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The Place of World War II in History  
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When we look back today on the world of fifty years ago, two facets immediately come into view. In the first place, there are the almost unbelievable human losses and physical destruction. Exactly how many lost their lives in the war will never be known, but the most reliable estimates suggest a figure of over sixty million. And please note, this figure does not include the wounded. Added to this staggering loss of life is the vast destruction. Among the capitals of the world, Warsaw and Manila were hit worst, but they are mentioned here merely to represent the hundreds of cities and towns on all continents from Dutch Harbor in Alaska to Darwin in Australia which were more or less damaged by bombing, shelling, or the deliberate burning down of communities.

The second facet we see is the division of the world into victors and defeated: the Allies on one side, and the powers of the Tripartite Pact on the other. At the end of almost six years of fighting in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, and after fourteen years of upheaval and fighting in Asia and the Pacific, one side had forced the other to capitulate. And in the final months of fighting as well as immediately afterwards, population movements, either caused or contributed to by the war, continued on a vast scale. The end of the shooting by no means brought an end to the suffering.

What did all this mean for the participants, at that time practically all nations on earth? For the defeated, this meant complete occupation for all except Finland. But occupation was only the obvious sign of a lost war. For the Germans, defeat meant the end of an effort to become the dominant power on earth. The intended demographic revolution, initiated inside Germany in 1933 with the compulsory sterilization of those with allegedly hereditary defects, and accelerated inside and outside the country with the invasion of Poland which started World War II in 1939, was halted- it could not be extended to the rest of the globe.

For millions of Germans, this meant that they would neither be settled somewhere in the Ukraine or North Caucasus nor be assigned to guard or garrison duty somewhere in Africa, Asia, or the Western Hemisphere. I rather doubt that many Germans were greatly disappointed. If the Nazi government had called for individuals in Germany's cities to register for settlement in the new defense villages in the East, they would probably not have gotten millions to sign up; but people would, of course, not have been asked. There would have been prepared lists published in the newspapers, and people could have looked for their names and begun life anew. Only the high-ranking leaders of the armed forces and the black-shirted SS, who had already been given or promised stolen estates, may at times in the postwar years have thought longingly of the vast acres they had lost.

On the other hand, defeat saved the lives of many Germans. Liberation from National Socialism meant that the vast numbers of severely wounded German veterans would not be murdered by their own government as "lives unworthy of life." Their lives would hardly be easy, but they could live them out with their surviving relatives. The same thing would be true of others scheduled for so-called euthanasia if Germany won. And the program under which 400,000 Germans had been forcibly sterilized by 1945 could not gather additional victims.

In the religious, as in the cultural life, defeat freed the Germans from great dangers. All religions were supposed to disappear from the country; it is no coincidence that all plans for future German cities and residential areas were drafted without space for churches.<sup>1</sup> And in art and music, literature and architecture, there would be only what might be described as National Socialist realism. Even those who might at times prefer to close their eyes or ears to what they can see or hear now will

need to recall that their freedom to enjoy the music and art that they like requires the freedom of others to create theirs.

For millions of Germans defeat meant the loss of their homes. We can see here one of the tragic results of the attacks on and destruction of the peace settlement at the end of the First World War. At Versailles an attempt had been made to adjust the borders of Europe to the population. Though not invariably implemented carefully and justly, this was a significant progressive concept which was never appreciated, especially in Germany. The Third Reich put forward the opposite principle: the boundaries should be drawn up first, and then the population shoved in whatever direction the new borders called for. This procedure was applied to the Germans themselves at the end of World War II by the victors. The alleged defects of Versailles on Germany's eastern border were corrected, but at a very high price.

One should note in this context that the majority of the Germans who fled or were expelled from the former eastern territories and other portions of Europe settled in the Western zones of occupation in Germany. In the difficult and slow but steady development of a democratic parliamentary republic with its very substantial economic growth they would be able to see, perhaps later than many, but see all the same the truth of the assertion of that great theologian and opponent of Hitler's, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, that for the Germans like all others defeat would be better than victory.<sup>2</sup>

Italy had paid for Mussolini's thoughtless entrance into the war with the loss of its colonial empire and endless destruction. Participation had effectively ended the independence Italy had attained in the nineteenth century, as it had to be rescued by its German ally in 1941. Only the victory of the Allies could restore the independence of the country, a process that was already under way in 1945. Here, too, defeat rather than victory at the side of an overbearing Germany was a blessing for the people. The colonies had always been a financial burden for a basically poor country, and it was only in the postwar era that Italy made dramatic economic progress, especially in the industrial field, becoming one of the leading national economies in the world. In the years of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when Italy had attempted to play the role of a great power, the economic basis for that role had always been lacking; it was only after defeat that Italy's economy rose to high rank. It may serve as an indication of this rank that the basis for the European Common Market was laid in the Treaty of Rome.

