

## CHAPTER 15 SECTION 1

From its location in the heart of Europe, Germany has helped to shape the continent's history. During the A.D. 700 a ruler called **Charlemagne** united several Germanic kingdoms. The German states became part of a loose confederation called the **Holy Roman Empire**. By the 1300s, about 100 German towns formed a trading group called the Hanseatic League. By the 1700s, a number of powers controlled or strongly influenced the German states. Among these were the *Prussians and the Habsburg Empire*. During the early 1800s Napoleon formed the **Confederation of the Rhine**. By 1871 Prussia led a movement to unify all Germanic states under their control forming what became Germany. Germany became a powerful industrial nation with a very strong military.

### World Wars

This rapid rise of military strength caused concern throughout Europe. As a result European countries began forming military Alliances. An alliance is an agreement between countries to support each other against an enemy. The **Triple Alliance** was Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and later the Ottoman Turks. The **Triple Entente** was France, UK, Russia, and later the US. The alliance deterred countries from challenging each other for many years.

WWI erupted because of political tension in Austria-Hungary between Germans and Slavic people. The assassination of the Archduke in 1914 sparked the tension between the groups. WWI ended in 1918, the *Treaty of Versailles* was a pact between the winners to punish the losers.

This hardship caused great hardships in Germany like high unemployment, food shortages and high inflation. Because of these problems the **Nazi Party** rose to power and Hitler as the leader seized control of the government and began invading lands surrounding Germany.

In 1939, after being told not to invade Poland; Hitler ignored the warnings and on Sept. 9, 1939 Germany invaded Poland. This marks the beginning of WWII in Europe. The US does not join the conflict until Dec. 11, 1941, when Germany declares war on the US. Germany was defeated in 1945; casualties of the war totalled more than 50 million people.

### Division and Unification

After WWII, the Russians occupied Eastern Germany and all of Eastern Europe. In these occupied areas the Soviets created communist governments controlled by them. The US, UK, and France controlled Western Germany, then eventually allowed the people to elect their own government after the Nazi were imprisoned or executed.

The division of Germany lasted 45 years when in 1990 the Soviet Union began to collapse and Eastern European countries started declaring independence and began to dismantle communism. At this point the East German government quit and allowed West Germany to annex the land thus reuniting the country

## **Culture**

Though the people were separated for 45 years because of political ideology their culture is still German. Today Germany is a unified country under a democratic government. The nation is divided into 16 states or Landers. Bavaria is the largest German state. The language of the people is German though there are some regional dialects. About a third of the people are Catholic, many others are Protestants many Lutheran.

In recent years concern over Germany's environment has grown. Lack of concern by the communist had created many hazardous conditions and large amounts of pollution. In the government many political parties calling themselves "*Green Parties*" have pushed many environmental laws to correct these problems and protect the environment for the future.

## **Economy**

Germany is an economic powerhouse. The country ranks fourth in the world in GDP. Germany is one of the most prominent members of the EU. Many of Germany's business leaders are investing large amounts of money throughout Europe. The nation has a very diverse economy. They are leaders in manufacturing, their scientist is among the top in the world, and high tech industries are growing.

Coal, iron, and other minerals are mined in the Ruhr Valley of Western Germany. Nuclear power is used to a degree to produce electricity. The government has cut back on the use of nuclear energy in the recent years because of their concern over its dangers.

Agriculture is also very productive. About 3% of the population is involved in farming, using about 50% of Germany's land area.

## **Issues and Challenges**

One important issue in Germany today is the country's changing population. Low birthrates and longer life spans, and large immigration are changing the face of Germany. Many immigrants come from Turkey. They are Muslim, which tend to concentrate in their own communities creating a distinctive flare in German society. Also the Germans that were under Soviet control still have communist customs that they practice, and now many Germanic people that were forced to live in Russia during the Cold War are now migrating into Germany. How these groups coexist is still undetermined, but each group feels some level of discrimination against the others

## **CHAPTER 15 SECTION 2**

## **THE ALPINE COUNTRIES**

Austria and Switzerland are both located in the Alps, the most mountainous region of Central Europe. Germanic culture has deeply influenced these two Alpine countries.

