

23 | World War II



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 23-1 Explain the causes of World War II.
- 23-2 Explain U.S. foreign policy as it developed after World War I, called isolationism, and describe how that policy changed as World War II progressed.
- 23-3 Describe the major events of World War II, both in Europe and the Pacific, and explain why the United States acted as it did throughout the conflict.
- 23-4 Describe and discuss the American home front during World War II, paying special attention to long-term societal changes.
- 23-5 Explain how World War II ended, both in Europe and in the Pacific, and discuss the aftermath of the war both in the United States and around the world.

**AFTER FINISHING
THIS CHAPTER
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FOR STUDY TOOLS**

If the New Deal could not end the Great Depression, a world war would. Beginning in the early 1930s, tensions grew fierce between China and Japan as each tried to claim authority over much of Asia, eventually leading to full-scale war by 1937. By the late 1930s, talk of war was becoming more urgent throughout Europe as well. The uncertainty created by the worldwide economic depression created political vulnerabilities that assisted the rise of militant, expansion-minded dictators in Japan, Italy, and Germany. Americans watched all these situations nervously, uncertain how Asian and European affairs might affect them. Little did they know that, in the end, the Second World War would transform America even more than the New Deal.

The war prompted a mobilization of American resources at a level unseen since the Civil War. Long-quiet industries were revitalized, the agricultural sector started to grow again, and the American economy ramped up to become the most powerful economy in the world. The demands of war created opportunities for women, who filled jobs left open by the men who enlisted in the service, and for African Americans and other minorities, who did not hesitate to use the facts of Hitler's racism and antisemitism to demonstrate the flaws of the American promise. The ethnic enclaves formed during the massive immigration between 1880 and 1924 lost some of their unique character as well, dwindling due to 1920s immigration restrictions and calls for unity put forward by the federal government. Sometimes the concept of American unity excluded racial minorities, as it did in the internment of thousands of Japanese Americans, whose sole supposedly un-American characteristic was their country of descent. For the most part, however, Americans embraced the call for greater tolerance, a tolerance that prompted the civil rights movement and other liberation movements that were to come.

In the end, the war created a world dominated and heavily influenced by two major powers, the Soviet Union and the United States. Their attempts to remake the world torn apart by the Second World War are the subject of the next chapter. But first, to the war and the dramatic transformations it set in motion.

23-1 CAUSES OF WAR

There were multiple causes of the Second World War, but the Great Depression was perhaps the most significant.

23-1a Provocations for War

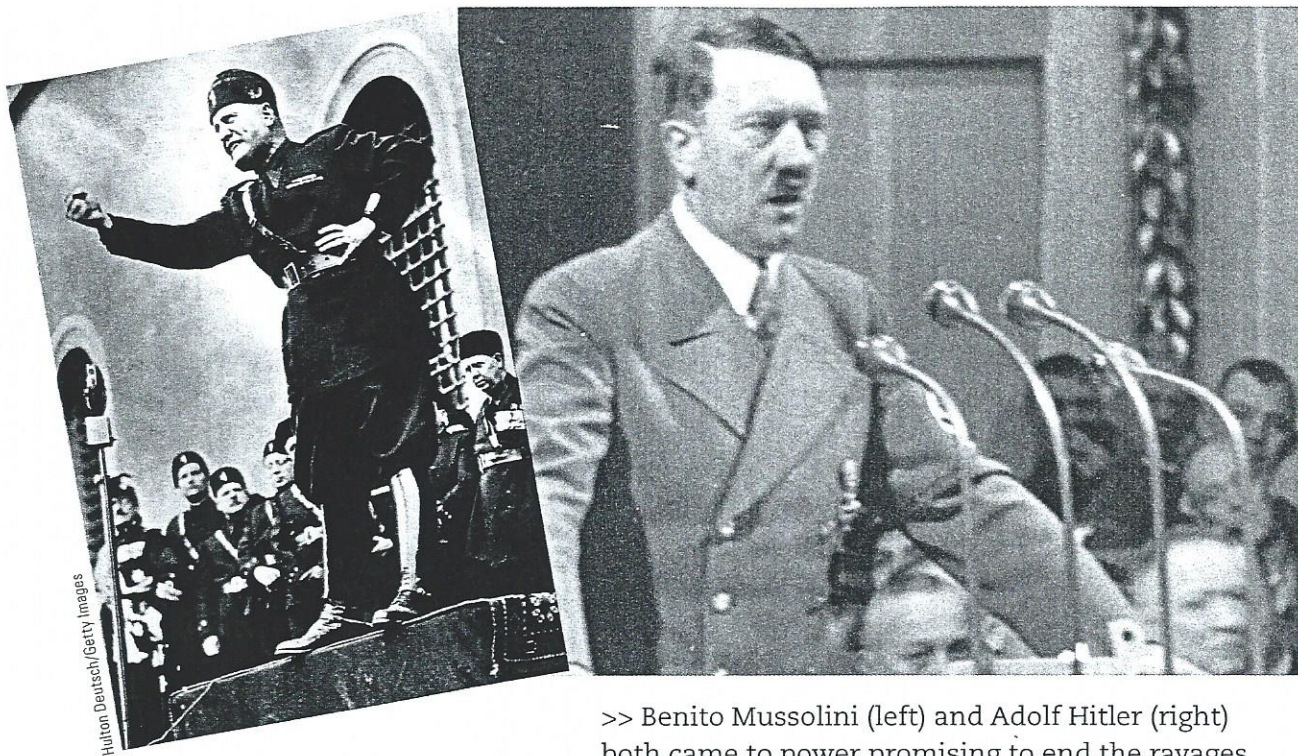
The stock market collapse between 1929 and 1932 ended American investment in Europe and caused economic slowdowns there. Without American dollars, European countries faced industrial decline, unemployment, and widespread homelessness.

These problems increased political tensions. In France and Spain, for example, fighting broke out between Communists and Nationalists over which group had the best plan to manage the disrupted economy. But the crash had a devastating effect on Germany, whose reparation payments for World War I were largely financed by American lenders. When American businesses withdrew investments in Germany, German production fell by half between 1929 and 1933. In 1933, with the economy in a shambles and chaos raging throughout German politics and in German streets, Adolf Hitler's National Socialist (Nazi) Party ascended to power and ruthlessly consolidated its control of the state. Hitler then began a massive armament campaign that put millions of Germans to work on public works projects and in factories. In some ways, it was a militant and extreme version of the New Deal. And in a sense it worked. The economic depression there was over by 1936, providing dramatic proof that the deficit spending advocated by John Maynard Keynes would work. A similar program for reform emerged in Italy under the dictatorship of Benito Mussolini.

But Hitler and Mussolini did not stop at economic reform. Driven by delusions of grandeur and by racist and antisemitic ideologies, and seeking to remake Europe (and, after that, the world) to match his nationalistic vision, Hitler defied World War I's Treaty of Versailles by occupying the industrialized Rhineland in 1936 and annexing German-speaking Austria in 1938. He was intent on expanding further, too. He roused the German public with promises of German power and antisemitic screeds that blamed Germany's plight on the Jews. Encouraged by Germany's example, Mussolini invaded and conquered Ethiopia in 1935 and Albania in 1939.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the globe, Emperor Hirohito of Japan was attempting to bring all of Asia under Japanese control. In 1931, Japanese forces, fearful that Japanese investments in the contested terrain of Manchuria were threatened by Chinese nationalist aspirations, occupied the Chinese territory of Manchuria. The Japanese used an explosion of a railroad track near the city of Mukden as an excuse to occupy the entire

◀◀ During the war, 12 million men joined the Armed Services, creating plentiful opportunities for American women. Here, three women assemble a B-17 bomber in Long Beach, California.



>> Benito Mussolini (left) and Adolf Hitler (right) both came to power promising to end the ravages of the worldwide economic depression.

region. The occupation clearly violated Japan's pledges as a member of the League of Nations, but neither the League nor the United States was immediately eager to respond. Instead, the United States warned Japan against further territorial aggression. Japan ignored the warning, attacking and briefly occupying China's famous port city of Shanghai in 1932.

Four years of quiet tensions simmered in Asia, until 1937, when Japan launched a full-scale invasion of China, occupying most of the large cities along the Chinese coast. Emperor Hirohito sought to create a region entirely dominated by Japan and Japanese business interests, and he saw China as his main competitor. By 1940, the two nations were stuck in a military stalemate: Japan was unable to defeat its much larger neighbor, while China's military suffered from internal political divisions. Japan had the upper hand, but it had not yet finished the military takeover, becoming bogged down in China's vast interior. To America's east, then, the European continent was on the verge of full-scale war as aggressors placed their pawns in position to attack. To America's west, the two major powers in Asia were locked

in a bloody military stalemate. The United States was an island of peace in the midst of tremors all around.