Japan, like, Italy lost its pre-war conquests. Here too destruction marked the land, but on nothing like the scale which would have been produced by a climactic final campaign in the home islands. Under the impact of the atomic bombs and the Soviet declaration of war, the Japanese government had abandoned the idea of fighting on to the bitter end and instead capitulated. In many ways, Japan's situation in the Pacific War in 1945 resembled that of Germany in 1918 rather than that in 1945. A large part of Japan's military apparatus, some seven million men in the army and over a million in the navy, was still in service, stationed not only in the home islands but in very substantial areas Japan had conquered in prior years and which were still under Japanese control. But because Japan was obliged to surrender and accept occupation, there has been since 1945 nothing like a stab-in-the-back legend in Japan, and nobody, or practically nobody in the country has followed the example of so many Germans who after World War I argued that Germany should have continued fighting in 1918. It was precisely such notions which the Allies in World War II wanted to keep from coming up again, and in this they were entirely successful with both the Germans and the Japanese. A few Germans did think about a third world war, Field Marshal Ritter von Leeb for one;<sup>3</sup> and there might have been some equally hopelessly blind individuals in Japan; but for the overwhelming majority of Japanese once- as for most Germans twice- was enough.

The Japanese dream of a huge empire was gone. In this case also one can raise the question whether there were really that many Japanese who wanted to leave their homes and settle in such conquered places as Guadalcanal or the jungles of New Guinea- to say nothing of the Aleutian islands now being used as places of exile for misbehaving teenagers. There is also the question whether an

enlarged Japanese empire, with a colonial system, which to judge by the Korean model would have been far worse than any other, could have lasted for any length of time without involving Japan in endless guerrilla warfare against nationalist uprisings of all sorts.

Before the advocates of a militarily aggressive foreign policy had shot their way into power in Japan, there had been elements in the country which had pushed for a democratic system at home and a conciliatory policy abroad. The foreign policy of Shidehara Kijuro, like that of Gustav Stresemann in Germany, was continually under attack at home, but it pointed in sound directions and would have served the country far better than the policies adopted by the critics of both. After the defeat of Japan, the elements shunted aside earlier had a new opportunity to rebuild on the ruins left behind by the military adventurers, and the reformist plans of the Americans- with their insistence on land reform, the development of independent trade unions, and the political emancipation of women, provided Japanese leaders with excellent support for their efforts.

For the victorious powers, victory provided a long-hoped-for relief from terrible dangers. Exhausted and exhilarated simultaneously, they now hoped for a period of peace. Even though their cooperation had been marked by differences and troubles, they had held together. The British and the Americans hoped that this could continue after the war, but all indications suggest that Stalin never entertained this sentiment. In any case, relations between the Allies deteriorated rather rapidly after the war. Aside from the differences between their systems of government and outlook, two problems were of outstanding significance in creating difficulties. The first was the question of the future of the smaller states of East and Southeast Europe, the other was that of the future of Germany.

While in the countries liberated by the Western Powers, Communist parties were (and still are) legal and at times partners in the government, it quickly became evident that in the areas of East and Southeast Europe, whether they had fought on the Allied or the Axis side, Soviet pressure moved in the direction of one-party Communist dictatorships. The free elections which according to the Yalta agreements were supposed to be held in Poland already before the end of the war in Europe were put off for over forty years. After the events of the summer of 1944, when the Soviets made it possible for the Germans to crush the Polish uprising in Warsaw, the Polish question had become symbolic for the whole relationship between the eastern and western Allies. Over this issue their relationship deteriorated increasingly rapidly from 1945 on, now that the threat from Germany no longer cemented them together.

