

# **How did the Allies reverse Axis advances in Europe and the Pacific?**

The United States confronted an intimidating military challenge in December 1941. The attack on Pearl Harbor destroyed much of its Pacific Fleet. In the Atlantic, Hitler's U-boats sank American ships, while German armies occupied most of western Europe and steadily advanced into the Soviet Union. Roosevelt and his military advisers believed that defeating Germany took top priority. That meant the United States had to support its allies, Britain and the Soviet Union.

If they fell, Hitler would command all the resources of Europe and would be ready for an assault on the United States. To fight back against Germany and Japan, the United States had to coordinate military and political strategy with its allies and muster all its human and economic assets. Victory over the Japanese fleet at the Battle of Midway, the successful elimination of Germany's menace to Allied shipping in the prolonged Battle of the Atlantic, and the Allied assault on North Africa and then Italy established Allied naval superiority in the Atlantic and Pacific and began to challenge German domination of southern Europe.

# Turning the Tide in the Pacific

In the Pacific theater, Japan's leading military strategist, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, believed that if his forces did not quickly conquer and secure the territories they targeted, Japan would eventually lose the war because of America's far greater resources. Swiftly, the Japanese assaulted American airfields in the Philippines and captured U.S. outposts on Guam and Wake Island. After occupying Singapore and Burma, Japan sought to complete its domination of the southern Pacific with an attack in January 1942 on the American stronghold in the Philippines ([Map 25.5](#)). American defenders surrendered to the Japanese in May. The Japanese victors sent captured American and Filipino soldiers on the infamous Bataan Death March to a concentration camp, causing thousands to die. By the summer of 1942, the Japanese had conquered the Dutch East Indies and were poised to strike Australia and New Zealand.

In the spring of 1942, U.S. forces launched a major two-pronged counteroffensive that military officials hoped would reverse Japanese advances. Forces led by General Douglas MacArthur, commander of the U.S. armed forces in the Pacific, moved north from Australia and eventually attacked the Japanese in the Philippines. Far more decisively, Admiral

Chester W. Nimitz sailed his battle fleet west from Hawai'i to retake Japanese-held islands in the southern and mid-Pacific. On May 7–8, 1942, in the Coral Sea just north of Australia, the American fleet and carrier-based warplanes defeated a Japanese armada that was sailing around the coast of New Guinea.

Nimitz then learned from an intelligence intercept that the Japanese were massing an invasion force aimed at Midway Island, an outpost guarding the Hawai'ian Islands. Nimitz maneuvered his fleet to surprise the Japanese at the Battle of Midway. In a furious battle that raged from June 3 to June 6, American ships and planes delivered a crushing blow to the Japanese navy. The **Battle of Midway** reversed the balance of naval power in the Pacific and put the Japanese at a disadvantage for the rest of the war. Japan managed to build only six more large aircraft carriers during the war, while the United States launched dozens, proving the wisdom of Yamamoto's prediction. But the Japanese still occupied and defended the many places they had conquered.

## The Campaign in Europe

After Pearl Harbor, Hitler's eastern-front armies marched ever deeper into the Soviet Union while his western-front forces prepared to invade Britain. As in World War I, the