23-1b Reactions

Many Americans hoped the United States would avoid armed conflict in both Asia and Europe. Congress passed a series of neutrality acts between 1935 and 1937 that placed arms embargoes on all belligerent powers. Roosevelt signed these measures, but, leery of the offensive actions of Germany, Italy, and Japan, in 1937 he called for the world community to "quarantine" these states. Eventually, he would come to regret signing the neutrality acts at all.

France and Britain also seemed reluctant to oppose these aggressive nations. Both countries had suffered greatly during the First World War and wanted to avoid further bloodshed. Their leaders hoped to appease Mussolini and especially Hitler by giving them some of what they wanted so as not to enrage them. In what has come to be called the **Munich Agreement** (1938), for example, the leading powers of western Europe allowed Hitler to annex strategic areas of Czechoslovakia in order to satisfy his territorial aspirations, hoping he would go no further. They assumed that if they allowed him to unify all the German-speaking people in Europe under one

Munich Agreement 1938 treaty in which the leading powers of western Europe allowed Hitler to annex strategic areas of Czechoslovakia in order to satisfy his territorial aspirations (strategy of appeasement)

flag, Hitler would abide by historic German territorial demands. They were, of course, wrong in this assumption.

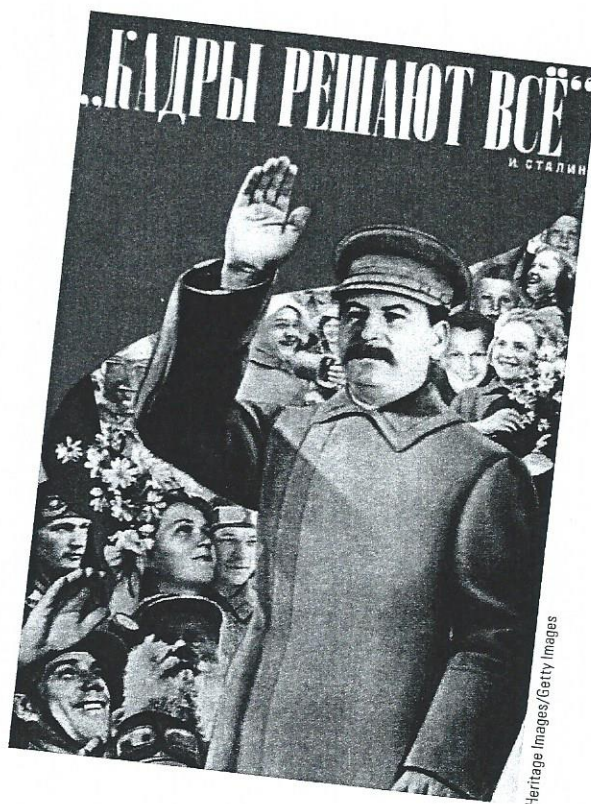
Beyond his territorial ambitions, Hitler also began denouncing and terrorizing Jews, communists, gays, and other groups he deemed undesirable and un-German. This was the beginning of what came to be called the Holocaust. Many in France, Britain, and the United States did not agree with or condone Hitler's brutal actions (although some did), but they all failed to confront him.

The British cautiously claimed that appeasement with Germany's historic territorial ambitions might bring "peace for our time" (although they were arming themselves while they said it), but it was not to be so. Hitler continued his relentless expansion into neighboring countries. In March 1939, Hitler broke his various promises and moved his armies into Czechoslovakia. He also demanded control over the German-speaking areas of Poland. British and French diplomats urgently solicited an alliance with Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. But Stalin distrusted the West, which was, after all, the capitalist rival of his communist nation.



AFP/Getty Images

>> The attempts of Emperor Hirohito, pictured here, to consolidate all of Asia under Japanese rule led to war with China in 1937.



Heritage Images/Getty Images

>> Joseph Stalin, seen here in a propaganda poster, led the Soviet Union beginning in 1924.

In a bold and ultimately wrongheaded move in August 1939, Stalin agreed to a secret **nonaggression pact** with Hitler that divided Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union. Unafraid of how France and Britain might respond, Hitler invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Now finally understanding that Hitler was after something more than just bringing together all of Europe's German-speaking people, Britain and France declared war on Germany. Europe was once again at war, just as Asia was across the Pacific.

23-2 AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY BEFORE THE WAR

Americans at first tried to stay out of the war, but this became less feasible as Hitler's aggression continued.

nonaggression pact 1939 agreement between Stalin and Hitler that divided Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union and said the two nations would not attack each other

23-2a 1930s Isolation

In the United States, the Great Depression had provoked a strong drift toward isolationism. The trend was already manifested in the American rejection of the League of Nations following World War I, but during the Great Depression many Americans remained preoccupied by domestic affairs. (For more on the reasons why many Americans resisted involvement in European affairs, see “The Reasons Why . . .” box.)

LATIN AMERICA

Concerning foreign policy, FDR was initially of the same mindset as his predecessor, Herbert Hoover. He was not a strict isolationist, but he was not eager to engage too deeply in foreign affairs. Indeed, rather than help the troubled European economy in the 1930s, American policymakers focused their efforts on improving relations with nations closer to home, particularly in Central and South America. At his 1933 inauguration, FDR announced that the United States would pursue a **“good neighbor” policy** toward Latin America, thus

“good neighbor” policy American strategy of renouncing military intervention in Latin American affairs

The Reasons Why...

There were several reasons why so many Americans favored isolationism before the Second World War:

World War I. Their memories of the First World War made many Americans leery of getting involved in European affairs. In 1914, Americans watched as a dizzying series of alliances led one nation into battle with another, without any apparent justification. The brutality of the First World War also made Americans shy away from any involvement in European affairs. Why risk American lives to protect European freedoms?

The Great Depression. The Great Depression deepened this isolationism. Most Americans were simply too focused on improving life in the United States to advocate getting involved in diplomatic disputes abroad.

renouncing military intervention in Latin American affairs, and during the next few years he signed treaties with various Central and South American nations. Their goal was to maintain political stability without using military means.

THE WORLD'S ARSENAL

Despite this diplomatic activity in Latin America, isolationism remained the key feature of American foreign policy. Polls showed that more than 90 percent of the American public did not want to go to war. But with the unrest in Asia and Europe, the United States, as a major world power, could not look away for long. The economic prospect of a military buildup was too alluring. For one thing, the warring nations needed American guns and armor, and from 1937 to 1941, Britain, France, China, and the Soviet Union all began rapid armament, boosting the American economy. In 1939, for example, American outrage over the invasion of Poland translated into a new neutrality act that allowed belligerent powers, particularly Britain and France, to buy arms aggressively from the United States. Roosevelt believed that France and Britain could win a European war on their own if the United States provided material assistance and served as the world's arsenal. At the same time, Roosevelt requested and

Respect for Hitler. At the same time, some Americans had profound respect for Adolf Hitler, who had, after all, plucked Germany from its own economic depression in record time. By the late 1930s, American icons like the aviator Charles Lindbergh argued that the Nazis were unstoppable under the leadership of Hitler and that the United States should negotiate with rather than fight against them.

Antisemitism. Lindbergh, like Hitler, was also an antisemite. Although the worst abuses of the Holocaust would only begin to occur in 1941, by the late 1930s many American Jews were asking President Roosevelt to take a stronger stance against Hitler. Roosevelt, aware that a large majority of Americans would not want to get involved in war in order to save Europe's Jews, opted to wait until he could rally greater public opinion. That only occurred in December of 1941, with the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

received congressional authorization to build 50,000 warplanes per year, just in case. America was beginning to build its own defenses. This also helped boost the American economy, although the nation was still officially neutral.

BLITZKRIEG AND DOUBT

The belief that Britain and France could effectively fight Germany was summarily negated when, in the spring of 1940, Germany launched a series of *blitzkrieg* (or “lightning wars”) that utilized surprise, speed, and unrelentingly concentrated attacks to defeat most of its neighbors. In April and May 1940, the Germans ripped through Denmark and Norway. Other German forces swept through Belgium and the Netherlands. On June 5, German armies attacked France and captured Paris after only six weeks of battle. Germany forced the French to sign a treaty creating a pro-German French regime, headquartered in **Vichy** and known by the name “Vichy France.” By the summer of 1940, Germany controlled most of western Europe, and had conquered it with astonishing ease.

In the process, Hitler now imprisoned the continent’s (not just Germany’s) Jews, gypsies, and other societal scapegoats in a web of concentration camps. By now, it was apparent that these efforts to intimidate, isolate, and concentrate European Jewry were more than just political stunts but methodological attempts to rid Europe of its so-called “undesireables.” Hitler had trod on the ground of early-twentieth-century social Darwinism and eugenics and was, by his own account, putting those ideas into frightful practice.

