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## **War: An Extremely Terrible Occurrence**

War! Used by some, hated by all. Between 1939 and 1945 the world witnessed a war that should never be repeated. It followed around twenty years after the previous world's worst war, WWI. It was the anger of the people and the cunning of some destructive men that led Germany, Italy, and Japan to use their military might to try and take gain control of the world.

To understand the reasons why WWII started, we need to go back to the end of WWI and the Treaty of Versailles. Also, the Great Depression played a role in what occurred. Germany, Italy, and Japan were, in their eyes, all slighted on the world stage as a result of WWI. Germany was destroyed, forced to pay a huge amount of reparations to the allies, given a government that went against their culture, and was in utter chaos when the depression hit. Italy, which had been on the winning side, was snubbed by the larger powers and did not gain the territory they had wanted. Japan had much of the same feelings as Italy as well as a weak civilian government.

First, let us take a look at fascism so that we can grasp why all this was occurring. Fascist states are ruled by a dictator with no opposition allowed towards the government. Now you may be saying to yourself, "This sounds exactly like what the U.S.S.R. and other communist nations were also doing at the time." But unlike socialism/communism, fascism used existing businesses for their needs instead of creating new ones. These forms of government bitterly hated and resented communism.

Italy, on other hand, as mentioned before, was on the winning side of the war, but the Great Depression hit them hard. Unhappy with their lives, they rallied behind Benito Mussolini, the man who invented fascism. His idea was to create a reincarnation of the Roman Empire

because that is when Italy was at its peak. So he led a march on Rome to overthrow the government. In great fear, the Italian king made Mussolini the Prime Minister and he quickly became the supreme ruler who could not be voted out. He set about solving the country's hemorrhaging of their people as well as conquering territories to make colonies such as Ethiopia.

With what had happened at the end of the “Great War” (WWI) with the Treaty of Versailles and also the Great Depression, many of the people in these countries wanted to throw off the shackles of the treaty and poverty of the depression. Germany wanted to get revenge on France and control the world with their German influence. For Adolf Hitler to convince his countrymen, he made passionate speeches about the furthering of the German race. As Joseph Goebbels, the head of Propaganda for the Nazi government, stated, *“If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it.”* And believe it or not, it worked. The people fell in love with Hitler, supported him, and even bought the idea that the Jews were the cause of all the world's problems so they should be annihilated. The Nazis had tried to force a rebellion, just like Mussolini had successfully done, but when that did not work out they used fear tactics to get voted into positions of power and became strong enough that Hitler was made Chancellor. He was more powerful than officials expected and quickly became a dictator for life.

As soon as he secured his position, Hitler went about building up the German military might. He brought back the Luftwaffe (the air force) and a strong army. Both of these moves had been banned by the Treaty of Versailles. But no one took any action against Germany. Hitler then annexed Austria and still no country countered them. Later, when he announced he was going to annex the Sudetenland, a heavily German populated area of Czechoslovakia, Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, negotiated with Hitler that this would be the last annexation that the Third Reich would undertake. Unfortunately, this was not true as they then proceeded to invade Poland which threw Europe into war.

Let us now look at Japan, the Land of the Rising Sun. They, much like Italy, were unsatisfied at the end of WWI. The Great Depression, much like any other nation, hit them full force. And again just like in the other countries, the people were dissatisfied with their national leadership. The Japanese populous put their trust in the military leaders. They still had an emperor, but he was heavily influenced by his military. Japan invaded Russia and seized control of the Russian-controlled Manchuria, the mineral-rich and sparsely populated region of North-Eastern China. After making it look like China had attacked a train, they used the occasion and had a full-force invasion of Manchuria taking control of the territory.

Two years into the war the United States had not entered, but that was all about to change. On December 7, 1941, the Japanese Navy launched an attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the largest U.S. military base in the Pacific. They had hoped to destroy the aircraft carriers that were not there, but out on the high seas. With the bombing, some ships and many lives were lost. As the U.S. president, Franklin D. Roosevelt stated, *“Dec. 7, 1941 - a date which will live in infamy - No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.”* This move would prove a fatal one for the Axis powers (coalition headed by Germany, Italy, and Japan that opposed the Allied Powers - Great Britain, France, Russia, and U.S.A. - in World War II) as it brought the might of the American people into the conflict. With that quote in his speech to the citizens, the president declared war on Japan. Germany would follow suit by declaring war on the U.S. the next day.

The U.S.S.R. was an interesting case in this whole war. It ended the war being an ally, yet it had the mindset of the Axis powers. It was a case of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” At least as long as there is a common goal. You see, Hitler and Stalin (the dictator of the U.S.S.R.) had signed a treaty and had even simultaneously invaded Poland agreeing to split it. But Hitler was a fascist and hated all communists. So he started a second war front and invaded

Russia. This is how Stalin changed sides in the war. When a supposed friend wages war on the other, the two can no longer be friends.

At the end of WWI Woodrow Wilson, the U.S. president, stated “*This is a war to end all wars.*” No one realized how wrong this statement would be. Twenty years later a war occurred that took many more lives and split the world in two. Hitler wanted a German world, Mussolini wanted a Roman Empire, and the Japanese wanted a Japanese Asia. The Allied side was not perfect either. The U.S.S.R. wanted a communist world but flipped sides when Hitler backstabbed them. All in all, war is an extremely terrible occurrence.

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