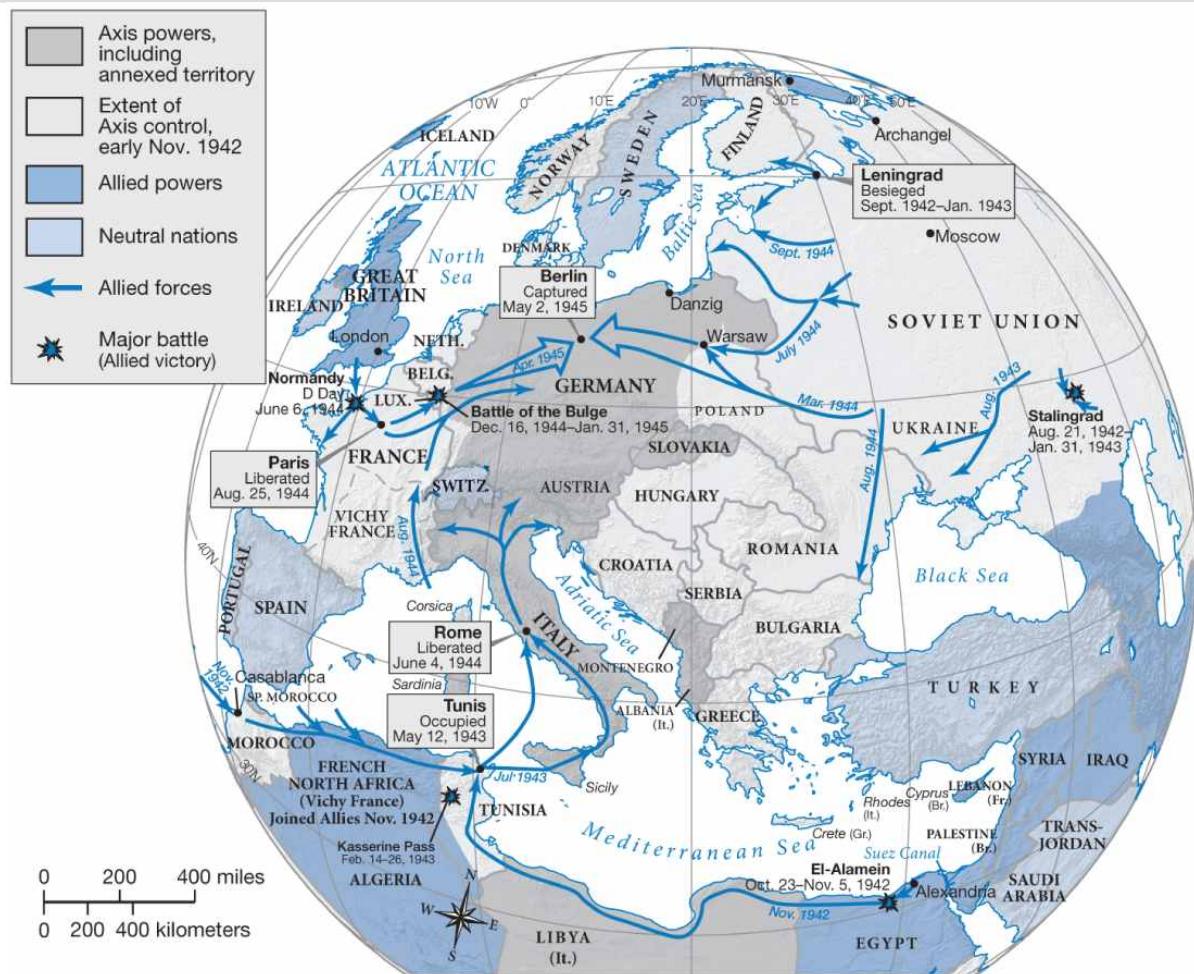
Germans tried to starve the British into submission by destroying their seaborne lifeline. In 1941 and 1942, they sank Allied ships faster than new ones could be built. Overall, this U-boat campaign sank 4,700 merchant vessels and almost 200 warships and killed 40,000 Allied seamen.

Until mid-1943, the outcome of the war in the Atlantic remained in doubt. Then, newly invented radar detectors and production of sufficient destroyer escorts for merchant vessels allowed the Allies to prey upon the lurking U-boats. After suffering a 75 percent casualty rate among U-boat crews, Hitler withdrew German submarines from the North Atlantic in late May 1943, allowing thousands of American supply ships to cross the Atlantic safely. Winning the Battle of the Atlantic allowed the United States to supply its British and Soviet allies for the duration of the war and to reduce the threat of a German invasion of Britain.

The most important strategic questions confronting the United States and its allies were when and where to open a second front against the Nazis. Stalin demanded that America and Britain mount an immediate and massive assault across the English Channel into western France to force Hitler to divert his armies from the eastern front and relieve the pressure on the Soviet Union. Churchill and Roosevelt instead delayed opening a second front, allowing the Germans and the Soviets to slug it out. This drawn-out

conflict weakened both the Nazis and the Communists and made an eventual Allied attack on western France more likely to succeed. Churchill and Roosevelt decided to strike first in North Africa to help secure Allied control of the Mediterranean.

In October and November 1942, British forces at El-Alamein in Egypt halted German general Erwin Rommel's drive to capture the Suez Canal, Britain's lifeline to the oil of the Middle East and to British colonies in India and South Asia ([\*\*Map 25.4\*\*](#)). In November, an American army under General Dwight D. Eisenhower landed far to the west, in French Morocco. Propelled by American tank units commanded by General George Patton, the Allied armies defeated the Germans in North Africa in May 1943. The North African campaign pushed the Germans out of Africa, made the Mediterranean safe for Allied shipping, and opened the door for an Allied invasion of Italy.



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### MAP 25.4 The European Theater of World War II, 1942–1945

The Russian reversal of the German offensive at Stalingrad and Leningrad, combined with Allied landings in North Africa and Normandy, trapped Germany in a closing vise of Allied armies on all sides.

#### Description

"The Allied powers highlighted on the map shows Great Britain; the northern part of Ireland; the Soviet Union extending from Murmansk in the north, along Leningrad to Archangel and Moscow in the center and further southward; Iraq; Syria; Lebanon (French); Cyprus (British); Transjordan; Palestine (Britain); Egypt; Algeria; French North Africa (Vichy France, Joined Allies November 1942); and Iceland. The Axis

Powers, including annexed territory shown on the map include Germany; Austria; Slovakia; Italy including Sicily and Sardinia; Slovakia; Albania (Italy); Montenegro; Libya (Italy); and Rhodes (Italy). The extent of Axis control, early November 1942 covered France; Vichy France; Belgium; Luxembourg; Netherlands; Denmark; Norway; Finland; Poland; Hungary; Croatia; Serbia; Romania; Bulgaria; Greece; Soviet Union extending from Sevastopol in the south across Ukraine to Leningrad in the north; Morocco; Tunisia; Corsica; and Crete. The Neutral nations comprised of Spain; Portugal; Switzerland; Ireland; Sweden; Turkey; and Saudi Arabia.