By late 1940, soldiers guarding these concentration camps began killing the Jews inside. By 1941, Hitler began using death squads to kill entire villages of Jews in eastern Europe. And by 1942, he had set up his infamous death camps, where gas chambers were built to speed up the process of mass killing and where disgusting scientific experiments were conducted on unwilling captives. These horrific events would later become known as the **Holocaust**. Until 1940, however, few outside Europe knew about Hitler’s processes of intimidation and murder (and when they learned of them, even fewer were spurred into action until much later in the war).

In Europe, only the British stood against the Germans. In the summer and autumn of 1940, the two nations fought in the **Battle of Britain**, in which



>> During the 1940 Battle of Britain, German planes bombed London incessantly, destroying much of the city. This photo shows some of the devastation around St. Paul’s Cathedral.

Keystone Archives/HIP/The Image Works

Hitler attempted to break Britain’s air power by heavily bombarding British cities and by deliberately targeting British civilians, hoping to sap their will to fight. Many Americans sympathized with the British people suffering through the bomb attacks, the horrors of which were relayed nightly from London by radio correspondents.

PARTIAL INVOLVEMENT

The devastation of Britain set the stage for American involvement. In May 1940, Roosevelt asked Congress to increase spending on American national defense and to authorize sending surplus arms to Britain.

blitzkrieg “Lightning war”; fast and brutal attacks staged by Germany on its neighbors starting in 1940

Vichy City in central France, headquarters of the pro-German French regime installed in 1940

Holocaust Systematic killing of 11 million Jews, gypsies, and other societal scapegoats in Nazi concentration camps all over Europe

Battle of Britain Fierce battle fought in the summer and autumn of 1940; Hitler attempted to break Britain’s air power through heavy bombardment of British cities



>> During the buildup to war, a strong bond grew between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, pictured here, and between the United States and Britain in general.

That same month, Winston Churchill was appointed Britain's prime minister. An inspiring speaker who had long warned of Hitler's growing power, Churchill pledged to fight the Germans in the streets of Britain, if necessary. Churchill also believed that an alliance with the United States was the key to Britain's survival. Determined to win Roosevelt's friendship and support, Churchill frequently wrote Roosevelt and later visited the White House for long stays.

23-2b From Isolation to Intervention

American public sentiment still fell considerably short of favoring direct intervention, but the idea that the United States should grant some form of aid had been

America First Committee Organization created to oppose U.S. involvement in the Second World War; committee leaders argued that the Nazis were unstoppable and that the United States should negotiate with them

Four Freedoms Basic human rights articulated by FDR to ensure that America's involvement in World War II was seen as ideologically sound: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, freedom from fear

growing since Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939. Many Americans foresaw dangers for the United States should Germany conquer Britain. With control of all of Europe, Germany might become unbeatable. American Jews were especially active in advocating a more aggressive stance against Hitler, but in an America controlled by a white, Anglo-Saxon elite, and with American antisemitism still socially acceptable and in fact growing, the urgings of American Jews did not carry enough weight to power a full-scale intervention.

In late 1940, Roosevelt approved the first peacetime draft in U.S. history. He also announced that the United States was giving the British fifty renovated naval destroyers, referring to the United States as "the arsenal of democracy."

Roosevelt's moves prompted criticism from the left and the right, but it was conservatives like William Randolph Hearst and Montana senator Burton Wheeler who formed an opposing organization, called the **America First Committee**.

Aviator Charles Lindbergh became the group's most notable spokesman (for more on Lindbergh, refer back to "The Reasons Why . . ." box).

Opinion polls found that most Americans supported providing aid to Britain. American politicians responded. In the fall of 1940, Roosevelt, running for an unprecedented third term of office, repeatedly declared that the United States would not enter the war, but he warned that dangerous waters lay ahead. What he proposed instead was "aid short of war."

23-2c Aid Short of War

Roosevelt handily won the election of 1940 and soon began articulating a plan for American involvement in the war.

THE FOUR FREEDOMS

America had to take a stand, Roosevelt declared, in order to create a world based on what he dubbed the **Four Freedoms**: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. This was Roosevelt's clearest statement yet that the United States would take a powerful role in creating a new order in world affairs. In almost every way, these four freedoms

were directly opposed to what the Nazis were doing in conquering Europe. If Roosevelt had his way, the war would be fought on ideological grounds.

Roosevelt then pressured Congress, in March 1941, to pass the **Lend-Lease Act**, empowering the president to lend weapons and supplies to nations fighting the Germans or the Japanese. These measures became even more urgent with a series of German, Italian, and Japanese victories in late 1940 and early 1941. In fact, Germany, planning an attack on Russia and searching for a Pacific partner, had begun to make overtures to Japan to form an alliance. Japan, still stalemated with China, thought the resources won from the toppling of the British Empire (if Germany won) would help Japan control the Pacific. Along with Italy, the nations came together in the Tripartite Pact; they were known as "the Axis Powers."

In August 1941, Roosevelt met with Churchill in a secret conference off the coast of Newfoundland. Roosevelt told Churchill he would give assistance but not declare war. The two leaders issued a set of aims known as the **Atlantic Charter**, which stated that the war was being waged in the name of national self-determination and was not a war of conquest. With the charter, the United States had committed itself to the defeat of Germany and the victory of Britain. But it was not yet at war.

Roosevelt ordered his navy to escort ships across the Atlantic, which was being heavily patrolled by German U-boats. The Germans sank U.S. ships in the fall of 1941, after which Roosevelt ordered the navy to fire on German and Italian submarines. By the middle of 1941, the United States was in an undeclared shooting war with Germany.

23-2d Conflict in the Pacific

Events in Asia would tilt the nation toward formally declaring war. Japanese attempts to conquer China violated the American belief that China should be kept free from foreign domination and thus open to American trade, which had been called the "open door policy." But Japan did not stop in China. In July 1941, Japanese forces occupied the French colony of Indochina, which included Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Alarmed by the aggressive nature of these invasions, the United States perceived a Japanese plan to control all of Asia. It retaliated by cutting off all trade with Japan.

This was a grave threat to the Japanese. Without raw materials from the United States, the Japanese economy would slow down. The United States had therefore given Japan a difficult choice: either withdraw from Indochina and China or seek resources elsewhere. Japanese planners chose to look elsewhere. They invaded British and Dutch possessions in the East Indies. But despite these acquisitions, the Japanese felt that the U.S. presence in the Far East was limiting Japan's capacity to expand into other territories. In their view, the United States had to be forcibly expelled from Asia.

In September 1941, the Japanese imperial command decided to stage an attack on the main U.S. fleet in the Pacific, anchored at Pearl Harbor, Hawai'i. If they succeeded in handicapping the American fleet, they might be able to finish their desired conquests before the United States could rebuild. American intelligence officials had cracked Japanese codes in 1940 but were unable to discern where or when an attack might come.

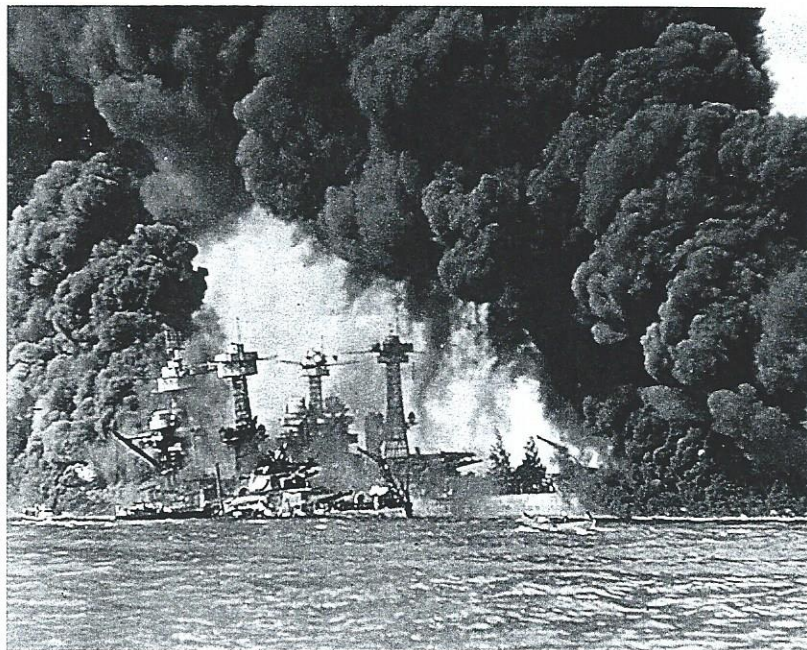
On the morning of December 7, 1941, Japanese bombers appeared in the skies above Pearl Harbor. The bombers sank or damaged eight U.S. battleships and killed 2,403 Americans before returning to aircraft carriers, some 220 miles away. At the same time, Japan launched offensives against American positions in the Philippines, Guam, and Midway Island, as well as British-held Hong Kong and Malaysia. Crucially, American aircraft carriers were at sea during the attack and therefore survived. Otherwise, the vast majority of the American Pacific arsenal was destroyed.