The differences over the German question were also becoming obvious in 1945. In the last days of fighting in Europe, the Soviets flew in a group of Communists led by Walter Ulbricht who were to establish a new regime under Moscow's auspices in the Soviet zone of occupation and hopefully all of Germany. The Soviet leadership began building the new structure with a roof and would try in subsequent decades to erect underneath this roof a structure that could hold it up. This proved to be as impossible in politics as in architecture. The Western Powers from the beginning followed an entirely different procedure. They decided to start at the bottom, and slowly at that. They would entrust responsibilities to Germans first at the local level, try to get Germans accustomed to democratic customs and procedures, and then step-by-step establish German authorities at higher levels. As this process went forward, political parties, newspapers, and magazines would be licensed to create a controlled but still vigorous area of public debate. A roof was put on this developing structure only in 1949, and with very obvious and substantial German participation even if under Allied influence. From the political as from the architectural point of view, this would prove to be on the whole a far more sensible procedure. I do not want to suggest that all had been planned carefully beforehand or was implemented without friction or mistakes; but now that the Germans are themselves getting a chance to try their hands at rebuilding on the ruins of a dictatorial regime, both they and observers from outside may become a bit more charitable in assessing the performance of the Western Allies after 1945.

The breakup of the wartime alliance over the issues of the independence of the East European countries and the German question together with some other issues would mark the postwar era. In this

connection, it is essential that we note a most significant difference between the way the two world wars ended. At the conclusion of World War I, all the major powers of Central and Eastern Europe had been defeated: first the Central Powers had defeated Russia and then the Western Powers had defeated Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman empire. The extraordinary situation of 1918-1919 is thrown into relief if we compare it with the situation at the end of prior wars in that region. In the many wars which the Habsburg, Romanov and Ottoman empires had fought against each other in preceding centuries, one or the other had emerged as winner. The winner had then taken territory or spheres of influence from the loser. At the end of World War I the smaller peoples of this part of Europe were able to arrange- or try to arrange- their own affairs as they saw fit for the first time in centuries. Even the victors in the war could not enforce their concepts in this region because they neither occupied it militarily, nor could they possibly persuade their peoples to maintain and employ the military forces necessary to enforce their views.

The Second World War initiated by Germany put an end to the experiments at independence by the peoples of Eastern Europe. At the end of this war one could hardly expect the extraordinary situation at the end of World War I to recur. Either Germany would win, and then the independence of the smaller countries would be terminated, or the Soviet Union would win- and then their independence would also be terminated. Only Yugoslavia, Albania, and Finland were able to evade this fate because of special circumstances in each case. For forty years the countries from Estonia to Bulgaria disappeared as truly independent actors from the international scene. It would turn out that it was all not as simple for the Soviet superpower as Stalin may have imagined, but for decades Moscow made all the critical decisions. I would remind you of the international conference at which the Soviet representative Andrei Gromyko got up during a plenary session and left the hall, much to the astonishment of the representatives of the satellites who had not been tipped off. One by one they stood up and followed him. It turned out that Gromyko had wanted to go to the toilet; one by one the others returned to their seats, slightly embarrassed.

Surely one of the most important results of World War II has been that the countries between Germany and Russia have been forced to start over after an interval of half a century. They were led into a dead-end alley as further victims of the great conflict. Under exceedingly difficult circumstances they must now attempt to work out a new and better future for themselves. It has been the great good fortune of the Germans that because of the insistence of President Roosevelt and his military and civilian advisors on an invasion of Northwest Europe, the majority of Germany's population was spared this ordeal. Had the Western Allies pursued the further operations in the Mediterranean which the British had urged, they might well have reached Bulgaria and Albania, and perhaps also parts of Yugoslavia and other bits of Southeast Europe; but the Iron Curtain would have run East-West instead of North-South with all of Germany north of it and hence under Soviet control. Those Germans who today complain about the costs and difficulties of reunification ought to give some thought to the farsightedness of American leadership in World War II which spared Germany three-quarters of the problem and provided that three-quarters with the framework for coping with the new challenge.