The Battle of Stalingrad took place between August 21, 1942 and January 31, 1943 and the Allied forces proceeded westward through the south of Ukraine while Leningrad was besieged between September 1942 and January 1943. The forces moved across the Soviet Union to Warsaw in Poland along different courses during March and July of 1944, they also moved to the Baltic Sea coast in September 1944 and Romania in August 1944. The Allied forces advanced to Tunisia in 1942 from Casablanca in Morocco and from Alexandria through Libya (Italy) to occupy Tunis (Tunisia) on May 12, 1943. A major battle resulted in the Allied victory at El-Alamein, Egypt between October 23 and November 5, 1942. The Allies were victorious at the battle in Kasserine Pass, Tunisia from February 14 to 26, 1943. From Tunis, the forces moved to Italy via the Mediterranean and Rome was liberated on June 4, 1943. The Forces took an alternative route from Tunis to Italy via Sicily in July, 1943. From Rome, the Forces led a route that launched their advancements to Vichy France on the west, and to Austria and Eastern Europe. In 1944, they advanced to Vichy France from the Mediterranean Sea and moved across France to join the route set forth by the Forces from London to Normandy. The resulting victory of the Forces at Normandy on the D Day, June 6, 1944 also led to the liberation of Paris on August 25, 1944. Following this, they advanced to Germany through Paris and a parallel route across Luxembourg and Belgium ensuing in the Battle of the Bulge between December 16, 1944 and January 31, 1945. This propelled their advancement to Germany in April 1945 and their subsequent capture of Berlin on May 2, 1945."

In January 1943, while the North African campaign was still under way, Roosevelt and Churchill met in Casablanca and announced that they would accept nothing less than the “unconditional surrender” of the Axis powers, ruling out peace negotiations. They agreed that they should strike next against Italy, forcing the Soviet Union to continue to bear the brunt of the Nazi war machine.

In July 1943, American and British forces landed in Sicily. Soon afterward, Mussolini was deposed in Italy, ending the reign of Italian fascism. Quickly, the Allies invaded the mainland, and the Italian government surrendered unconditionally. The Germans responded by rushing reinforcements to Italy, turning the Allies’ Italian campaign into a series of battles to liberate Italy from German occupation.

German troops dug into strong fortifications and fought to defend every inch of Italy’s rugged terrain. Allied forces continued to battle against stubborn German defenses for the remainder of the war, making the Italian campaign the war’s deadliest for American infantrymen. One soldier in Italy wrote that his buddies “died like butchered swine.”

#### REVIEW

How did U.S. military strategy against the Japanese and the Germans differ?



# How did war change the American home front?

The war effort mobilized Americans as never before.

Factories churned out bombs, bullets, tanks, ships, and airplanes, which workers rushed to assemble, leaving their farms and small towns and congregating in cities. Women took jobs with wrenches and welding torches, boosting the nation's workforce while violating traditional notions that a woman's place was in the home rather than on the assembly line. Despite rationing and shortages, gigantic government expenditures for war production brought prosperity to many Americans after years of depression-era poverty.

Although Americans in uniform risked their lives on battlefields in Europe and Asia, Americans on the U.S. mainland enjoyed complete immunity from foreign attack — in sharp contrast to their Soviet and British allies. Wartime ideology contrasted Allied support for human rights with Axis tyranny and provided justification for the many sacrifices Americans were required to make. The ideology also established a standard of basic human equality that became a potent weapon in the campaign for equal rights at home and in condemning atrocities such as the Nazis' Holocaust.

# **Women and Families, Guns and Butter**

Millions of American women gladly took their places on assembly lines in defense industries. At the start of the war, about one-quarter of adult women worked outside the home, but few women worked in factories, except for textile mills and sewing industries. Wartime mobilization and the enlistment of millions of men in the armed forces left factories begging for women workers.

Government advertisements urged women to take industrial jobs by assuring them that their household chores had prepared them for work on the “Victory Line.” One billboard proclaimed, “If you’ve sewed buttons, or made buttonholes, on a [sewing] machine, you can learn to do spot welding on airplane parts.” Millions of women responded. Advertisers often referred to a woman who worked in a war industry as “Rosie the Riveter,” a popular wartime term.

By the end of the war, women working outside the home numbered 50 percent more than in 1939. Contributing to the war effort also paid off in wages. A Kentucky woman remembered her job at a munitions plant, where she earned “the fabulous sum of \$32 a week. To us it was an absolute miracle. Before that we made nothing.” Although men were paid an average of \$54 for similar wartime work, women

accepted the pay difference and welcomed their chance to earn wages and help win the war at the same time.



Library of Congress, 8e01288.

**Riveting Rosies** Dora Miles (left) and Dorothy Johnson (right) were among the millions of women (nicknamed “Rosie the Riveter”) who flocked to work in war industries at jobs formerly held by men. Like many other women war workers, Miles and Johnson helped build airplanes. Here they are depicted riveting the frame of an aircraft at a plant in Long Beach, California.