Shocked and furious, Roosevelt announced that December 7 would become "a date which will live in infamy." He then asked Congress for a declaration of war. On December 8, both houses of Congress declared war with only one dissenting vote (Congresswoman Jeanette Rankin of Montana, a pacifist). Honoring his alliance with Japan, Hitler declared war on the United States on December 11, making the war a world war.

Lend-Lease Act Legislation passed in March 1941 empowering the president to lend weapons and supplies to nations fighting the Germans or the Japanese

Atlantic Charter Set of aims issued by Roosevelt and Churchill stating that the war was being waged in the name of national self-determination and was not a war of conquest

By the middle of 1941, the United States was in an undeclared shooting war with Germany.



National Archives/NCT/Newscom

>> “AIR RAID PEARL HARBOR . . . This is no drill.”—Navy Lieutenant Commander Logan Ramsey’s first broadcast alert on December 7, 1941. Pictured here are burning vessels. Much of the U.S. Pacific Naval fleet was destroyed.

23-3

THE WAR

In December 1941, the German-Japanese Axis seemed all-powerful. On all fronts, the Allies were losing. In the Pacific, the Japanese had mauled the Americans at Pearl Harbor and scored rapid victories in the Dutch East Indies and the Philippines. By mid-1942, Japan’s quest for control of a unified Asia was almost complete. Meanwhile, German and Italian forces occupied much of North Africa and most of Europe except Britain. Despite his nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union, Hitler’s armies were nearing Moscow as well. They had also begun the process of murdering all of Europe’s Jews and political radicals in an effort to remake Europe in Germany’s Aryan image; the Holocaust was under way.

These frightening developments brought the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union together in a **Grand Alliance** that would eventually turn the tide of the war.

Grand Alliance Group of three countries allied to fight Hitler: the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union

four policemen Four major allies: the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and China; Roosevelt suggested that after the war, these countries exert their military power to ensure international peace

But it was a long journey from those initial defeats to eventual victory.

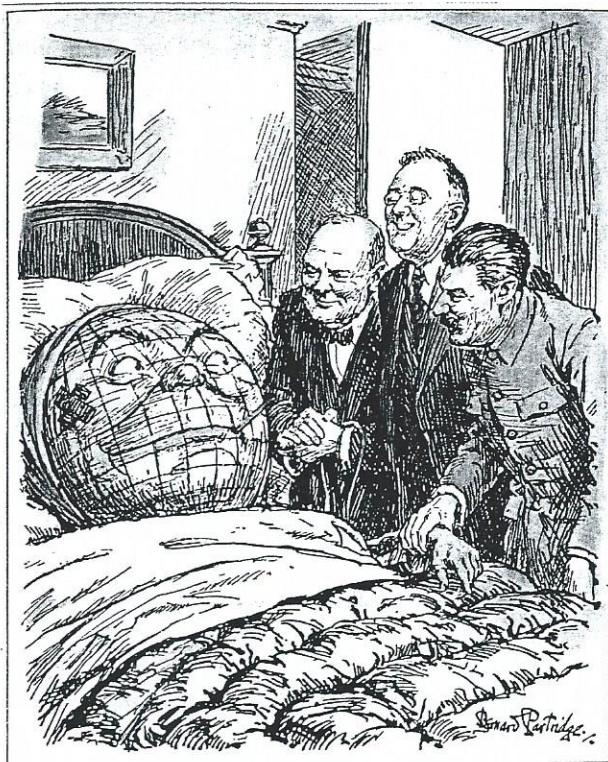
23-3a The Alliance

Although most Americans viewed Japan as the main aggressor, Roosevelt and Churchill agreed that Germany posed the greater threat. For the time being, however, neither the United States nor Britain was strong enough to mount an attack. For many months, the Soviet Union was the only force battling the Axis on the European continent.

To help the Soviets, the United States and Britain sent \$11 billion in trucks, food, and other supplies. The Soviets were grateful, but Stalin wanted a permanent alliance. The question was, on what terms? Stalin would not accept the Atlantic Charter because of its insistence on democratic elections, which might threaten his creation of a communist empire. Stalin also wanted to reclaim Poland from Germany, which

was forbidden by the charter’s commitment to national determination. Stalin had decided he would never agree to any European settlement that would let armies sweep eastward, unimpeded, toward Moscow. He wanted to ensure Soviet security from western Europe, and that meant control over Poland.

In May 1942, the Soviet Red Army struggled alone against Germany. Roosevelt, fearing the Soviets might make a separate peace with Germany, suggested that, after the war, the four major allies (the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and China) exert their military power to ensure international peace. Stalin enthusiastically agreed to this **four policemen** approach, believing it was Roosevelt’s way of promising that governments friendly to Soviet interests would be installed in central Europe. Roosevelt probably envisioned only a general Soviet role in guaranteeing security. Thus, even as the United States entered the war, Roosevelt’s vision of the postwar world was on a collision course with that of the Soviet leader, a course that would lead to the Cold War. For the time being, though, a remarkable alliance had been forged, one that brought together the largest capitalist nation in the world (the United States), the largest communist nation, which was still committed to the goal of world revolution (the Soviet



"AND HOW ARE WE FEELING TO-DAY?"

>> Britain's Winston Churchill, the U.S.'s Franklin Roosevelt, and the Soviet Union's Joseph Stalin imagined themselves, and were imagined as this cartoon illustrates with them asking the ailing world, "And how are we feeling today?"

Union), and the largest colonial power actively struggling to keep its vast global empire closed to American trade (Great Britain).

23-3b The Pacific Theater, 1941–1942

Although the Allies recognized that Germany was a larger threat than Japan, the United States had a larger presence in the Pacific than in Europe. Thus, American troops fought their first battles in the Pacific. Japan's strategy was to keep the United States at bay long enough to take control over much of the Pacific, which would limit American involvement in Asian affairs. American forces suffered many defeats in those early months. In the Philippines, the Wake Islands, and near Australia, Allied troops lost repeatedly. In mid-1942, the Japanese even took several of the Aleutian Islands (off the coast of Alaska), which, although no one knew it then, was destined to be the only

American land occupied by the Japanese throughout the course of the war. Still, sensing an opportunity to eject the American presence from the Pacific once and for all, the Japanese actively sought possession of Hawai'i. By taking Hawai'i, they hoped to end the American threat in the Pacific before the United States had fully mobilized for war.

Good news came in May 1942, when Americans finally slowed the Japanese advance in the Pacific at the Battle of the Coral Sea. Then in June, a Japanese plan to deal a knockout punch to American forces backfired at Midway Island, when the Japanese suffered a decisive defeat. After the **Battle of Midway**, Japan had reached the limit of its expansion in the Pacific, about halfway across the ocean. It was no longer an offensive threat pushing toward the American West Coast. It had reached the limits of its expansionary capacities. But what would it take to beat Japan back entirely? As it turned out, quite a lot.

23-3c The European Theater, 1942–1943

In the early months of 1942, the Axis Powers reached the limit of their expansion in Europe too. In the west, German U-boats had sunk more than four hundred American ships in the Atlantic and were handily in control of almost all of western Europe. In the south, German troops moved from Libya to Egypt, African land they sought in order to shut down the Allies' last unfettered supply routes and win sole access to Middle Eastern oil. In the east, the Germans launched a summer counteroffensive in southern Russia and the Caucasus Mountains, taking Stalingrad on September 13. By the middle of 1942, the Germans had buttressed their hold on western Europe on all sides. Only Britain remained unoccupied. The German goal of reconquering all the European lands through to be "German" and providing a buffer around them to ensure Germany's safety seemed to be coming to fruition.

For the Allies, better news came in late 1942, four months after Japan had been slowed in the Pacific. In October, British troops checked the Axis advance in Africa at the second battle of El Alamein in Egypt. Shortly thereafter, American troops arrived in North Africa, bottling up the Germans in Tunisia. The south was increasingly secure; Axis advances were repelled, and an avenue appeared through which the Allies could

Battle of Midway Turning point of the Pacific battle when, in 1942, the Allies finally stopped the expansion of Japan



AP Images/British Official

>> Italian women applaud as Allied troops take over the islands of southern Italy. It was the first step in conquering the whole of Europe.

enter Europe. In the east, meanwhile, the Soviets stopped the German advance in the titanic **Battle of Stalingrad**. The Soviet Union slowly began to reconquer lands it had just lost. After years of deadly brutal war, by late 1942 Axis advances were blocked on all fronts. Millions had died already.