The countries of Northern and Western Europe regained the freedom they had lost in 1940 due to the strategy of the Western Allies during the last year of the war. Northwestern Europeans had suffered greatly, but with some American help, they were not only able to reconstruct their democratic systems but also to begin moving them in new directions. Here the victory of the Allies brought with it a movement pointing to Europe's future. I want to illustrate this with one striking example. When Europe was reorganized in 1814-1815 at the end of the Napoleonic Wars the three areas of the Netherlands, what had been the Austrian Netherlands, and Luxembourg were joined into one state under the Dutch crown. In the first nationalist tidal wave of the nineteenth century, first Belgium and then Luxembourg broke away from the Netherlands. The independence of these states was originally directed, not surprisingly against Holland. One major result of World War II was the formation of Benelux: the furnace of war melted old ways of thinking and produced new initiatives. Here, as in the

case of Italy, there are geographic symbols: the European authorities in Brussels and the Treaty of Maastricht.

This development brings up what will surely be regarded as one of the most significant changes by which the place of World War II in history will be assessed: the end of the Franco-German antagonism. One might very well have anticipated just the opposite: on one hand, the terror regime of the Germans in France, accompanied by a degree of economic exploitation which makes the post-World War I reparations demands look like small change, and on the other hand, as a result of this experience, a French policy in post-World War II Europe designed to preclude any German unity of whatever variety. But in spite of all this, the war brought other perceptions to the fore in both countries; a process most easily recognizable in the agreement of the French government to the reunion of the Saar territory with the Federal Republic of Germany. I should mention that it was in connection with his Saar policy that Konrad Adenauer was called "the Chancellor of the Allies" in a parliamentary debate!

In regard to the change in German-French relations, it can be argued that the symbols have been personal, not geographic. No one could accuse Adenauer of opportunism when he advocated close German-French relations; he had argued for such a policy in the Germany of the 1920s when that was about the least popular line for anyone to take in the country. And no one could accuse Charles de Gaulle of being subservient to or a collaborator with Germany. He was, as all knew, the man who had personified defiance of and resistance to Germany. It is certainly sad that a second world war was needed to bring about this great change, but surely in this case late is far better than never.

For Great Britain the war meant that her role as a world power was ended, even though not all inside or outside the country recognized it right away. In wars against the Dutch colonial empire and against French and Spanish efforts to obtain a dominant role in Europe, England had secured its own position as a world power. The two wars against Germany's attempts to dominate the globe destroyed England's position. How did it come to be that the same process which had once created now debilitated the status of England? Simply put, it was just too great an effort; the strain was beyond bearing. This reversal is most visible in two aspects of the rise and fall of Britain's position.

One way of looking at this question is to consider the colonial issue. While Britain had in prior wars almost invariably increased her colonial possessions, primarily at the expense of her European rivals, this situation was reversed by the two world wars because of their great difficulty. Instead of utilizing its military power to defend its colonies and perhaps add to them, in both world wars Britain had to call upon her empire to assist in the defeat of Germany in Europe. The colonial accessions resulting from World War I in no way invalidate this point: in the first place, most of them were allocated to the Dominions, not Britain herself; and secondly, they were all supposed to be headed for independence. And this process had by 1939 already moved forward substantially in the case of Iraq for example. The members of the Commonwealth correctly looked back on their participation in the war as their point of coming out into independence: on the hill in Ottawa in front of the parliament building stands the monument to the Canadian soldiers who fought at Vimy Ridge, and every April the Australians on ANZAC-Day recall the landing of their soldiers at Gallipoli.

I shall return to the colonial question in general shortly, but it must first be noted that the participation of forces from the Commonwealth and Empire was even more important for England in World War II than in World War I. Of the many signs of this, only three will be mentioned as illustrations: units from the world-wide empire constituted a large proportion of the British forces fighting in North Africa; the Canadians took over a major segment of the Battle of the Atlantic; and India provided over two million soldiers for the largest volunteer army of the war. The postwar situation was far different for Britain in 1919 than in 1815, and this was even more the case after 1945.

A second characteristic of the changed status of Britain was a complete reversal of the country's financial role in the war. In prior wars England had almost invariably assisted its allies with subsidies or loans. In addition to covering its own war costs, it had helped its allies cover theirs. In World War I

it had still been possible for England to do this. It is true that England obtained credits from the United States, but these were in part taken out to cover the expenses of allies of London whose credit was weak, and the rest was more than offset by direct credits which England provided its allies. This was entirely different in World War II. As could be- and was- anticipated, Britain's financial situation, not yet recovered from the damage it had suffered in the last war, was simply not up to the costs of another great conflict. Only some financial assistance from the Commonwealth and extensive aid from the United States enabled Great Britain to fight on after late 1940. Victory was simply too expensive for the state's financial resources.