The majority of married women remained at home, occupied with domestic chores and child care. But they, too,

supported the war effort, planting Victory Gardens, saving tin cans and newspapers for recycling into war materiel, and buying war bonds. Many families scrimped to cope with the 30 percent inflation during the war, but men and women in manufacturing industries enjoyed wages that grew twice as fast as inflation.

The war influenced how all families spent their earnings. Buying a new washing machine or car was out of the question since factories that formerly built them now made military goods. Many other consumer goods — such as tires, gasoline, shoes, and meat — were rationed at home to meet military needs overseas. But most Americans readily found things to buy, including movie tickets, cosmetics, and music recordings.

The wartime prosperity and abundance enjoyed by most Americans contrasted with the experiences of their hard-pressed allies. Personal consumption fell by 22 percent in Britain, and food output plummeted to just one-third of prewar levels in the Soviet Union, creating widespread hunger and even starvation. Few went hungry in the United States as farm output grew 25 percent annually during the war, providing a food surplus for export to the Allies.

## **The Double V Campaign**

Fighting against Nazi Germany and its ideology of white racial supremacy, Americans confronted extensive racial prejudice in their own country. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, a leading black newspaper, asserted that the wartime emergency called for a **Double V campaign** seeking “victory over our enemies at home and victory over our enemies on the battlefields abroad.” As a Mississippi-born African American combat veteran of the Pacific theater recalled, “We had two wars to fight: prejudice ... and those Japs.”

In 1941, black organizations demanded that the federal government require companies receiving defense contracts to integrate their workforces. A. Philip Randolph, head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, promised that one hundred thousand African American protesters would march on Washington if the president did not eliminate discrimination in defense industries. Roosevelt decided to risk offending his white allies in unions and in the South, and in mid-1941 issued Executive Order 8802, which created the Committee on Fair Employment Practices to investigate and prevent racial discrimination in employment.

Progress came slowly, however. In 1940, nine out of ten black Americans lived below the federal poverty line. Those who worked earned an average of just 39 percent of whites' wages. In search of better jobs and living conditions, 5.5

million black Americans migrated from the South to war-industry jobs in the North and West. For the first time in U.S. history, the migration made a majority of African Americans city dwellers. Severe labor shortages and government fair employment standards opened assembly-line jobs in defense plants to African Americans, causing black unemployment to drop by 80 percent during the war. But more jobs did not mean equal pay for blacks. The average income of black families rose during the war, but by the end of the conflict it still stood at only half of what white families earned.

Blacks' migration to defense jobs intensified racial antagonisms, which boiled over in the hot summer of 1943 when 242 race riots erupted in forty-seven cities. The worst mayhem occurred in Detroit, where a long-simmering conflict between whites and blacks over racially segregated housing ignited into a race war. In two days of violence, twenty-five blacks and nine whites were killed, and scores more were injured.

Racial violence created the impetus for the Double V campaign, officially supported by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Double V activists argued that black Americans deserved the same rights and privileges enjoyed by all other Americans, an argument that was reinforced by the Allies' wartime

ideology of freedom and democracy. The NAACP focused largely on court challenges to segregation, while a new organization founded in 1942, the Congress of Racial Equality, organized picketing and sit-ins against racially segregated restaurants and theaters. Despite these efforts, the Double V campaign achieved only limited success against racial discrimination during the war.

## **Wartime Politics and the 1944 Election**

Americans rallied around the war effort almost unanimously. In June 1944, Congress recognized the sacrifices made by millions of veterans and unanimously passed the landmark **GI Bill of Rights**, which gave military veterans government funds for education, housing, and health care, as well as providing loans to start businesses and buy homes. The GI Bill put the financial resources of the federal government behind the abstract goals of freedom and democracy for which veterans were fighting, and it empowered millions of GIs to better themselves and their families after the war.

After twelve turbulent years in the White House, Roosevelt was exhausted and ill with heart disease. Still, he was determined to remain president until the war ended. His poor health made the selection of a vice presidential candidate unusually important. Convinced that many

Americans had soured on liberal reform, Roosevelt chose Senator Harry S. Truman of Missouri as his running mate. A reliable party man from a southern border state, Truman satisfied urban Democratic leaders while not worrying white southerners, who were nervous about challenges to racial segregation.