TURNING POINTS: 1943

In 1943, Allied leaders faced the question of how to translate these initial successes into a strategy for winning the war. Roosevelt and Churchill, avoiding a direct assault on Axis strongholds like France or Germany, agreed to invade Sicily and Italy, which the Allies succeeded in doing rather quickly. They were making progress on other fronts, too. The United States had launched its first offensive in the Pacific at **Guadalcanal**, finally winning a foothold there. It also

Battle of Stalingrad Five-month-long battle in southwestern Russia that halted the advance of Germany into the Soviet Union in 1942. With somewhere near 1.5 million casualties, it is often considered one of the bloodiest battles in the history of warfare

Guadalcanal One of the Solomon Islands in the Pacific, the location of a 1943 battle that gave the United States and its allies a foothold in the Pacific

began a strategy of “island-hopping,” in which it flew over heavily defended outer islands and attacked less defended islands, isolating Japanese strongholds. In Africa, by May 1943, all German and Italian forces had been defeated. The grip was loosening. American war power and materiel (equipment), together with the British and the other Allied forces, seemed to be strong enough to mount a successful battle.

THE TEHRAN CONFERENCE

The first meeting between Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin took place in November 1943, in Tehran, Iran. Their main topic was the opening of the second front against Vichy France, which would bolster the Soviet forces fighting on the eastern front. By opening a second front in France, the Allies hoped to divide the German forces and ensure the defeat of Hitler. At the meeting, the three powers set a launch date in mid-1944. In exchange

for this attempt to surround Germany in Europe, Stalin agreed to open a front against Japan once Germany had been defeated.

23-3d 1944: Victory in View

In early 1944, with the spirit of cooperation between the major Allies stronger than ever, Allied forces attacked German and Japanese troops on a number of fronts. But all eyes were on the planned Allied landing in northern France, which Hitler was anticipating. If Hitler could stop the Allies from securing a foothold in France, he would be able to rush troops back to Russia and possibly hold off the advancing Soviets, perhaps securing his empire.

NORMANDY

Hitler didn't know where the attack was going to come, though. And on June 6, 1944, an amphibious American, Canadian, and British assault on a 60-mile stretch of Normandy, France, supervised by American general Dwight Eisenhower, established a landing zone. After D-Day (a military euphemism for “designation day,” also in this case known as Operation Overlord), 1 million Allied troops poured into France and struck eastward, taking Caen and St. Lô en route to securing Paris on August 25.

Moving swiftly, more than 2 million American, British, and other Allied troops entered France by September 5, and German defenses crumbled. By September 11, 1944, all of France, Belgium, and Luxembourg had been liberated, and the next day Allied troops entered Germany (see Map 23.1). On the eastern front, Soviet troops invaded the Baltic states and East Prussia in the

north and the Balkans and Hungary in the south. In the Pacific, American troops landed on Mindoro Island in the Philippines on December 15, and in a series of naval battles, destroyed most of Japan's remaining sea power (see Map 23.2). By late 1944, with Allied troops moving on all fronts toward Berlin and Tokyo, the defeat of the Axis was assured.

Map 23.1 Allied Advances and Collapse of German Power

>> This map of Europe during the Second World War shows the dramatic expansion of Hitler's Axis powers before the series of battles from 1943 that turned the tide of war.





>> The 1944 D-Day landing at Normandy, France, pictured here, was a major turning point in the European theater, allowing Allied troops to enter Europe easily.

23-4

THE AMERICAN HOME FRONT

World War II was a remarkably destructive war, laying waste to much of Europe. Indeed, one would be hard pressed to overstate its destruction. The war killed off almost an entire generation—more than 23 million Soviets alone and about 62 million total. The war displaced millions more. Buildings—churches, castles, monasteries—that had stood for a thousand years or more were obliterated. Hitler's soldiers had annihilated nearly all of European Jewry—roughly 6 million Jews died in Nazi concentration camps. About half of the Jews killed were from Poland; the rest came from almost every other European nation, including France, Germany, the Ukraine, the Baltic states, Greece, and Italy.

The United States suffered too, but on a very different scale. Roughly 400,000 Americans died, and millions were injured. However, as unsettling and uncomfortable as it might seem to do so, the Second World War can be seen as an energizing event in

American history rather than a destructive one. Very little American land or property was destroyed; the economy recovered from the Great Depression; and groups that were long excluded from full participation in American life slowly gained a measure of inclusion. This is not to say that World War II was a “good war”: soldiers died, many suffered, and discrimination persisted. But it is true that the war had a transformative effect on the American home front.

23-4a The War Economy

The economy showed the most remarkable improvement. Wartime mobilization boosted production, increased demand for labor, and rescued the national economy from the Great Depression. And it did all this without the extreme measures advocated by some experts. For instance, there was no draft for labor, which would have ensured that all industries operated at maximum capacity.

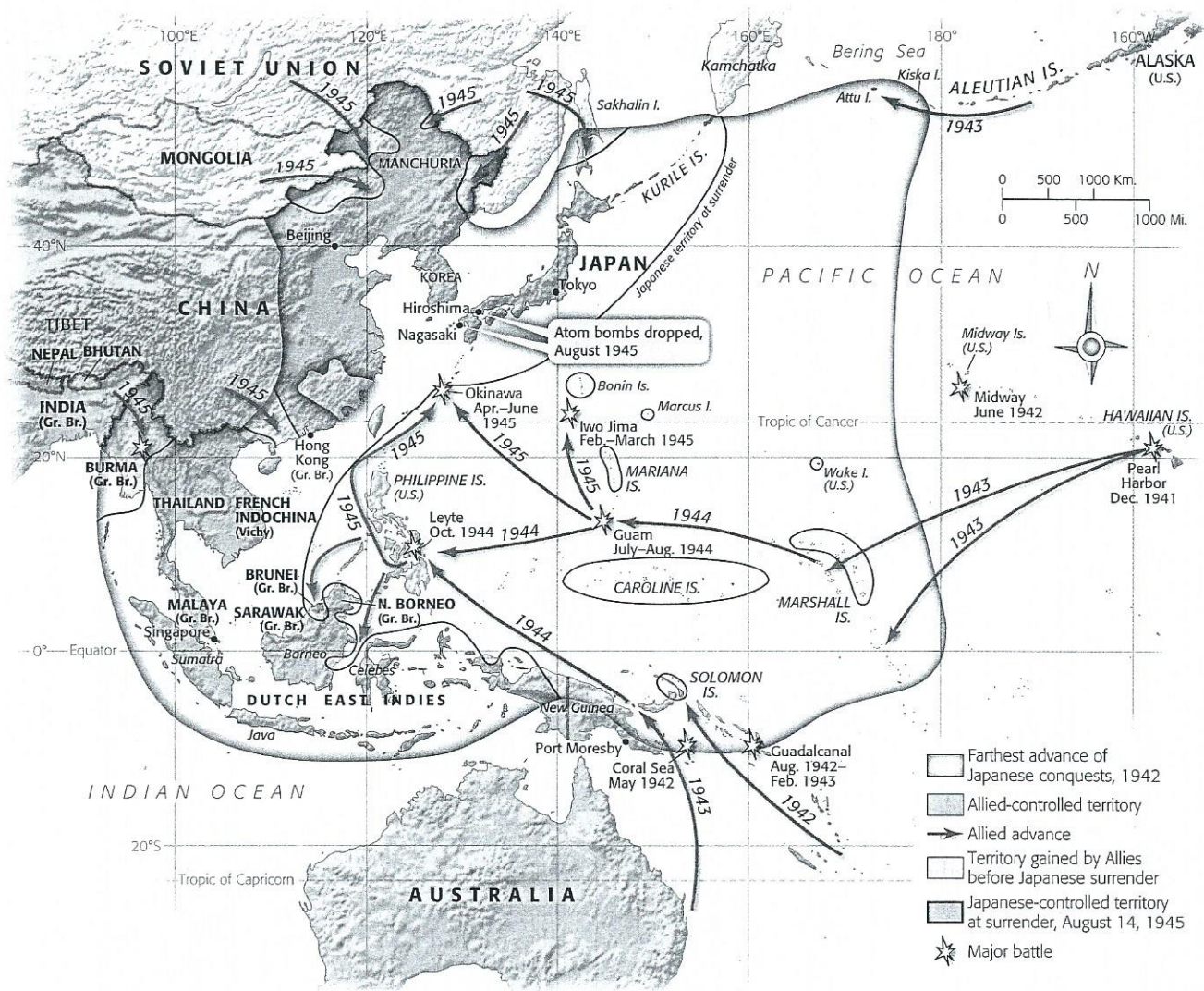
MANUFACTURING FOR WAR

Despite this, World War II did in fact initiate the most significant federal management of the economy in



Historical/Getty Images

>> Although some Americans knew about the systematic killing of European Jewry as early as 1942, images such as this one of starved prisoners, which emerged only after the war, horrified the nation.



