad was a long drawn-out affair that lasted 900 days. Starvation, more than bullets exacted its toll, especially on civilians. Although as many as 1.5 million Russians died in the siege of Leningrad, the city stood held out.

If any battle was the turning point of the war, it was Stalingrad, an industrial city that Hitler saw as the key to Russia's oil fields in the south. After initial German successes that took 90% of the city, the fighting bogged down into desperate house-to-house and even room-to-room fighting. As the Russians bled the German army white in the rubble of Stalingrad, they were also building massive forces to the north and south. On November 19, 1942, they slammed into the flanks of the German army guarded by its Italian and Romanian allies, broke through, and met in a giant pincer movement behind the German army. The German army of some 250,000 men besieging Stalingrad was now itself surrounded and besieged.

Hitler refused to let the Germans break out and retreat, insisting that they continue the siege while he tried to airlift supplies to them. Therefore, while starvation, the Russian winter, and shelling took their toll, the fighting in the rubble continued. However, in February 1943, the Germans finally surrendered. Of the 90,000 Germans who survived to surrender at Stalingrad, only 5000 would make it home from Stalin's prison camps.

The Russian victory at Stalingrad provided the impetus to go on the offensive and drive the Germans out of Russia. Two things provided the Russians with the means to fight this war to the bitter end. First, and most important, was the revival of Russian industries, many of them moved beyond the Ural Mountains and out of reach of the *Luftwaffe*. Second, there was substantial material aid from the United States shipped north of Scandinavia, braving

the hazards of both the Arctic Ocean and German U-boats. By war's end, these gave Stalin the means to build the most massive war machine in all history.

The Russian Front in World War II became renown for the intensity and the desperation of its fighting. This was especially true of the Battle of Kursk in the summer of 1943, a German attempt to break through a strong salient in the Russian line and turn the tide back in Germany's favor. This battle involved over one million men, 5800 tanks and assault guns, 5000 planes, and 30,000 artillery pieces on both sides. After weeks of blasting away at each other, sometimes at pointblank range, the Russians had broken the German offensive.

If Stalingrad signaled the end of the German tide of conquests, Kursk signaled the beginning of the end of Hitler's Third Reich. Not that Germany was completely done for yet. The fighting on the Russian Front assumed epic proportions till the end of the war. Whereas Hitler committed 10 divisions to North Africa, he had 200 divisions on the Russian Front. Therefore, the fighting, destruction, and bloodshed escalated to horrific levels and continued unbroken until the bitter end.

The Western Front (1942-44)

The tide was turning against Germany on other fronts as well, especially as American forces and material were being fed into the war. In North Africa, Allied forces under the British General, Montgomery decisively defeated German General Rommel and his Afrika Corps at El Alamein. Despite all of Rommel's efforts, the German war effort in North Africa faltered without adequate aid from home. By May 1943, the Germans had been cleared from North Africa.

The Allies then swept across Sicily and into Italy. German forces defending Italy used its rocky and mountainous terrain well and slowed down the Allies who referred to Italy as "tough old gut". The slowness of the Allied advance in Italy aggravated Stalin who pushed the British and Americans to open a new front to take the pressure off Russia. Much of the hostility between Russia and the West after the war came from Stalin's belief that his allies intentionally dragged their feet while Russia and Germany bled each other to death.

In fairness to the British and Americans, launching an amphibious assault on France's heavily defended coasts was a very dangerous and tricky operation. It required intense preparations and the build-up of massive forces that were not ready until 1944. Until that time, the British and American air forces were busy taking the war directly to the German heartland. As the war progressed, so did the intensity of aerial bombardments of German cities. In some cases, as at Hamburg in 1943 and Dresden in 1945, the bombing was so intense that firestorms developed, whipping up 150 mile per hour winds and temperatures of 1800 degrees Fahrenheit. The destruction and death tolls from these raids were devastating to the German people. However, German war industries had largely been decentralized and spread out away from the heart of German cities, Therefore, they still managed to maintain production of weapons and war materials.

On D-Day, June 6, 1944, the British and Americans finally gave Stalin the second front he wanted by launching an amphibious assault on the beaches of Normandy, the largest such assault in history. It ran a tremendous risk, but was successful in establishing a foothold in France. In the following weeks, the Allies expanded that foothold and then broke out into the French countryside in July. In the following months, they triumphantly advanced through France, liberating Paris in August, and being poised for a final assault on Germany in 1945.