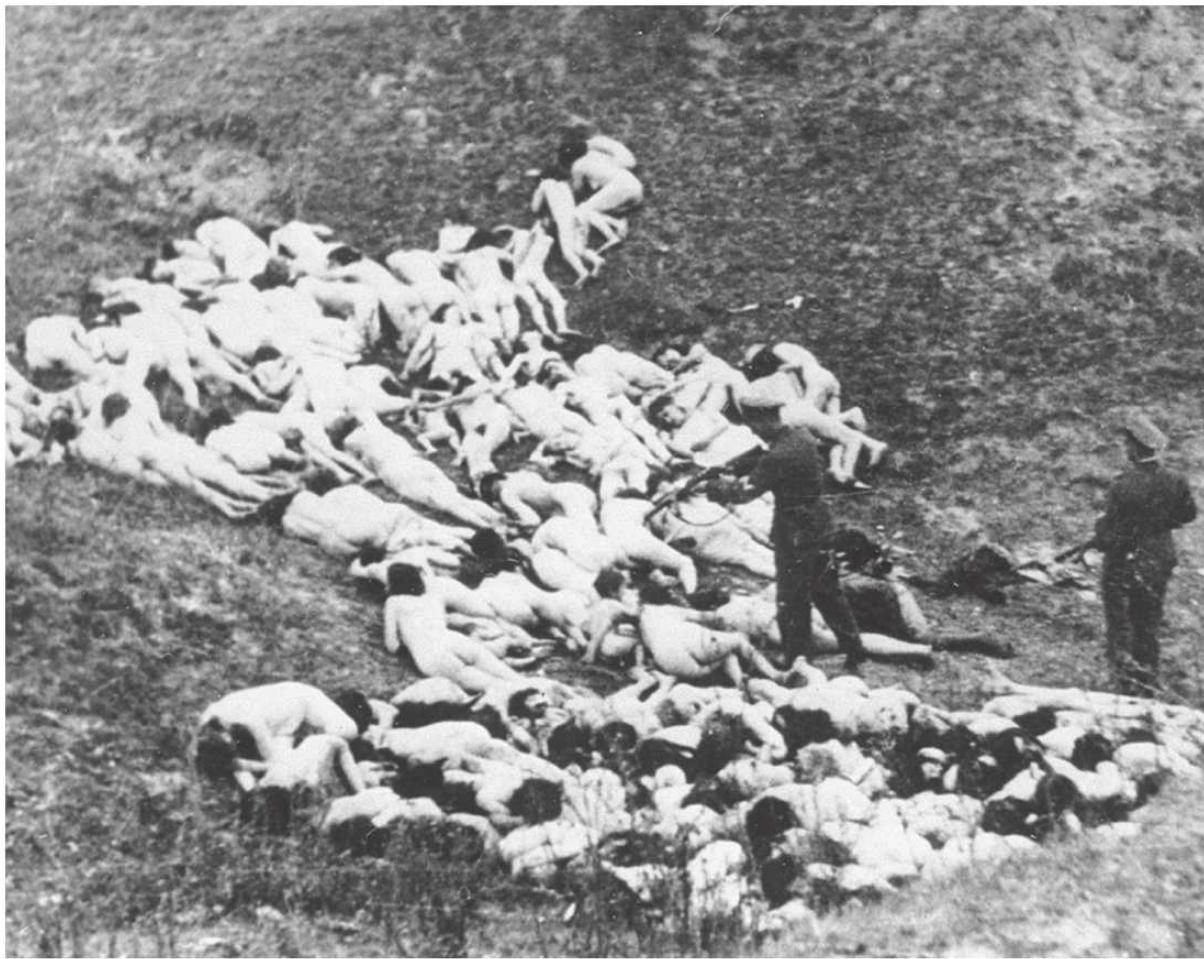
The Republicans, confident of a strong conservative upsurge in the nation, nominated Thomas E. Dewey as their presidential candidate. The governor of New York, Dewey had made his reputation as a tough crime fighter. In the 1944 presidential campaign, Dewey failed to persuade most voters that the New Deal was a creeping socialist menace. Roosevelt's failing health alarmed many observers, but it was outweighed by Americans' unwillingness to change presidents in the midst of the war. In his narrowest presidential victory, voters gave Roosevelt a 53.5 percent majority, confirming his leadership as Dr. Win-the-War.

## **Reaction to the Holocaust**

Since the 1930s, the Nazis had persecuted Jews in Germany and every German-occupied territory, causing many Jews to seek asylum beyond Hitler's reach. Thousands of Jews sought to immigrate to the United States, but 82 percent of Americans opposed admitting them, and they were turned away. In 1942, numerous reports reached the United States

that Hitler was sending Jews, Gypsies, religious and political dissenters, homosexuals, and others to concentration camps, where old people, children, and others deemed too weak to work were systematically killed and cremated, while the able-bodied were put to work at slave labor until they died of starvation and abuse.

Other camps were devoted almost exclusively to murdering and cremating Jews. Despite reports of the brutal slave labor and death camps, U.S. officials refused to grant asylum to Jewish refugees. Most Americans, including top officials, believed that reports were exaggerated. Only 152,000 of Europe's millions of Jews managed to gain refuge in the United States before America's entry into the war. Afterward, the number of Jewish refugees dropped to just 2,400 by 1944.



United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

**Mass Execution of Jewish Women and Children** On October 14, 1942, Jewish women and children from the village of Mizocz in present-day Ukraine were herded into a ravine, forced to undress and lie facedown, and then shot at point-blank range by German officials. To centralize such executions, the Nazis built death camps, where they systematically slaughtered millions of Jews and other “undesirables.”

Desperate to stop the atrocities, the World Jewish Congress appealed to the Allies to bomb the death camps and the railroad tracks leading to them. Intent on achieving military victory as soon as possible, the Allies repeatedly turned

down such bombing requests, arguing that the air forces could not deviate from their military missions.