Map 23.2 The Final Assault Against Japan

>> This map shows the war in Asia, including Japan's rapid expansion into the Pacific until 1943, when the tide of war shifted.

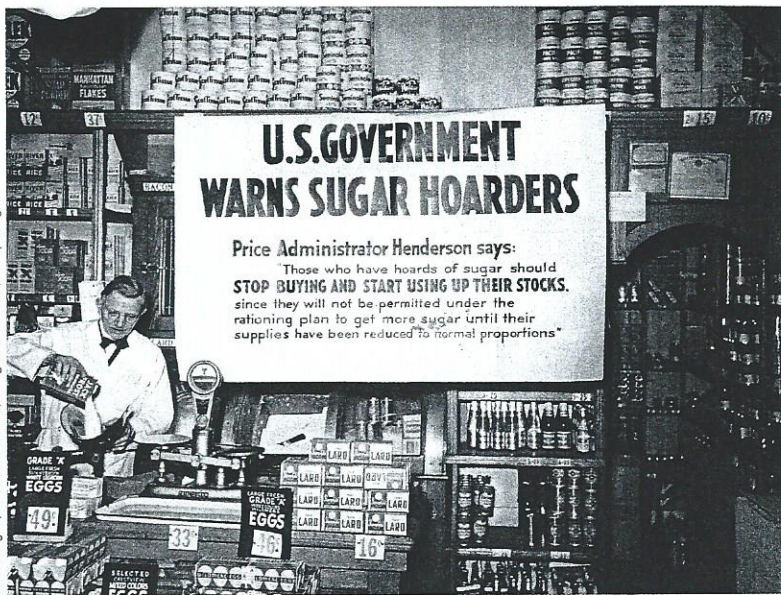
American history. When the war began, President Roosevelt implemented the War Production Board (WPB) to steer the economy into manufacturing weapons rather than consumer goods. Under WPB contracts, Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors shifted from making cars to producing tanks and airplanes. Firestone, Goodyear, and B.F. Goodrich ceased production of civilian car tires and made tires for jeeps, trucks, and airplanes.

In 1943, Roosevelt instituted the Office of War Mobilization (OWM) to oversee the distribution of essential materials such as steel, rubber, and aluminum. Meanwhile, to conserve resources, the WPB banned production of nonessential items and

prioritized war-related industries. Farmers produced crops in record amounts as well. Through careful direction, the government worked with industry to handle the explosion in war-related manufacturing.

LABOR

The expansion of the economy increased the size of the labor force. On one hand, 12 million Americans joined the armed forces, subtracting them from the domestic labor pool. On the other hand, formerly depressed industries were now replete with contracts, hiring men and women at unprecedented levels. Roosevelt established the National War Labor Board



>> Rationing notices such as this one adorned American stores, ensuring that all Americans felt they were a part of the war effort.

(NWLB) in 1942 to minimize labor disputes and set wages, working conditions, and hours. The government did not want strikes slowing down the production of war-related goods, but it also did not want workers to be squeezed or mistreated because of the more intense wartime production levels.

This need for workers was a boon to unions. Union membership grew from 9 million in 1940 to nearly 15 million in 1945. Although some strikes did break out during the war, most laborers felt it unpatriotic to leave work while their compatriots were fighting. They were aided in this pledge by the Smith-Connally Act of 1943, which formally prohibited strikes. In return for working longer hours, workers received heftier paychecks.

PAYING FOR WAR

It was expensive to pay for all these war supplies. In total, the government spent \$321 billion on the war effort. To pay for the war, Roosevelt did three things. First, he pushed for increased taxation, particularly on the wealthy and big business. Inheritance and corporate taxes were also assessed. As a result, taxes paid for 45 percent of the war's cost. Second, the government issued U.S. Savings Bonds, which people bought in expectation of repayment, with interest, later. These bonds increased the national debt from \$40 billion in 1940 to \$260 billion in 1945, but they provided a lot of money up front to the government. Savings bonds were

particularly attractive to Americans because government rationing had already limited consumer spending. With nowhere else to spend their bigger paychecks, many people bought bonds. Finally, the federal government rationed goods. For example, in order to redirect food to soldiers, the government sponsored the "Victory Garden" movement, which encouraged people to grow their own vegetables. More extensive rationing and price controls were also instituted. Early in 1942, Congress opened the Office of Price Administration (OPA), which had the authority to impose rationing and control wages, prices, and rents. Among their many sacrifices, Americans sporadically lived without sugar, butter, coffee, meat, or gasoline. Doing without certain luxuries brought the war closer to home, creating an environment where civilians far from the battlefields felt they were contributing to the war effort.

23-4b Opportunities

The sudden demand for labor, fueled by the notion that the United States was fighting a cadre of brutal racist dictators, led to increased opportunities for women and minorities. These groups were now offered high-paying jobs that had never before been available to them. At the same time, certain forms of discrimination continued. The record is mixed, but the changes provoked by the war prompted social changes that resonated long after 1945.

WOMEN

As millions of men enlisted in the armed services, U.S. industries needed more workers to replace them. American women filled this vacuum. By 1945, female employment outside the home had increased by more than 50 percent, to 20 million. In the process, women entered into fields that were not typically thought of as "women's work," including industrial jobs in defense factories.

To promote American women's involvement in the effort, a government campaign featured the character of Rosie the Riveter, a robust, cheerful woman in overalls who labored on the assembly lines. This campaign, coupled with the acute labor shortage, helped change employers' attitudes. Though they sometimes had to cope with the hostility of their male coworkers,



>> By 1945, female employment outside the home had increased by more than 50 percent, to 20 million. Meanwhile, annual wages for African Americans went from \$457 before the war to \$1,976 after. This photo shows an African American woman drilling rivets, a conspicuous look-alike of the famous image of Rosie the Riveter.

women workers demonstrated diligence and skill. Women comprised more than a third of workers at shipyards and aircraft plants.

Women also served in military units during the Second World War. In 1942, the U.S. Army created the Women's Army Corps (WACs), and a few months later, the U.S. Navy created the WAVES (Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service). During the course of the war, more than 86,000 women volunteered for the WAVES, serving in hospitals, defense jobs, wartime communications, and intelligence operations. These organizations anticipated the Women's Armed Services Integration Act in 1948, which formally allowed women to serve in the military during both peacetime and war.

AFRICAN AMERICANS

Just as wartime demands for labor created opportunities for women, it opened doors for African Americans. The movement to challenge racial bias in employment began in the early 1940s. Months before Pearl Harbor, A. Philip Randolph, leader of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (an African American union), started the March on Washington Movement. Its goal was twofold: (1) to pressure the government to develop and enforce antidiscrimination

measures in the industries that had lucrative defense contracts and (2) to end segregation in the military. President Roosevelt feared that Randolph's threat to bring more than 100,000 African Americans to march on the capital might provoke a race war. In response, the president issued Executive Order 8802, which gave Randolph half of what he demanded. Executive Order 8802 established the **Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC)**, which required companies with federal contracts to make jobs available without regard to "race, creed, color, or national origin." Coupled with the demand for labor, the FEPC had some effect. In total, the percentage of African Americans in war production work rose from 3 percent to 9 percent during the war. Between 1942 and 1945, the number of

African Americans in labor unions (traditionally the province of higher-skilled workers) doubled to more than 1 million. The average annual wage for African Americans quadrupled in the war years, from \$457 to \$1,976. Randolph's second demand, to integrate the armed services, would have to wait until after the war.

Despite the formal segregation enforced in the military, about 1 million African Americans served in the armed forces. Most served in segregated units commanded by white officers. African Americans nevertheless took pride in notable achievements during their service. A black Air Force squadron known as the Tuskegee Airmen, for example, won eighty Distinguished Flying Crosses for successful combat missions flown against the Germans.

Their commitment and service during the war encouraged many African Americans to believe that fighting for a victory over oppression and race hatred abroad should have a corresponding effect on ending

Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) Agency that required companies with federal contracts to make jobs available without regard to "race, creed, color, or national origin"

"It is my belief that some Los Angeles policeman or group of policemen suggested to some sailor or group of sailors that they get together and sap up on the zoot suiters. Everyone knows that it has been a long and bitter complaint of Los Angeles policemen that they were not allowed to beat up the zoot suiters themselves."

—CHESTER B. HIMES, "ZOOT RIOTS ARE RACE RIOTS"

discrimination at home. This movement, demanding "democracy at home and abroad," became known as the **Double V** campaign. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, a black-owned newspaper, launched the public relations campaign, asking readers to endorse the slogan and to wear pins with the Double V symbol.

