Questions for Discussion and Review (VIII)

RELEVANT LECTURES: Numbers 26 (WW II, "The Good War"), 27 (The War Against the Jews; Reflections on Modern Genocides), 28, The Cold War; 1989 and All That

RELEVANT READING: McKay, Chapters 30, 31; Perry, Chapter 13 [391-420], 14

1. Identifications:

   a. Munich Agreements
   b. Yalta Conference
   c. Berlin Air Lift
   d. Josip Tito
   e. Stalingrad
   f. EEC (Common Market)
   g. Willy Brandt
   h. Nazi-Soviet Pact
   i. Iron Curtain
   j. de Gaulle
   k. “socialism with a human face”
   l. NATO
   m. Brezhnev Doctrine
   n. Blitzkrieg
   o. Yom Kippur (Oct. ’73) War

2. Review Questions:

   a. What were the reasons that Europeans so feared war in the 1930s?
   
   b. What were the most fundamental reasons that Hitler's Reich was finally defeated?
   
   c. What were the main themes of Khrushchev’s “secret speech” of 1956, and why did he deliver it?
   
   d. What was “Big Science” and why did it become increasingly necessary after World War II?
   
   e. What were the main reasons that communist parties came to power in eastern Europe immediately after World War II but failed to do so in western Europe? In which eastern European countries did communism have the most genuine popular appeal? In which was it least popular?
   
   f. What were the most important territorial changes in Europe after World War II? (Be able to identify them on a blank map; consult the maps in McKay; a guide to them is on pp. xi-xii)
   
   g. What were the main reasons for the economic difficulties of the 1970s? What was “stagflation”?
   
   h. Is it appropriate to compare the Truman Doctrine of 1947 with the Brezhnev Doctrine of 1968?
   
   g. Compare the Solidarity Movement in Poland with the reforms sought in Czechoslovakia in 1968. What were the main differences between Alexander Dubcek and Lech Walesa (personally, politically, etc.)?
h. McKay speaks of a “second wave” in the women’s movement, which “gained major victories” in the 1970s and 1980s. What was the nature of that second wave and what were the most important underlying reasons for it?

3. **Discussion Questions:**

a. “It would have taken only one leader of character and courage in France or Great Britain to have stymied Hitler by the mid-1930s, and thus ultimately to have prevented the horrors of 1939-45. Unfortunately, no such leader was in power at that time.” Comment critically. Why were European statesmen so unsuccessful in effectively blocking Hitler’s expansionism?

b. “In spite of the hypocritical tongue-clucking of western statesmen, the Nazi-Soviet Pact made perfect sense from the standpoint of Russian national interests. If the leaders of France or Great Britain had been able to sign a comparable pact — turning Nazi Germany against Communist Russia in 1939, causing the war to begin as an anti-communist struggle — their historians would have praised them as brilliant.” Comment critically.

c. Author Deborah Lipstadt has written that denying the uniqueness of the Holocaust "is more insidious than outright denial. It nurtures and is nurtured by Holocaust-denial." Nobel prize winner Elie Wiesel, similarly, has described the Holocaust as "equal to the revelation at Sinai" in its religious significance; attempts to "desanctify" or "demystify" the Holocaust he has denounced as a subtle form of anti-Semitism. Is the Holocaust in fact "unique" in these senses? Were other genocides "essentially" different and (at least implicitly from Lipstadt's and Wiesel's language) less important? How does one define a "genocide"?

d. “In explaining the so-called ‘European Renaissance’ following World War II, American aid must finally count as less important than the talents and skills of Europeans themselves. Calls for ‘Marshall plans’ to benefit Third World countries often fail to recognize a fundamental truth: Without a population skilled in the techniques both of industrialization and parliamentary democracy, American aid will inevitably be much less effective than it was in Europe in the generation following the war.” Do you agree? How can one account for the strikingly differing degrees of recovery even among those European countries that received American aid? What was the explanation of Japan’s remarkable recovery?

e. “The dropping of the atomic bomb may be considered as much the first act of the Cold War as the last act of World War II.” Do you agree? What were the most important reasons for dropping the bomb? How might it be defended as an act that — paradoxically — was designed to reduce death and destruction, both of Japanese and Americans? Did it in fact impress Stalin and his advisers, causing them to draw back from expansionist designs?

f. “The failure of America to come to the aid of the Hungarian Freedom Fighters in 1956, after all of the statements previously made by leading American policy makers, must be counted as one of the greatest acts of cowardice and betrayal since Munich.” Comment critically.
g. McKay frequently uses the term “moralistic” to refer to American policy in the twentieth century. Do you consider that an appropriate adjective? Should it be a source of pride or of embarrassment to be "moralistic"? How appropriate is it in application to American policy at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, in the Cold War, and in the Suez Crisis of 1956?

h. Might the Cold War have been avoided, or at least greatly mitigated? Which country or leader was most responsible for its excesses? Might different leaders have followed substantially different policies (for example, if a man like Gorbachev had been at the head of Russia, instead of Stalin, or a man like Adlai Stevenson instead of Truman)? What were the most important constraints under which both leaders were operating? Do totalitarian states “need” enemies in order to mobilize their own populations (do other kinds of states also exploit the existence of enemy powers in order to accomplish certain domestic purposes, such as the suppression of dissent)? Might it be said that the two countries, because of contrasting histories and national interests, were bound almost inevitably to come into conflict?

i. After 1989 communist rule collapsed with astonishing speed in the Soviet Union and in the Eastern Bloc, confounding almost all observers. What were the most important reasons for that collapse? Why did so few see it coming? By the mid-to-late 1990s, however, former communists were making a come-back in some areas—remarkably, more in the countries that had had communism imposed upon them by the Soviets after World War II than in the Soviet Union itself. What were the reasons for that comeback? In which ways had the former communists changed? Is a return to something like Stalinist rule likely?