The nightmare of the **Holocaust** was all too real. When Russian troops arrived at Auschwitz in Poland in January 1945, they found emaciated prisoners, skeletal corpses, gas chambers, pits filled with human ashes, and loot the Nazis had stripped from the dead, including hair, gold fillings, and false teeth. At last, the truth about the Holocaust began to be known beyond the murdered men, women, and children and the Germans who had tolerated and participated in this genocide. By then, it was too late for the eleven million civilian victims — mostly Jews — of these Nazi crimes against humanity.

**REVIEW**

How did the war influence American society?



# **How did the Allies win the war?**

By February 1943, Soviet defenders had defeated the massive German offensive against Stalingrad, turning the tide of the war in Europe. After gargantuan sacrifices in fighting that lasted for eighteen months, the Red Army forced Hitler's Wehrmacht to turn back toward the west. In the Pacific, the Allies halted the expansion of the Japanese empire and now had the deadly task of dislodging Japanese defenders from the outposts they still occupied. Allied military planners adopted a strategy to annihilate Axis resistance by taking advantage of America's industrial superiority. A secret plan to develop a superbomb that harnessed atomic power developed too late to use against Germany. But when the atomic bomb devastated the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan finally surrendered, canceling the planned assault on the Japanese homeland by hundreds of thousands of American soldiers and sailors and their allies.

## **From Bombing Raids to Berlin**

As an airborne substitute for the delayed second front on the ground, British and American pilots flew bombing missions from England to German-occupied territories and

to Germany itself. During night raids, British bombers targeted general areas, hoping to hit civilians, create terror, and undermine morale. Beginning with Paul Tibbets's flight in August 1942, American pilots flew heavily armored B-17s from English airfields in daytime raids on industrial targets vital for the German war machine.

German air defenses took a fearsome toll on Allied pilots and aircraft. In 1943, two-thirds of American airmen did not survive to complete their twenty-five-mission tours of duty. In all, 85,000 American airmen were killed in the skies over Europe. Many others were shot down and held as prisoners of war. In February 1944, the arrival of America's durable and deadly P-51 Mustang fighter gave Allied bombers superior protection. The Mustangs slowly began to sweep the Luftwaffe from the skies, allowing Allied bombers to penetrate deep into Germany and pound civilian and military targets around the clock.

In November 1943, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin met in Tehran to discuss wartime strategy and the second front. Roosevelt agreed to Stalin's demand that the Soviet Union would exercise control of the Eastern European countries that the Red Army occupied as it rolled back the still-potent German Wehrmacht. Stalin agreed to enter the war against Japan once Germany finally surrendered, in effect promising to open a second front in the Pacific theater. Roosevelt and

Churchill told Stalin that they would at last launch a massive second-front assault in northern France, code-named Overlord, in May 1944.

General Eisenhower was assigned overall command of Allied forces, and mountains of military supplies were stockpiled in Britain. Most of Hitler's armies were in the east, trying to halt the Red Army's westward offensive. Relatively few German troops were stationed to defend against an Allied attack on occupied France. More decisive, years of Allied air raids had decimated the German Luftwaffe, which could send aloft only three hundred fighter planes against twelve thousand Allied aircraft.

After frustrating delays caused by stormy weather, Eisenhower launched the largest amphibious assault in world history on **D Day**, June 6, 1944 (see [Map 25.4](#)). Allied soldiers finally succeeded in securing the beachhead. An officer told his men, "The only people on this beach are the dead and those that are going to die — now let's get the hell out of here." They did, finally surmounting the cliffs that loomed over the beach and destroying the German defenses. One GI who made the landing recalled the soldiers "were exhausted and we were exultant. We had survived D Day!"

Within a week, a flood of soldiers, tanks, and other military equipment pushed Allied forces toward Germany. On August 25, the Allies liberated Paris from four years of Nazi occupation. As the giant pincers of the Allied and Soviet armies closed on Germany in December 1944, Hitler ordered a counterattack to capture the Allies' essential supply port at Antwerp, Belgium. In the Battle of the Bulge (December 16, 1944, to January 31, 1945), as the Allies termed it, German forces drove fifty-five miles into Allied lines before being stopped at Bastogne. The battle caused nearly 90,000 American casualties, more than in any other battle of the war. An American lieutenant recalled the macabre scene of "all the bodies ... frozen stiff ... many dead Americans and Germans ... [many with] the ring finger ... cut off in order to get the ring." The battle cost the Nazis hundreds of tanks and more than 100,000 men, fatally depleting Hitler's reserves.

In February 1945, while Allied armies pushed German forces backward, Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt met secretly at the Yalta Conference (named for the Russian resort town where it was held) to discuss their plans for the postwar world. Roosevelt managed to secure Stalin's promise to permit votes of self-determination in the Eastern European countries occupied by the Red Army. The Allies pledged to support Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) as the leader of China. The Soviet Union obtained a role in the postwar

governments of Korea and Manchuria in exchange for entering the war against Japan after the defeat of Germany.

The “Big Three” also agreed on the creation of a new international peacekeeping organization, the United Nations (UN). All nations would have a place in the UN General Assembly, but the Security Council would wield decisive power. The Security Council’s permanent representatives from the Allied powers — China, France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States — would possess a veto over UN actions. The Senate ratified the United Nations Charter in July 1945 by a vote of 89 to 2, demonstrating the triumph of internationalism over isolationism during the war.