In August 1939 a German diplomat warned a member of the Foreign Office that only Russia and America would emerge as victors from a new war. He asked: "How would England like to be an American Dominion?" The British diplomat replied "that she would infinitely prefer to be an American Dominion than a German Gau."<sup>4</sup> There was never any suggestion in this country that England be made into a Dominion.<sup>5</sup> The danger of the island kingdom becoming a German Gau was, however real; the Imperial War Museum in London has recently reprinted both the German military government handbook for Great Britain and the voluminous arrest list. There is, further, an interesting but - rarely noted facet of the notorious Wannsee Protocol, the record of the German conference of January 1942 in which the apparatus of the German government as a whole was harnessed to the program for the murder of Europe's Jews. Included in the listing of those destined to be killed were the Jews of England, estimated at 330,000.<sup>6</sup> A number of questions were discussed at the conference, but this point was so taken for granted that no discussion of it was thought necessary. After all, England alongside Ireland, was to become a German Gau.

The demands of a war which surpassed the capacity of Great Britain left it in search of a new role in the world in spite of its being one of the Big Three victors. This was and remains a difficult process. It would, in my judgment, be a serious mistake to pass it by with a slight smile. What the future holds in this regard is far more difficult to predict than many assume. Just one illuminating example: in the international civil aviation conference held in Chicago during the war to work out rules for the postwar era, there was a serious clash between the British and the American delegations. The details are not of importance now, but the basis for the controversy is worth noting. The British were afraid that if they were not allowed rules which in effect would allow them special preferences, they would be hopelessly outmatched in postwar competition, while the Americans insisted on a more open market. With great- and greatly resented- pressure, the Americans pushed through most of their demands. Nevertheless, today British Airways is the largest and most successful civilian airline in the world and dominates civil aviation's most profitable route, that across the North Atlantic.

Mention of the civil aviation conference raises a further aspect of World War II which will mark its place in modern history. With the United States playing a leading role, and President Franklin Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull very much personally engaged, preparatory steps were taken during the war for the establishment of the United Nations Organization and a whole host of other structures like UNESCO and the Food and Agriculture Organization. If one asks, why all this organizational activity and such extensive American participation, one must, of course, first recognize that all hoped that the second world war in the century would be followed by a more successful attempt at an international system to protect the peace that had been established in 1919. As for the United States' role in it, we must recall the way in which the American leadership of the time saw their own experiences at the end and after World War I. Practically all of them had been very much involved in the events of that period. They had seen first how the granting of an armistice to Germany at a time when their Republican opponents were calling for unconditional surrender had contributed heavily to their loss of the midterm Congressional election of 1918. Thereafter, they had struggled in vain for the ratification of the peace treaties and American entrance into the League of Nations. President Woodrow Wilson had predicted that if the United States turned its back on the world, there would be another war in twenty years; now his prophecy had been realized in the most awful way conceivable.

Roosevelt perhaps more than anyone was determined that this time it would be different. Not everyone recalls that as candidate for Vice-President in 1920 he had suffered his only electoral defeat; I can assure you that he remembered. He made sure that this time high-ranking members of the Republican Party would be involved in the process of establishing the UN, that the American public came to recognize the importance of such an organization for them, and that the preliminary and organizing conferences for it as well as its headquarters would all be located in the United States as a means of engaging the American public. He himself was dead by the time of the San Francisco Conference, but he had set the path. This time around, the people of the United States should see themselves as playing an active role in world affairs- to secure their own interests if for no other purposes- and in this endeavor he was to be entirely successful. More and more Americans came to see the past in this regard the way he did, and they were willing to do things differently this time in the hope that such an attitude and the policies designed to implement it would preclude a third world war. Joining the UN was approved in the Senate by a vote of 89 to 2.