The end of the Third Reich (1944-45)

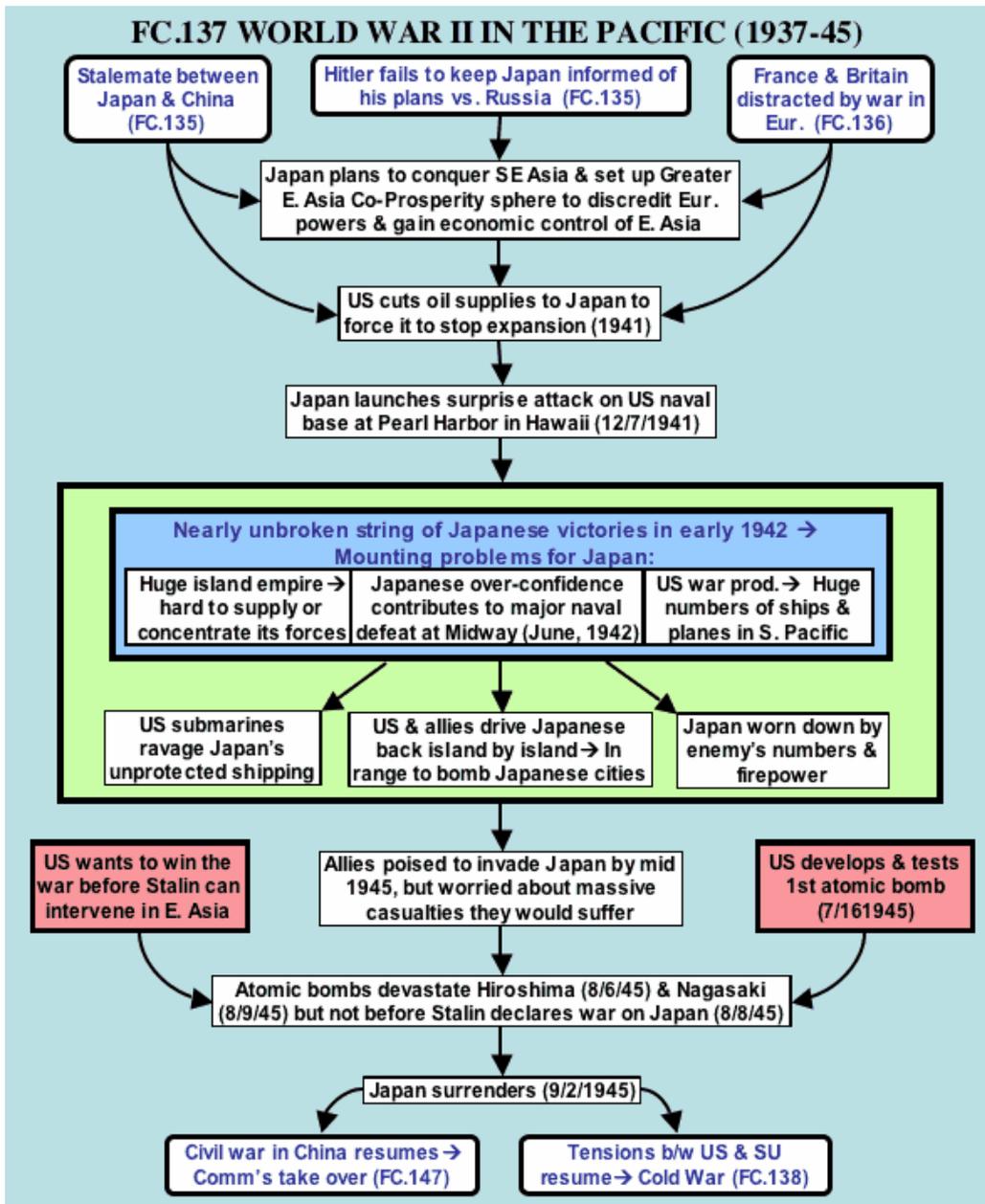
By late 1944, the German position on both the Eastern and Western Fronts was steadily crumbling. On June 22, 1944 (the third anniversary of the German invasion of Russia), the Russians broke through two strong points in the German line and surrounded 40 divisions known as Army Group Center. Eventually they destroyed or captured all but 12 of those divisions. In October, a similar offensive destroyed Germany's Army Group North. Germany's allies, Romania and Bulgaria, dropped out of the war and the Germans were forced to abandon the Balkans. By 1945 the Russians were driving through Poland against a German army that had only one tank for every three or four miles of front and was drafting old men and 14 year old boys to fill its ranks.