Austria became part of the old Holy Roman Empire. From the 1400s onward the Holy Roman emperor was a member of the Habsburgs, a powerful family of German nobles. The Holy Roman Empire was united only by its allegiance to the emperor and for the defense of the church.

The Austrian Empire, under the Habsburg control, eventually replaced the Holy Roman Empire. The Austrian Empire was a major power in Europe in the 1800s. In 1867 the Austrians agreed to share political power with the Hungarians. This formed the Austrian-Hungary Empire. This empire collapsed at the end of WWI. Hungary and other parts of the empire were divided into independent nations. The Habsburgs lost power in Austria and the nation formed a democratic government. Germany invaded Austria in 1937, uniting the countries under German control. The country finally regained its independence in 1955.

Today Austria is a country about the size of South Carolina. Most all Austrians speak German, and more than 75% are Roman Catholic. Vienna, Austria's capital and largest city, is located on the Danube River. Austria is a member of the EU and has a diverse economy. Austrian industries include steel, machinery, and chemicals. Forestry and hydroelectric power are also important. The scenic Alps and the countries cultural attractions draw many tourists. Austrian ski resorts are world-famous. Many American and Western European companies base their Eastern European operations in Austria.

## SWITZERLAND

The history of Austria and Switzerland began to diverge in the late 1200s. At that time Swiss states began to form alliances to protect themselves against invading Austrian armies. Switzerland became independent of Habsburg rule in the late 1600s. Today Switzerland is a **confederation**, or group of states joined together for a common purpose. The country is made up of **26 cantons**. Each canton has self-government for all issues not reserved for the federal government. The federal government controls national policies, such as defense, international relations, and social programs.

Since Switzerland was formed it has been a **neutral** country. A neutral country is one that does not take sides in international conflicts or alliances. Switzerland has not been involved in recent wars. To preserve their neutrality, the Swiss have even resisted joining international organizations like the EU, or the UN. Many world and regional organizations have their headquarters in the city of Geneva and many international meetings have been held there. Switzerland has four major languages: German, French, Italian and Romansh. English is increasing as a fifth language group. Many Swiss are multilingual. 46% of the people are Catholic and 40% are Protestant.

Switzerland's largest cities are Basel-transportation, Bern-the Capital, Geneva-international headquarters, and Zurich-world banking center. Switzerland has one of the world's highest standards of living. International banking, insurance companies, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, watches, and dairy farming are all-important parts of their economic growth. Tourism in the mountainous areas helps the economy also.

## CHAPTER 15 SECTION 3 POLAND AND THE BALTICS

### History

Poland gets its name from a Slavic people who moved into the area. Their name, Polanie, means plains or fields. Poland's landscape is plains and some rolling hills. Poland is the largest of the

European countries that once made up what is called the Soviet bloc. These countries were forced into submission by the Soviets after WWII. Poland became a country after WWI. They were occupied by the Soviets before and after WWII and had to set up a communist government under Russian control. The Poles tried to rebel in 1956, 72, 76, and 80 to gain control over their own affairs. In 56 and 72 armed rebellions were put down in; 76 and 80 worker strikes forced the Soviets to meet some of the demands of the people. Finally with the collapse of the USSR, Poland became an independent country in 1991.

The Baltic countries also gained independence from Russia after WWI. These countries are Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The Soviets regained control over these lands during WWII. Like all other Soviet bloc countries they declared themselves independent as early as 1989.

Russia still controls a small stripe of land on the Baltic Sea called Kaliningrad. This is an exclave. An exclave is a territory separated from the rest of its country by other territories.

## **POLAND**

Nearly all of Poland's people are ethnic Polish and speak Polish, a Slavic language. The population is about 98% Catholic.