In a moment I shall return to some further aspects of the United Nations Organization, but first a word must be said about the way in which the war changed the United States beyond its altered role in international affairs. The economy of this country had not only grown massively, but it had changed geographically. In addition to expansion in the traditional areas of industrial strength, new centers had been developed, especially in the West and Northwest. Furthermore, the need for a rapid build-up of American forces had led the government to look for training bases and flying facilities in regions of the country where the weather could be expected to facilitate year-round operations; hence the tremendous growth of what is now known as the sun-belt. It is too often forgotten today that the demographic, economic, and political shift within this country toward a larger role for the South, Southwest, and West is the product of decisions made in Washington during World War II.

These shifts carried with them further changes, or at least the beginnings of them. Although there has been some argument about this in recent scholarship, I would assert that the war opened up a whole variety of avenues for change in both the field of race relations and in the area of opportunities for women. The more dramatic alterations would come later, but much of the foundation for them was laid during the war. In addition, the passage of the GI Bill of Rights, especially its educational provisions, opened up America to social mobility in a way nothing else in this century had accomplished.

A word should be said about the fate averted by victory. As early as the summer of 1928, Hitler had assumed that Germany would fight the United States. While the German government had been working on weapons systems for that war, it had not gotten around to preparing either an occupation handbook or an arrest list as it had for England. But German occupation policy elsewhere provides clear indications of the terrible future awaiting the American people. Let me mention just one feature of German policy which was ruthlessly applied everywhere their power could reach: the killing of those in mental institutions, in old folks' homes, and with what they considered physical defects. The young woman who is this year's Miss America would have been murdered for being deaf; surely here is a point worth contemplating among the fiftieth anniversaries of battles that have recently filled our media.

Returning to the UN, I want to comment on two further aspects of that organization: the role of China and the increasing number of newly independent states. The British and Soviet governments were most reluctant to agree to Roosevelt's insistence on China being treated as a great power during the war; in fact, they thought he was crazy to push this issue and China's being allotted a permanent seat in the Security Council. But the President saw a future world without colonies and one in which a reconstructed China would play a major role in Asia and, as a friend of the United States, restrain any other power in Asia- something that could only mean the Soviet Union- from attaining a dominant role. It is hardly surprising that such concepts did not garner applause in London or Moscow.

Developments inside China went in a different direction from that Roosevelt had hoped for. The long war with Japan destroyed the Nationalist regime; Japan's campaign in China brought the Communists to power there. But regardless of who controlled the country, it would play a new and major role in world affairs. The Germans had lost their special treaty rights in China as a result of World War I; the Western Allies gave up theirs during World War II; the rights and territories extorted by the Russian Empire would poison postwar Soviet-Chinese relations even as their governments were supposed to be allied. As for internal modernization, a comparison between today's Taiwan and the People's Republic of China suggests that a Nationalist regime might have done at least as well as those waving Mao's Red Book, but that is something the Chinese people will have to work out themselves.

The other aspect of the UN in the decades after World War II was the dramatic increase in membership. This is the internationally visible manifestation of the process of decolonization. As Roosevelt had hoped and foreseen, the history of colonialism, already affected by World War I, was, with the possible exception of Eastern Europe, effectively ended by World War II. The United States had decided before the war that we would leave the Philippines; in this case the war actually delayed the process. Similarly in India, the war originally meant postponement rather than acceleration, but that was only the initial impact. With the continuation of military operations, everything changed: at the bottom, an Indian army made up primarily of Indian soldiers led by Indian officers could not be employed against the population; at the top it was the Allied commander of the last years of the war, Lord Louis Mountbatten, who arranged the transfer of power.

The example of India, the most populous of the colonies, may serve as representative for the whole process of decolonization. One by one, sometimes peacefully, sometimes accompanied by great bloodshed, the remaining colonies of Western Europe became independent as the colonial powers had for the most part lost both the ability and the will to hold empires as a result of the war. The French resisted the trend more than others, very much to their own and their former colonies' disadvantage. And decolonization, it should be noted, extended to those who had remained neutral in the war: Spain and Portugal. A new chapter in the history of what had been the expansion of Europe into the world began. Three aspects of this new chapter merit further attention: the old-new boundaries of the former colonies, the special situation in the Near East, and the colonies of Russia and the Soviet Union.

Let me turn first to the borders. The new states inherited borders designed by the Europeans to accommodate *their* interests and drawn without regard for, or much knowledge of, the peoples in the affected areas. That as a result there were and still are all sorts of problems involving structure and boundaries in the newly independent states ought not to occasion much surprise. And that these have been and remain most difficult in what had been India, as I said, the largest and most populous of the former colonies, has to be seen as part of this problem.