But gains were not easy to win. African Americans continued to battle discrimination in the workplace. They also contended with violent responses from white workers resistant to working with black people. Racial violence flared intensely in the summer of 1943, when more than 250 riots raged in fifty cities across the country. One 1943 riot in Detroit left twenty-five African Americans and nine white people dead.

For African Americans, the war created opportunities and spotlighted continuing discrimination. It epitomized what sociologist Gunnar Myrdal called, in his popular 1944 book of the same name, "an American dilemma"—the difference between the open-minded American ideology and the true nature of American race relations. As Myrdal might have predicted, leaders emerged from the war who would pave the way for the civil rights movement.

Double V Campaign championed by African Americans during World War II, demanding "democracy at home and abroad"

bracero program Wartime arrangement in which the U.S. government brought several hundred thousand Mexican migrants to work on California farms

HISPANICS

Hispanics also found new opportunities during the war. Many went to work in agriculture and the booming defense industry of southern California. The government's **bracero program** brought several hundred thousand Mexican migrants to work on farms in the American Southwest, which were experiencing an acute labor shortage due to war demands. Similarly, in 1942, as a result of labor shortages and antidiscrimination guidelines, 17,000 Mexican Americans were hired for shipyard jobs that had previously been barred to them. Hispanics also contributed to the war effort in the services: more than 300,000 Mexican Americans served in the armed forces.

But Mexican Americans also faced hostility as they advanced. In 1943, a series of clashes between whites and Hispanics in Los Angeles became known as the Zoot Suit Riots. A subculture of Hispanic young men wore "zoot suits" (long suit coats over baggy, pleated pants), a fashion connected to the culture of swing music (and worn by

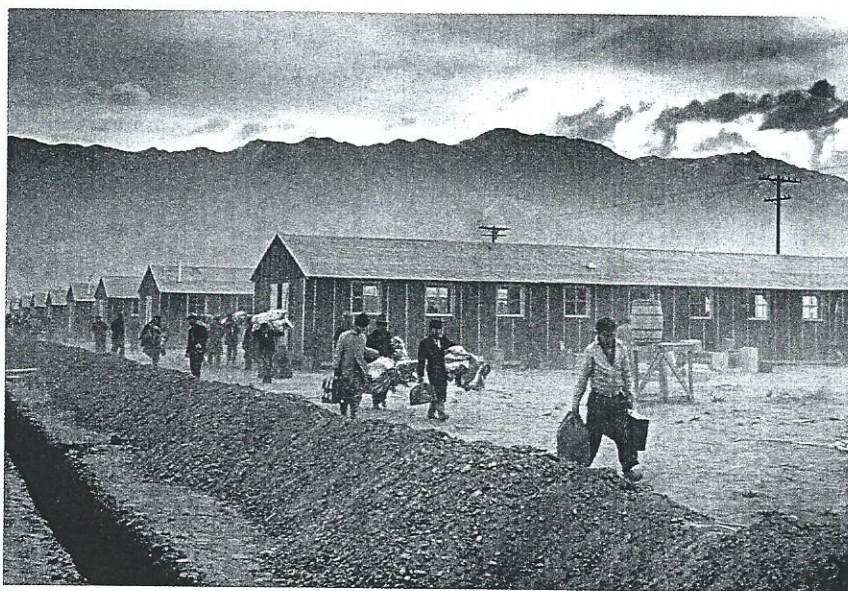


>> The Zoot Suit Riots, 1943. In LA in 1943, a number of young Latino men were beaten for wearing a Zoot Suit, a fashion of the time, but one that went against the government's allocation of material.

some African Americans and whites as well). But because the voluminous suits violated wartime fabric-conservation guidelines, many white people perceived the zoot suit as a brazen, unpatriotic refusal to make sacrifices for the war. White outrage turned into an excuse for violence when groups of white sailors stationed near Los Angeles attacked young Mexican American men, some wearing zoot suits and some not. The men were beaten and their clothing was torn off them and burned. Police failed to protect the Mexican American youths. Instead, authorities dealt with the problem by barring military personnel from certain parts of the city and making it a crime to wear a zoot suit.

JAPANESE AMERICANS

Of all American minority groups, Japanese Americans experienced the most egregious mistreatment during the war. Soon after Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbor, the U.S. government ordered the internment of "aliens of enemy nationalities." It was President Roosevelt, with Executive Order 9066, who ordered the internment of people thought to be possible spies. Though some Italian and German nationals were targeted, Japanese Americans were the only ethnic group forced into internment camps. The Japanese had long suffered discrimination throughout the West Coast, where most Japanese Americans lived. The internment camps were simply the culmination of that distrust. Fearing disloyalty or the presence of enemy spies, the military forcibly removed 112,000 people of Japanese descent from California, Oregon, and Washington. Many of them were American citizens, having been in the United States for several generations. Nevertheless, although entirely innocent of treason, the entire ethnic Japanese population was forced to leave their homes and property behind and move to ten War Relocation Authority internment camps in the deserts of California and the American Southwest and Southeast. For the duration of the war, interned Japanese Americans lived in bleak barracks surrounded by barbed wire, with few amenities beyond the possessions they carried with them. The Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Japanese internment in the 1944 case of *Korematsu v. United States*. The camps closed months after the war ended, in 1945 and 1946.



Eliot Elisofsky/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images

>> "We saw the picture in the newspaper shortly after and the caption underneath it read, 'Japs good-natured about evacuation.'"—Monica Sone, *Nisei Daughter*. This picture shows more of the reality: the desolate internment camps where Japanese Americans, many of them US citizens, were forced to live for much of the war.

In 1988, more than three decades later, the United States formally apologized to those it interned, saying Japanese internment was premised on "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership." It granted each survivor \$20,000 in reparations.

THE GI BILL

The war created unprecedented opportunities for another group—returning soldiers. Near the end of the war, Congress passed a number of influential social programs directed to ease the soldiers' reentry to civilian life after the war. The most significant of these was the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the GI Bill of Rights (or the **GI Bill**). It promised unemployment benefits, educational opportunities, low-interest housing loans, and medical care to millions of soldiers. One of the bill's most consequential effects was to provide returning veterans with financial aid for college, which had long been the exclusive domain of the upper-middle class and the wealthy. More than 2 million ex-servicemen enrolled

GI Bill Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, which promised unemployment benefits, educational opportunities, low-interest housing loans, and medical care to millions of soldiers

in colleges in the decade following the war. It also provided affordable home loans that prompted soldiers to buy homes in the rapidly developing suburbs.

The GI Bill typified the ways that government action could dramatically change American society and set the stage for further welfare-state legislation in later years. But the bill failed to acknowledge racial disparities, and it allowed local control of home loans and university admissions, which often perpetuated ingrained forms of discrimination. Thus, the GI Bill tacitly endorsed some aspects of racial discrimination in the United States and created opportunities for white Americans that their African American counterparts did not enjoy.

23-4c Demographic Shifts

Perhaps as important as the new opportunities for women, minorities, and returning soldiers, the upheavals of the war included dramatic shifts in the nation's population. About 15 million Americans moved during the war, mainly for jobs in the new centers of the defense industry. This was one of the largest internal migrations in the nation's history.

THE WEST

Almost 8 million people relocated to states west of the Mississippi during the 1940s. Most of this migration was directly tied to defense industry jobs, because the West Coast was the staging area for the war in the Pacific. With 10 percent of all defense contracts in California, the state became an employment magnet; the population increased by 2 million during the war. With so many people moving, cities suffered housing shortages and overcrowding. To deal with the problem, Roosevelt established the Federal Housing Agency to facilitate new building. Nearly 2 million new housing units were built during the war. Thus, the war's job opportunities included not only defense work but also home and road construction to accommodate all the newcomers.

THE SOUTH

Though the largest boom took place in the West, the South also benefited from industrial investment, although its demographic transition was more complicated than the West's. Black and rural white southerners left the region in tremendous numbers. All told, about 1.3 million southerners moved to cities in the North or Midwest during the war, and 600,000 more moved to the West. The majority of southern migrants were African Americans fleeing the South, continuing the Great Migration that had peaked

from 1910 to the 1930s. In the California cities of Richmond, Oakland, Los Angeles, and San Diego, black migrants carved out new communities for themselves, usually in close proximity to factories producing goods for the war. The migration of African Americans from the South dispersed their population more widely, making race relations more of a national issue, not just confined to a single region.

Northerners also moved south. Because Southern legislators were able to secure nearly \$6 billion in defense contracts during the war, nearly 1 million northerners migrated into the South during the 1940s. The South consequentially became more industrial and more urban, even in some parts softening its traditional stance to racial segregation.

THE MIDWEST

While the population in the Midwest did not increase dramatically during the war, the region did experience other upheavals. In Detroit, the nation's largest manufacturing center, war mobilization led to racial discord even as it virtually ended the problems of unemployment, which had been as high as 50 percent during the Great Depression. The migration of more than 200,000 African Americans to Detroit changed the racial composition of the city. Riots there in 1942 and 1943 stemmed in part from white hostility to black people moving into historically white neighborhoods.