Warsaw is Poland's capital and its transportation hub. The city is located on the Vistula River. Warsaw became the capital of the kingdom of Poland in the late 1500s. During the 1600 and 1700s Poland was divided between its neighbors Russia and Germany until it was no longer a country. After WWI the nation reappeared on the map. Many Jews migrated to Warsaw creating the largest urban Jewish population in Europe. During WWII the Germans force the Jews to relocate to camps and to ghettos in Warsaw. The ghetto was like a prison because the Jews were force out of their own homes and communities to relocate there. Once they moved in they were not allowed out of that area. Many of the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto rebelled in 1943; about 60,000 of those living there were killed.

Today as an independent democratic nation Poland has made much progress. Cities like Warsaw and Gdansk (a major shipyard) provide many jobs. The stable government system has allowed many foreign investments to the country. The government's promotion of capitalism and private ownership has also stimulated the economy. Agriculture has long been a productive part of the nations income. Though farmers have had a hard adjustment to private ownership and production, crop levels have increased.

## **THE BALTIC COUNTRIES**

During the middle ages, two groups of people lived in what are now the Baltic countries. The Balts occupied modern Latvia and Lithuania. The Finns settled in Estonia. Lithuania remained an independent country for many years; Latvia and Estonia did not. The Estonians language is related to Finnish. Latvia has ties to the Swedes and Lithuania is culturally linked to Poland and the Catholic Church.

Teutonic Knights brought a strong German element into the Baltic's. They also helped spread Christianity to the Latvians and the Estonians. Historically the Baltic Sea was one of the busiest trade routes in northern Europe. Baltic ports exchanged both goods and information.

These three nations were the first to declare themselves independent after the collapse of the USSR. Since their independence like most former Soviet controlled areas they are discovering the transition from communism to capitalism is slow and difficult.

## CHAPTER 15 SECTION 4

### History

The Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary lie south of Germany and Poland. Slovakia and the Czech Republic populations are dominated by the Slavic culture. Hungary culture was formed from a group of people called the Magyars. These countries were once part of the Austrian-Hungary Empire. After WWI, Austria and Hungary were separated and Czechoslovakia was formed from as one country. After WWII the Soviets occupied these countries and established communist governments. An uprising in 1956 brought more Soviet troops to Hungary to repress the people. In 1968 in Czechoslovakia their rebellion was also put down by Soviet troops. These two countries declared independence from Soviets in 1990 when the USSR collapsed. Then in 1993 the two ethnic groups of Czechoslovakia voted to separate the country into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Prior to their separation these two countries formed a **complimentary region**. The economic advantage of industry in Czech and the farming structures of Slovakia benefit each group.

The **Czech Republic** is made up of the regions of Bohemia and Moravia. 40% percent of the people are Catholic. The countries capital and largest city is Prague. The Czech Republic is a hilly region with good supplies of iron, coal, and uranium. The Czechs became well know for the production of fine steel and glass products. Their farmers grow mainly cereal and sugar beets. To improve its economy the nation is trying to join the EU, they are already members of NATO.

**Slovakia** is the poorer of the two nations. The move to a capitalist system is slow. Unemployment is high. Bratislava is the capital and largest city. Farming is still the most dominant form of income in Slovakia. Trying to attract foreign investments has been difficult.

**Hungary's** cultural origins are related to a group of people called the *Magyars*. Their cultural ties are with the Finnish people of northern Europe. About two-thirds of their population is Catholic.

Budapest is the capital and largest city of Hungary. About a fourth of the nation's population lives in or near the capital. Hungary is located on a broad plain drained by the Danube River. Farming still plays a major role in the country's economy. Potatoes, sugar beets, and wheat are the main crops.

Like the other countries of Eastern Europe, they declared their independence after the USSR collapsed and began a move toward democracy and capitalism. They are members of NATO and hope to be allowed into the EU in the near future.