While Allied armies sped toward Berlin, Allied warplanes dropped more bombs after D Day than in all the previous European bombing raids combined. By April 11, Allied armies reached the banks of the Elbe River and paused while the Soviets smashed into Berlin. The Red Army captured Berlin on May 2. Hitler had committed suicide on April 30, and the provisional German government surrendered unconditionally on May 7. The war in Europe was finally over, with the sacrifice of 135,576 American soldiers, nearly 250,000 British troops, and 9 million Russian combatants.

Roosevelt did not live to witness the end of the war. On April 12, he suffered a fatal stroke. Americans grieved for the man who had led them through years of depression and war, and they worried about his untested successor, Vice President Harry Truman.

## The Defeat of Japan

After punishing defeats in the Coral Sea and at Midway, Japan had to fend off Allied naval and air attacks. In 1943, British and American forces, along with Indian and Chinese allies, launched an offensive against Japanese outposts in southern Asia, pushing through Burma and into China, where Jiang's armies continued to resist conquest. In the Pacific, Americans and their allies attacked Japanese strongholds by sea, air, and land, moving island by island toward the Japanese homeland (see [Map 25.5](#)).



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### MAP 25.5 The Pacific Theater of World War II, 1941-1945

To drive the Japanese from their far-flung empire, the Allies launched two combined naval and military offensives — one to recapture the Philippines and then attack Japanese forces in China, the other to hop from island to island in the Central Pacific toward the Japanese mainland.

#### Description

"The Soviet Union, China, India, present-day Sri Lanka, Nepal, Alaska (U.S.), northern Sakhalin Island, Aleutian Island (U.S.), Australia, southern New Guinea, New Hebrides (French-British), New Caledonia (France), Fiji Island (Britain) constituted Allies while Mongolia, Tibet, and countries to the west of the Indian subcontinent stood as Neutral nations.

The extent of Japanese control (August 1942) ran from Malaya, Burma, French Indochina; Thailand; the eastern coastal belt of China comprising Hong Kong and Nanjing; Manchuria; Korea; southern Sakhalin Island on the North Pacific Ocean; Japan; and the islands Sumatra, Java, Celebes, Borneo; the Philippines, Dutch East Indies; northern New Guinea; Rabaul; the Bougainville Island; Solomon Island; Guadalcanal; and a quadrilateral comprising of Mariana Island, Caroline Island, and Marshall Island on the southern Pacific Ocean.

While the Allied Forces advanced from the Aleutian Islands to Attu Islands on the North Pacific Ocean in May 1943, in the South Pacific, the Allies took a route from the Pearl Harbor that bifurcated to Eniwetok and the Bougainville Island to the south and north of Marshall Island in the Japanese Mandate in November 1943 following their advancement to the Bougainville Island and Rabaul in August 1942. Another Pacific route in April 1944 took them to the Leyte Gulf under Commander MacArthur in October and Bataan and Corregidor in the Philippines Islands and to Okinawa situated to the south of Japan besides deflecting to Borneo from the Philippine Islands. In April 1945, the Allied launched attacks to Leyte Gulf, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa from Guam.

On land, the Allies headed to Thailand from Burma in 1944 and set forth to Manchuria in 1945 from Mongolia and the Soviet Union.

The major battles on the Pacific Ocean are listed as follows: Bataan and Corregidor (January 2 to May 6, 1942); Guam (July 21 to August 10, 1945); Okinawa (April 1 to June 21, 1945); Iwo Jima (February 19 to March 16, 1945); Leyte Gulf (October 23 to 26, 1944); Coral Sea (May 7 to 8, 1942); Guadalcanal (August 7, 1942 to February 8, 1943); Solomon Island; Midway Island (June 3 to 6, 1942); Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941). Atomic explosions took place in the Japanese cities of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and Nagasaki on August 9, 1945.

The map identifies the islands of Guam, Wake, Hawaii, in the Pacific Ocean as American colonies.”

This island-hopping campaign began in August 1942, when American Marines landed on Guadalcanal in the southern Pacific. For the next six months, a savage battle raged for control of the island. Finally, during the night of February 8, 1943, Japanese forces withdrew. The terrible losses on both sides indicated to the Marines how costly it would be to defeat Japan. After the battle, Joseph Steinbacher, a twenty-one-year-old from Alabama, sailed from San Francisco to New Guinea, where, he recalled, “all the cannon fodder waited to be assigned” to replace the killed and wounded.

In mid-1943, Allied forces launched offensives in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands that gradually secured the South Pacific. In the Central Pacific, amphibious forces conquered the Gilbert and Marshall islands, which served as forward bases for air assaults on the Japanese home islands. As the Allies attacked island after island, Japanese soldiers were ordered to refuse to surrender no matter how hopeless their plight.