These difficulties are greatly accentuated in the Middle East as a result of Nazi actions. In the winter of 1938-39 the British switched their policies towards the Germans and the Arabs. Up to that time, the London government had tried to appease the Germans and to repress the Arab uprising in the smaller of the two mandates carved out of the original Palestine mandate. Now this scenario was reversed. Britain decided that she would fight Germany the next time it attacked any country that defended itself, but this meant that the troops in Palestine had to be brought home, and London would have to try to appease the Arabs. Jewish immigration was practically halted, and all plans to establish a tiny Jewish state within the mandate were dropped. The war turned all this in other directions.

On the one hand, the Jews in Europe who had survived the killing of some six million of their number by the Germans were almost all determined to go to Palestine; on the other hand, the leadership of the extremist Arab nationalists had aligned themselves with the Germans- in view of the promise of the latter to murder all Jews in the Middle East- and were therefore discredited. A new partition of the former mandate followed, with a Jewish state now to be larger than that contemplated in the discarded partition plan of 1937. Wars and other troubles followed. These would be further complicated by the fact that with the vast majority of East European Jews murdered during the war, a



high proportion of the Jewish immigrants came until 1989 from the newly independent Arab states and hence were resentful of persecution by Arabs rather than Germans, Poles or Russians.

The third aspect of the decolonization process which must be addressed is that of the Soviet and Russian colonial empires. This represents merely a portion of the impact of World War II on Soviet society, but there is an advantage to starting with it. Nothing demonstrates more dramatically the false direction into which Moscow steered than the fact that precisely in the years when the other colonial empires in the world were being dismantled, the Soviet leadership was erecting a new Soviet colonial empire in Eastern Europe on top of the Russian colonial empire built by their Romanov predecessors. In the Baltic States they followed the example of France in Algeria- annexation and mass settlement; in the rest of Eastern Europe they tried to copy the British colonial concept of indirect rule, that is, rule through dependent local authorities selected by the imperial power.

Why did the Soviets, who were always so proud of their far-seeing scientific understanding of historical evolution, so completely miss the real trend of the time? In trying to answer this question, we must look at two effects of the war: fear of possible new dangers and pride as well as consolidation because of the victory. The terrible experience of war should make it easy to understand why security concerns merged with ambitious expansionist plans in Stalin's policies. All this had been made possible by German actions. In the First World War, the German imperial government had done whatever it could to help the Bolsheviks obtain power in Russia. Then, instead of recognizing the advantages of a peace which placed a tier of independent states between Germany and Russia, the Germans could not wait to terminate their existence. Having once again obtained the dubious blessing of a common border, the Germans invaded the Soviet Union. It was this invasion which provided the Soviet regime with its only period of true legitimacy in the eyes of the mass of its population. It was this government which had held together the state in its great crisis, had thereby averted rule by people who had accomplished the extraordinary feat of making Stalin look benign, and had defeated the supposedly invincible German army. Without the consolidation of the Soviet regime as a result of this, there would not only never have been such vast expansion of Soviet power in eastern Europe, but the whole system would most likely have collapsed even sooner under the burden of its own incompetence as it did in the 1980s. The war had inflicted terrible losses on the country- some 25 million dead- and immeasurable destruction, but it had given the government decades of super-power status in the world and years of added viability at home.

A further new development of the war which attests to its historical significance is connected with the fact that this prolongation of Soviet rule in Moscow did not lead to a new war. The production of nuclear weapons, whose use helped end the war more quickly, had, precisely through that use, dramatically illuminated the possible costs of any new conflict and had thus made all major powers far more cautious. Because the leaders of the Soviet Union really did believe that history moved on railroad tracks according to a schedule laid down by Marx, Lenin, and Stalin, they saw no need to run unnecessary risks. Since they knew the direction of the world historical process ahead of time, no dangerous push was needed to accomplish the triumph of their vision which was inevitable in any case.

