

## World War II Ends (1945)

At the Potsdam Conference of July-August 1945, U.S. President Harry S. Truman (who had taken office after Roosevelt's death in April), Churchill and Stalin discussed the ongoing war with Japan as well as the peace settlement with Germany. Post-war Germany would be divided into four occupation zones, to be controlled by the Soviet Union, Britain, the United States and France. On the divisive matter of Eastern Europe's future, Churchill and Truman acquiesced to Stalin, as they needed Soviet cooperation in the war against Japan.

Heavy casualties sustained in the campaigns at Iwo Jima (February 1945) and Okinawa (April-June 1945), and fears of the even costlier land invasion of Japan led Truman to authorize the use of a new and devastating weapon. Developed during a top secret operation code-named The Manhattan Project, the atomic bomb was unleashed on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in early August. On August 15, the Japanese government issued a statement declaring they would accept the terms of the Potsdam Declaration, and on September 2, U.S. General Douglas MacArthur accepted Japan's formal surrender aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay.

## World War II Casualties and Legacy

World War II proved to be the deadliest international conflict in history, taking the lives of 60 to 80 million people, including 6 million Jews who died at the hands of the Nazis during the Holocaust. Civilians made up an estimated 50-55 million deaths from the war, while military comprised 21 to 25 million of those lost during the war. Millions more were injured, and still more lost their homes and property.

The legacy of the war would include the spread of communism from the Soviet Union into eastern Europe as well as its eventual triumph in China, and the global shift in power from Europe to two

rival superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union—that would soon face off against each other in the Cold War.