After WWI, most of Europe and the United States wanted nothing more than to avoid another huge war. In the United States, the federal government decided the best way to avoid war was isolationism, the policy in which a country isolates itself to avoid conflict with other nations. Great Britain and France were busy trying to rebuild their nations. The Soviet Union was occupied with making their new nation strong. No one wanted another war, so they were willing to ignore what was occurring in several nations around Europe and the world.

In this atmosphere, authoritarianism was given a chance to rise. Authoritarianism is a belief in an all-powerful central government and a population that is forced to give up personal freedoms and be obedient. Authoritarian countries usually have 1 leader who is praised as a god. He is seen as the hero of the nation and the only person who can bring back glory, power and honor.

Authoritarian governments developed in 4 nations in Europe and in Japan during the Interwar Period (1919-1939). In Germany, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party took over the country. In Italy, the Fascist Party, led by Benito Mussolini, gained power. Francisco Franco led the Nationalists to power in Spain. Josef Stalin continued the authoritarian regime in the Soviet Union. And, in Japan, Hideki Tojo took over. Let’s take a look at one of these authoritarian countries.

**Germany: An Authoritarian Case Study**

The Treaty of Versailles to end WWI harshly punished Germany. Germany lost land, reduced their military to 100,000 soldiers, and was forced to pay billions of dollars in damages. The new government was a democracy, but quickly lost the support of the people. Germany’s economy completely fell apart. People were starving and desperate.

Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party offered the people a way out of this misery. Hitler promised to restore power and glory to Germany, but specifically just for Germans. He promised to rebuild the country and to ignore the Treaty of Versailles. He also invented an enemy for the German people, someone they could blame for the loss of the war and for the situation the country was now in. He blamed Jews.

By the early 1930s, the Nazi Party had gained enough popularity to be the controlling party in the German government. Hitler was named chancellor, but that wasn’t enough for him. Through intimidation, violence, and coercion, Hitler was able to expand his power and eventually become the dictator of Germany.

Hitler began to rebuild Germany into a world power. He built the German military into a modern powerhouse, defying the Versailles Treaty. He created laws against Jews and other ethnicities that were not German. He created a secret police force to arrest and murder anyone that spoke out against him. He took total control of Germany.

The next thing Hitler wanted to do was take back the land Germany lost after WWI. He sent troops into Austria and Czechoslovakia and no one stopped him. The leaders of Europe were terrified but did not want to start another war. They met with Hitler to ask him to stop invading other countries. Hitler agreed by saying he was only trying to reunite Germans in Austria and Czechoslovakia with their mother country.

Six months after promising to not invade any more countries, Germany invaded Poland and toppled the nation in 2 weeks. Great Britain and France declared war on Germany in September of 1939, thus starting WWII.

**World War Two: A Brief History**

In the years leading up to WWII, Nazi Germany had made defense alliances with Italy and Japan, forming the Axis Powers. These two nations were of like mind with Germany. They were both interested in expanding the size of their countries by invading other nations. Italy had invaded parts of Northern Africa and Ethiopia. Japan invaded East Asia and Southeastern Asia. No one tried to stop this expansion. Hitler now knew he could invade Europe without much intervention.

After invading and destroying Poland, Hitler sat his sights on Western Europe. In six weeks, Germany took over Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and France. By the summer of 1940, nearly all of Europe was under the control of Germany or allies with Germany.

Great Britain and the Soviet Union were the next countries on Hitler’s radar. He tried several times to invade Great Britain by air raids. Germany bombed British cities continuously for 57 days, but ultimately failed to destroy Great Britain. Germany eventually ran out of supplies to continue the bombing and decided to focus on the Soviet Union.

Germany launched a surprise attack on the Soviet Union in 1941. Germany drove deep into the Soviet Union but was unable to ever bring the Soviet Union to her knees, despite killing millions of Russian soldiers and civilians. The invasion of the Soviet Union was ultimately a disaster for Germany and Hitler gave up after 1943.

The United States, after 2 years of planning, finally joined the war in the European Theater in June 1944. In a dramatic invasion known as D-Day, the United States invaded northern France and pushed the Germans back. By August of 1944, France was liberated from Nazi occupation. The Allied Powers of the United States, France, Great Britain and the Soviet Union began their invasion of Germany to topple Adolf Hitler. VE Day, or “Victory In Europe Day,” occurred on May 8, 1945, when the Nazis were finally defeated.

In the Pacific Theater, the fighting between the United States and Japan was brutal. The United States declared war on Japan in December 1941, after Japan bombed the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Knowing fighting a war in two parts of the world would be impossible, the United States used submarine warfare against the Japanese in the Pacific until they could secure victory in Europe.

Over the course of a few months, the United States took control of the Pacific and planned on invading Japan. Some experts feared that an invasion of Japan would cost hundreds of thousands of lives and looked for an alternative approach. Since 1941, the United States had been involved in a secret project to develop a nuclear bomb before Germany. The secret project, known as the Manhattan Project, was finished in 1945, with a successful test of a nuclear bomb in the New Mexico desert. President Truman made the decision to drop the bombs on two cities, Nagasaki and Hiroshima, hoping the devastation would make Japan surrender. The bombs wreaked havoc, killing nearly 230,000 people by some estimates. Japan surrendered on September 2, 1945, ending World War Two.

**WWII Vocabulary**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Correct Term** | **Definition** | **Possible Answers** |
| authoritarianism | **The belief in an all-powerful central government and a population that is forced to give up personal freedoms and be obedient** | **Interwar period**  **isolationism**  **Authoritarianism**  **Adolf Hitler**  **Josef Stalin**  **Benito Mussolini**  **Francisco Franco**  **Hideki Tojo**  **Pearl Harbor**  **Allied Powers**  **Axis Powers**  **European Theater**  **Pacific Theater**  **D-Day**  **VE Day**  **Nagasaki & Hiroshima**  **The Manhattan Project** |
|  | **the secret project of the United States to create a nuclear bomb** |
|  | **the authoritarian leader of Italy** |
|  | **the alliance between Great Britain, Russia, and the United States during WWII** |
|  | **the period of time between WWI and WWII** |
|  | **the authoritarian leader of the Soviet Union** |
|  | **The US naval base that was attacked by surprise by Japan. The attack drew the US into WWII.** |
|  | **The 2 Japanese cities the United States dropped nuclear bombs on** |
|  | **the authoritarian leader of Spain** |
|  | **the battles of WWII in Europe** |
|  | **the battles of WWII in the Pacific** |
|  | **The alliance between Germany, Japan, and Italy during WWII** |
|  | **“Day of Days” the day the United States invaded Europe in an effort to beat the Nazis** |
|  | **the authoritarian leader of Germany** |
|  | **the prime minister of Japan** |
|  | **a policy in which a country stays out of the business of foreign nations in an effort to avoid conflict** |
|  | **“Victory In Europe Day,” the day the Allies beat the Germans to end WWII in Europe** |

***Summary: After doing the vocabulary and reading the article, please write a 1 paragraph summary of the article, using at least 6 vocabulary words. Use the space below.***