There was here a fundamental difference from the view of Hitler who was always worried about not moving fast enough, who very much regretted not having gone to war in 1938, and preferred to have war sooner rather than later.<sup>7</sup> If someone is absolutely determined to have war, there is really nothing other than surrender that one can do to avoid it. But because the Soviets were confident of ultimate triumph, the NATO countries could simply wait them out. There was always the possibility of a miscalculation- the Berlin crises of 1948-49 and 1958-61, as well as the Cuban Missile Crisis, offer particularly dangerous examples- but with sufficient self-confidence and deterrent weapons, one could await the future in a Cold Peace. It must be noted that the creation of the United States Air Force Academy was one of the steps this country took to implement such a policy. With caution and good luck the waiting approach worked. The sad thing is that the peoples of the former Russian empire now have to start over again; here the war delayed rather than accelerated developments.

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From a distance of half a century we see how the world was altered by the greatest war ever. It had shown that modern industrial society has an incredible capacity for destruction. It had also shown that human beings have the capacity to deny their own humanity and transmute themselves into something else: the recently released mass murderer Kurt Franz referred to his participation in mass killing at the killing center of Treblinka as "The Good Old Days."<sup>8</sup> The victory of the Allies saved the world from the practitioners of "The Good Old Days." That victory brought the defeated as well as the victors an opportunity to make a new start: in overcoming the hatreds of the war, in new international organizations- whatever their defects- in new forms of cooperation in Western and Central Europe, in the freedom of former colonial peoples, in the construction of democratic systems in many countries- Germany and Japan included. And just as the war demonstrated the destructive capacity of the modern world, so the postwar years showed that humanity's capacity for rebuilding can also not be overestimated. But reconstruction cannot be confined to the building of houses and the repair of bridges. Physical reconstruction is important, but it cannot stand alone.

A final but especially significant break in history was caused by the war through its impact on the religious life of many. After a century in which especially, but not only in the Western world, all belief in religious values had declined and been replaced by a secularistic way of life and thought, the Second World War brought an even more dramatic break. How could human beings believe in a gracious God who allowed such things to happen? Is there any possibility of rebuilding the concept of humans created in the divine image after so deep a descent? I would suggest that this is the central issue in the reconstruction of the world after the war. Instead of exclusive preoccupation with and adulation of themselves, people must once again find ways to recognize in the faces of others- whatever their color, religion, or nationality- the image of fellow human beings created in God's image. If we cannot do that, the end of World War II shows us what the end of human history will look like. No one can claim that we have not been warned.

## NOTES

This lecture was originally delivered with a somewhat different text in German with the title "Der Historische Ort des Zweiten Weltkriegs" at a conference of the Military History Research Office of the Federal Republic of Germany on February 10, 1995, and will be published by that office in its volume, *Das Ende des zweiten Weltkrieges in Europa: Die Kämpfe an der Oder, den Seelower Höhen und um Berlin im Frühjahr 1945*, Roland G. Foerster, ed. (Herford: Mittler, 1995).

1. Jost Dulffer, Jochen Thies, and Josef Henke (eds.), *Hitler's Städte: Eine Dokumentation* (Cologne: Bohlau, 1978), p.212.
2. Klemens von Klemperer, *German Resistance against Hitler: The Search for Allies Abroad, 1938-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 273.
3. Georg Meyer (ed.), *Generalfeldmarschall Ritter von Leeb: Tagebuchaufzeichnungen und Lagebetrachtungen aus zwei Weltkriegen* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1976), p.80 n 195.
4. Memorandum of Mr. Jebb, 19 Aug. 1939, *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, 3d Series, Vol. VII, p.556.
5. There were Americans like Clarence Streit who favored a close tie, but this was to be in a federation including the countries of Western Europe and the British Dominions. See Robert A. Divine, *Second Chance: The Triumph of Internationalism in America during World War II* (New York: Atheneum, 1971), pp.38-39.
6. *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik, 1918-1945*, Series E, Vol.1, p.270.

7. On Hitler's hurry in 1939, including his refusal to wait even the one day that his own time-table allowed before war was to start, see *Germany, Hitler, and World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.147-48.

8. Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen, and Volker Riess (eds.), "The Good Old Days:" The Holocaust as Seen by Its Perpetrators and Bystanders, trans. by Deborah Bernstein (New York: Free Press, 1988). The original German title of the book, "Schöne Zeiten:" Judenmord aus der Sicht der Täter und Gaffer (Frankfurt/M: S. Fischer, 1988), is derived from Franz's photo album.

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