In one last desperate bid, probably to get a negotiated settlement from Britain and America and thus force the Russians to stop their advance, Hitler launched a surprise attack against the American and British forces in the Ardennes in December 1944. The Germans were initially successful in this "Battle of the Bulge," but their offensive literally ran out of gas and men as the Allies regrouped and counterattacked. In early 1945, the Russians, Americans, and British invaded Germany from both east and west.

With invasions closing in from all sides and air raids tearing apart Germany's cities, only Hitler, who was secluded in an underground bunker, failed to recognize the inevitable collapse of Germany and refused to surrender. In late April, Russian forces reached Berlin. What few German forces that remained put up a desperate resistance, and it took the Russians three days to take the city. Just as the Russians were closing in on his bunker, Hitler committed suicide. His body, probably cremated beyond recognition, was never found.

In his wake, Hitler left an unprecedented amount of death and destruction, including the brutal and bizarre murder of some 6,000,000 Jews and millions of others in his death camps. He had intended his Third Reich to last 1000 years. It had lasted twelve.

FC137World War II in the Pacific (1941-45)



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"I am become Death, the destroyer of Worlds."— *Robert Oppenheimer, quoting the Hindu scripture, The Bhagavadgita, upon witnessing the first atomic bomb test in July 1945*

We have already seen how the stalemate between Japan and China, Hitler's failure to keep Japan informed about his plans against Russia, and France and Britain being distracted by the outbreak of war in Europe caused Japan to turn south and threaten the European colonies in South-east Asia. The Japanese planned to consolidate their gains there by forming the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, an organization of states that would provide Japan with raw materials as well as markets for its manufactured goods. All this seriously damaged the reputation of the West and set the stage for colonial revolts and independence after the war.

Up to this point, Japan was careful not to antagonize the United States, which then held the Philippines. However, in 1941 the United States, nearly as concerned about aggression in Asia as in Europe, cut off its oil shipments to Japan to persuade it to back off from invading Indonesia. The Japanese, desperate for oil, took the fatal step of attacking the United States' naval base at Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands (12/7/41). This did cripple American

naval power in the Pacific for the time being, but it also brought into action an industrial giant that Japan would have a hard time matching blow for blow. Still, the opening months of 1942 saw a virtually unbroken string of Japanese successes, including the conquest of the Philippines.

However, in the long run, these victories would cause some serious problems for Japan. For one thing, the Japanese generals became overconfident of victory, which in June, 1942 helped set up a serious defeat at the hands of the American navy at Midway, a battle which proved to be the turning point of the war. Secondly, the Japanese advance caused American industrial production to intensify and create overwhelming numbers of ships and planes for the war in the Pacific. In fact, by 1944 American production was twice that of Japan, Germany, and Italy combined. Another major problem Japan had was that, although its empire covered nearly 1/10 of the globe, most of that was water. This spread the Japanese army very thinly over a large number of islands. That in turn stretched the Japanese navy's resources to its limits as it tried to supply the army on the various islands.

As a result, everything started going wrong for Japan. First of all, the widespread nature of the Japanese Empire meant that American warships, especially submarines, could destroy most of the Japanese navy and shipping, thus isolating forces on the islands from each other and Japan. This in turn allowed the allies to concentrate their forces on each island separately and destroy the forces there in detail. Finally, the stepped up industrial production of the United States wore the Japanese down with its superior numbers and firepower. The Japanese fought ferociously, often to the last man, despite being supplied with no food or ammunition and sometimes having to fight with bamboo spears.

By 1944, the Allies had taken islands within bomber range of Japan and were launching devastating raids on Japanese cities. One raid over Tokyo in 1945 triggered a firestorm, much like the ones that hit Hamburg and Dresden, killing 200,000 Japanese civilians in its flames. Japanese houses, made of wood and paper, were much more susceptible to Allied incendiary bombs than European cities of brick and stone.