While the island-hopping campaign kept pressure on Japanese forces, the Allies invaded the Philippines in the fall of 1944. In the four-day Battle of Leyte Gulf, one of the greatest naval battles in world history, the American fleet crushed the Japanese armada, clearing the way for Allied victory in the Philippines. While the Philippine campaign was under way, American forces captured two crucial islands —

Iwo Jima and Okinawa — from which they planned to launch an attack on the Japanese homeland. To defend Okinawa, Japanese leaders ordered thousands of suicide pilots, known as *kamikaze*, to crash their bomb-laden planes into Allied ships. But instead of destroying the American fleet, the kamikaze demolished the Japanese air force. By June 1945, the Japanese were nearly defenseless on the sea and in the air. Still, their leaders prepared to fight to the death for their homeland.

Joseph Steinbacher and other GIs who had suffered “horrendous” casualties in the Philippines were now told by their commanding officer, “Men, in a few short months we are going to invade [Japan].... We will be going in on the first wave and are expecting ninety percent casualties the first day.... For the few of us left alive the war will be over.” Steinbacher later recalled his thoughts at that moment: “I know that I am now a walking dead man and will not have a snowball’s chance in hell of making it through the last great battle to conquer the home islands of Japan.”

## Atomic Warfare

In mid-July 1945, as Allied forces prepared for the final assault on Japan, American scientists tested a secret weapon at an isolated desert site near Los Alamos, New Mexico. In 1942, Roosevelt had authorized the top-secret

**Manhattan Project** to find a way to convert nuclear energy into a superbomb before the Germans added such a weapon to their arsenal. More than one hundred thousand Americans, led by scientists, engineers, and military officers, worked frantically to win the race for an atomic bomb. Germany surrendered two and a half months before the test on July 16, 1945, when scientists first witnessed an atomic explosion that sent a mushroom cloud of debris eight miles into the atmosphere. After watching the successful test of the bomb, J. Robert Oppenheimer, the head scientist at Los Alamos, remarked soberly, “Lots of boys not grown up yet will owe their life to it.”

President Truman saw no reason not to use the atomic bomb against Japan if doing so would save American lives. Despite numerous defeats, Japan still had more than six million reserves at home for a last-ditch defense against the anticipated Allied assault, which U.S. military advisers estimated would kill at least 250,000 Americans. But first Truman issued an ultimatum: Japan must surrender unconditionally or face utter ruin. When the Japanese failed to respond by the deadline, Truman ordered that an atomic bomb be dropped on a Japanese city. The bomb that Colonel Paul Tibbets and his crew released over Hiroshima on August 6 leveled the city and incinerated about 80,000 people, and many thousands more died later from injuries and radiation. Three days later, after the Japanese

government still refused to surrender, the second atomic bomb killed nearly as many civilians at Nagasaki.

With America's promise that the emperor could retain his throne after the Allies took over, Japan surrendered on August 14. On a troopship departing from Europe for what would have been the final assault on Japan, an American soldier spoke for millions of others when he heard the wonderful news that the killing was over: "We are going to grow to adulthood after all."

While all Americans welcomed peace, some worried about the consequences of unleashing atomic power. Almost every American believed that the atomic bomb had brought peace in 1945, but nobody knew what it would bring in the future.

**REVIEW**

Why did Truman decide to use the atomic bomb against Japan?



# **Conclusion: Why did the United States emerge as a superpower at the end of the war?**

At a cost of 405,399 American lives, the nation united with its allies to crush the Axis aggressors into unconditional surrender. Almost all Americans believed they had won a “good war” against totalitarian evil. The Allies saved Asia and Europe from enslavement and finally halted the Nazis’ genocidal campaign against Jews and many others whom the Nazis considered inferior. To secure human rights and protect the world against future wars, the Roosevelt administration took the lead in creating the United Nations.

Wartime production lifted the nation out of the Great Depression. The gross national product soared to four times what it had been when Roosevelt became president in 1933. Jobs in defense industries eliminated chronic unemployment, provided wages for millions of women workers and African American migrants from southern farms, and boosted Americans’ prosperity. Ahead stretched the challenge of maintaining that prosperity while reintegrating millions of uniformed men and women, with help from the benefits of the GI Bill.

By the end of the war, the United States had emerged as a global superpower. Wartime mobilization made the American economy the strongest in the world, protected by the military clout of the nation's nuclear monopoly. Although the war left much of the world a rubble-strewn wasteland, the American mainland had remained safe from attack. The Japanese occupation of China had left fifty million people without homes, and millions more dead, maimed, or orphaned. The German offensive against the Soviet Union had killed more than twenty million Russian soldiers and civilians. Germany and Japan lay in ruins, their economies and societies as shattered as their military forces. But in the gruesome balance sheet of war, the Axis powers had inflicted far more grief, misery, and destruction on the global victims of their aggression than they had suffered in return.

As the dominant Western nation in the postwar world, the United States asserted its leadership in the reconstruction of Europe while occupying Japan and overseeing its economic and political recovery. America soon confronted new challenges in the tense aftermath of the war, as the Soviets seized political control of Eastern Europe, a Communist revolution swept China, and national liberation movements emerged in the colonial empires of Britain and France. The forces unleashed by World War II would shape the United States and the rest of the world for decades to come. Before

the ashes of World War II had cooled, America's wartime alliance with the Soviet Union fractured, igniting a Cold War between the superpowers. To resist global communism, the United States became in effect the policeman of the free world, leaving behind the pre-World War II legacy of isolationism.