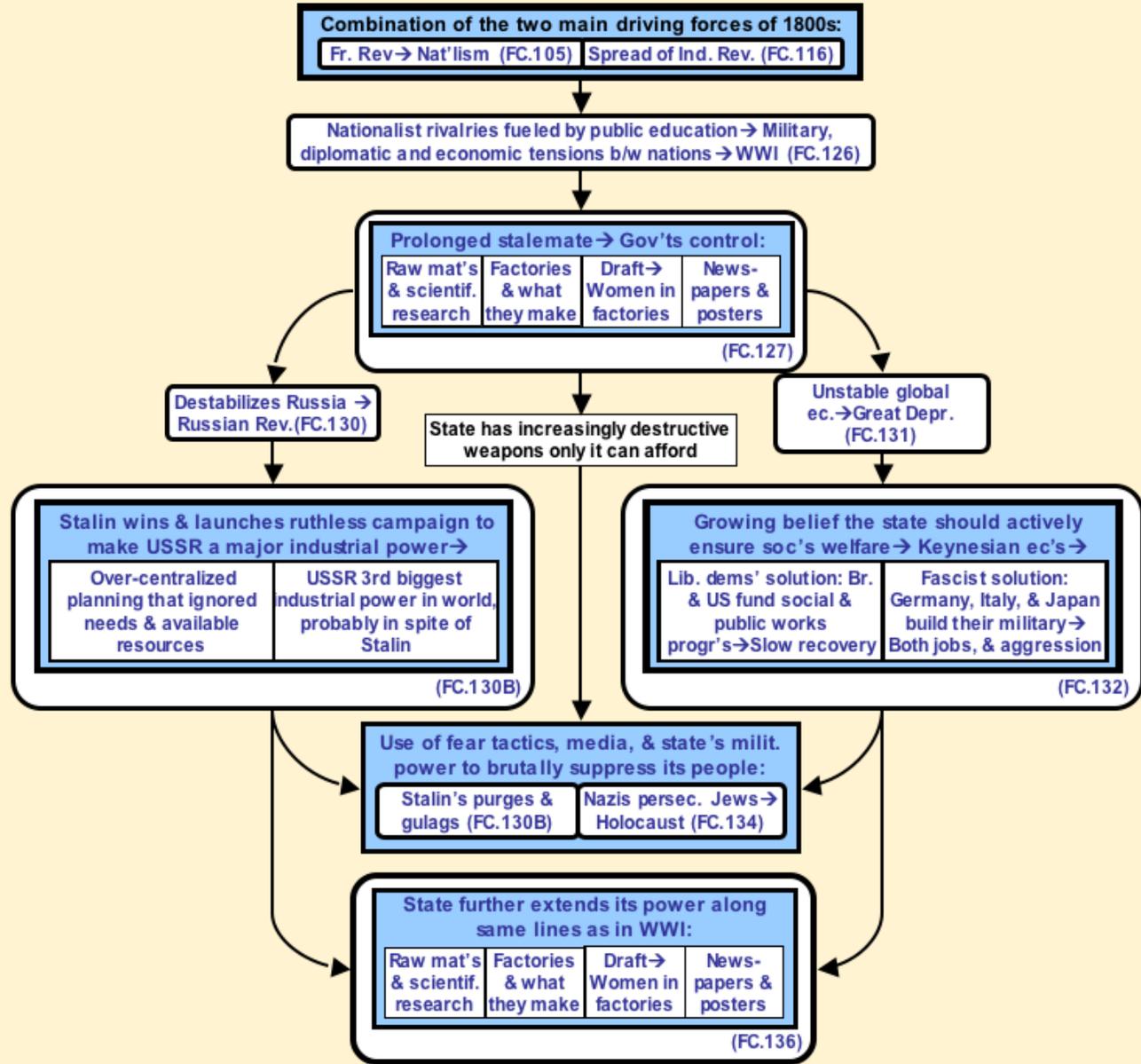
By the time the war in Europe was over, the Allies were preparing to invade a Japanese homeland whose 60 largest cities were 60% destroyed, whose fuel supplies were depleted, and whose railroads and industries were near collapse. However, an invasion of Japan was not a thought the Allies treasured, since some estimated Allied casualties would reach one million while Japanese casualties might reach 10-20 million.

Complicating this situation was the fact that Stalin had promised to enter the war against the Japanese 90 days after the conclusion of the war in Europe. That would put his entry into the war in early August. The United States, not wanting to give Stalin a chance to expand in Asia, needed to win the war quickly with as few casualties as possible. They found that way with a new weapon: the atomic bomb, which they had been developing through the Manhattan Project since 1942.

On August 6 and 9, 1945, the United States Air Force launched nuclear attacks on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki respectively. The level of destruction and suffering was unprecedented and signaled a dangerous new era in history. Debates continue about whether the U.S. should have dropped these bombs. Some see it as a needless act of mass destruction launched against a country on the verge of collapse. However, to Americans still caught up in the fury of a world war, it was seen as a way to shorten the war and save American (and Japanese) lives. Whatever one's opinion, Hiroshima and Nagasaki provided a grim and frightening vision of what the future could hold for us. The direct result of the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was that Japan soon surrendered on September 2, 1945. However, Asia was anything but calm as civil war in China would put the Communists in power there in 1949 and the Cold War between the United States and Russia was starting .

FC137B The Evolution of the State in the Early Twentieth Century

FC.137B THE EVOLUTION OF THE STATE IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY (1900-45)



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