23-4d Leisure in Wartime

The war also affected the way Americans had fun. The period's limitations (long work hours, few men present, rationing of goods) generated a new kind of resourcefulness. After the departure of many male athletes for the armed services, for example, women's baseball leagues filled the void. The Rockford Peaches, Kenosha Comets, Racine Belles, and South Bend Blue Sox drew hundreds of thousands of fans to women's baseball games across the Midwest. In 1948, the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League reached a peak of ten teams and nearly 1 million in attendance, impressive in light of the small size of the cities that hosted the teams.

In music, jazz captured the energy of the era and embodied the push toward racial integration. Jazz, especially the styles practiced by the big swing bands, was America's favorite music in the 1940s. Millions of Americans found respite from the war while listening to the radio and dancing in nightclubs. Swing music popularized jazz for white audiences, encouraging



>> The 1992 film *A League of Their Own* was inspired by the Rockford Peaches, a team in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, shown here in 1945. The Peaches won the championship four of the League's eleven years.

greater racial integration and symbolizing the promise of a more democratic society.

23-5 A WORLD REMADE, 1945

Meanwhile, the war continued on its many fronts. By late 1944, the war was nearing its end.

23-5a Germany's Last Stand

Realizing the tides of battle had turned against them, on December 16, 1944, German forces launched a desperate counteroffensive in Belgium, forcing thinly spread Allied troops to retreat for 50 miles. The **Battle of the Bulge**, the largest battle of the western front, ended when the Germans failed to capture the Allied stronghold of Bastogne, Belgium. Although the battle stymied Allied progress in the west in January 1945, it diverted badly needed resources from the rest of Germany, leaving the country virtually undefended from other sides. Thus, in January, the Soviets made rapid progress toward Berlin from the east.

YALTA

Yet, just at the point of their imminent success, relations among the Allies grew strained. Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin, meeting at the Crimean town of Yalta in early February 1945, faced the question of what the world should look like after the war. Although the Allies had been issuing joint statements for years, serious problems emerged over how to put these principles into practice. The most intense disagreements between the western Allies and the Soviet Union concerned Poland, now occupied by Soviet forces. Stalin reiterated his desire for a defensive buffer between the Soviet Union and the rest of Europe, while Britain and the United States wanted an independent Poland.

In the end, the **Yalta agreement**, though vague and contradictory, yielded to Soviet demands on many points. It promised independent regimes in Poland and eastern Europe, yet conceded that pro-Soviet parties would have a large role in creating and sustaining these regimes. In

subsequent years, as disagreements between the West and the Soviets escalated into the Cold War, critics charged that Roosevelt, who did not share Churchill's keen mistrust of Stalin, sold out eastern Europe at Yalta and emboldened Soviet aggression.

23-5b Final Moves

Before the postwar world could be arranged, however, the Axis had to be defeated. Beginning their final offensive on February 8, 1945, Allied troops crossed the Rhine River and rapidly dominated the German heartland. Throughout mid-February, the British and American air forces conducted an intense firebombing campaign over the beautiful German city of Dresden, creating a cocktail of bombs that blew roofs off

Battle of the Bulge Largest battle of the western front; ended when the Germans failed to capture the Allied stronghold of Bastogne, Belgium, and allowed Soviet forces to advance on Germany from the east

Yalta agreement Statement issued by Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin in February 1945 that promised independent regimes in Poland and eastern Europe, yet conceded that pro-Soviet parties would have a large role in creating and sustaining these regimes



>> Jazz, and especially big band swing music, was wildly popular during the war years, a hint of the promise of greater harmony between black and white Americans after the war. Pictured here is the Count Basie Orchestra at the Savoy Ballroom in Chicago, Illinois.

buildings. In a typical campaign, the Allies then dropped “matchstick bombs” to ignite building frames and followed these with high explosives onto main avenues into town, which prevented rescue missions. Within days, the city was destroyed and approximately 30,000 Germans were killed. The controversial goal of the mission was to sap the German will to fight and to ensure that German troops could not move east to fight the Soviet Union. The Soviets, meanwhile, entered Berlin on April 24. Knowing the end was near, Hitler committed suicide on April 30 and all German forces surrendered on May 8, known as “Victory in Europe Day,” or V-E Day.

In the Pacific, Japan did not capitulate when the Germans did. The naval war had largely ended by late 1944 with a resounding Allied victory, but the prospect of a drawn-out invasion of Japan in order to get the Japanese to surrender loomed. Japanese forces, given orders to fight to the death, hoped to hold off the Allied demand for unconditional surrender. It took a month for American forces to eliminate Japanese resistance on the island of Iwo Jima. Victory at Iwo Jima came at a cost of 6,800 American lives—more Marines than in any other battle in

Manhattan Project American project during World War II designed to harness the power of the atom and create an atom bomb

the Pacific—and about 21,000 of the 22,000 Japanese who had been on the island. American troops encountered the same fierce resistance on the island of Okinawa, where it took American troops three months to claim victory, at the cost of 140,000 civilians, 66,000 Japanese soldiers, and 12,000 American soldiers. American forces learned in these two battles that attaining Japan’s unconditional surrender would be a long, exhausting ordeal.

THE POTSDAM CONFERENCE

The Potsdam conference, held from late July to early August 1945, brought the leaders of Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union together for the last time during the war. But the faces had changed: President Harry Truman now represented the United States, having taken office after President Roosevelt’s death in April. Then Churchill left mid-conference after being voted

out of office. The turnover in leaders brought a new sense of uncertainty and mistrust to the proceedings.

Much of the tension could be attributed to the suspicion felt by American and British officials for what they saw as aggressive moves by the Soviets. Stalin demanded that Germany never be permitted to wage war again, proposing to take \$20 billion in reparations from any future German state. The western Allies resisted this demand, recalling the effects that high reparations had on Germany after World War I. A compromise emerged, allowing the Soviets to gain some reparations in the form of industrial machinery and equipment from the western occupation zones. At the same time, Stalin was also adamant that pro-Soviet governments be established in Soviet-conquered areas of eastern Europe. His blunt message and hostile tone discouraged Western leaders, particularly Truman, from making concessions.

Matters became even more complicated when Truman learned from his advisors that the United States had successfully tested a nuclear weapon. He did not share the specifics of the atomic bomb with Stalin, but he did reveal that the United States had a new weapon of unimaginable proportions. Stalin, who had been aware of the American project to build the bomb (the **Manhattan Project**) even before Truman was, knew that the United States had succeeded in harnessing the power of the atom.

Eventually the Allies found broad agreement in several punitive steps against Germany. In the Potsdam Declaration, the Allies divided Germany and Austria into four occupied zones, and German-speaking people in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland were forcibly moved to Germany. The Potsdam conference ended on August 2, with the Allies demanding Japan's unconditional surrender.

23-5c Defeat of Japan

In 1945, Japan was only lightly defended against American attack; huge firebombings of Japanese cities went unanswered. But American planners estimated that an invasion of the Japanese home islands, scheduled for November 1945 and March 1946, would cost 50,000 American casualties in its first phases alone. The battles at Iwo Jima and Okinawa demonstrated the extent to which Japanese soldiers would fight to avoid full capitulation. At the same moment, Truman was slowly coming to accept that he had the power to use the atomic bomb to end the war. Truman chose to use the massive new bomb on the city of Hiroshima after the Japanese government failed to respond to an Allied ultimatum to surrender or face "utter devastation." On August 6, 1945, a B-29 bomber named *Enola Gay* dropped the bomb, destroying Hiroshima and ultimately causing death or injury to 160,000 people. After a second bomb destroyed Nagasaki on August 9 (killing between 60,000 and 80,000 people), the Japanese government surrendered on the



Topfoto/The Image Works

>> Pictured here is what little remained of Hiroshima after the atomic bomb was dropped on August 6th, 1945.

"One of my classmates . . . muttered something and pointed outside the window, saying 'A B-29 is coming.' . . .

Looking in the direction he was pointing . . . all I can remember was a pale lightning flash for two or three seconds."

—YOSHITAKA KAWAMOTO, THIRTEEN YEARS OLD ON AUGUST 6, 1945, AND HALF A MILE AWAY FROM THE HIROSHIMA BOMB SITE

condition that the Japanese emperor be allowed to keep his throne. The Allies accepted. The hostilities of World War II were over, but at a tremendous cost, both human and moral.

Truman himself said he never lost sleep over the decision to use nuclear bombs, but others were more conflicted. Perhaps most disturbed by the moral dimensions of nuclear weaponry was Robert Oppenheimer, the scientist in charge of the Manhattan Project. Upon seeing the first nuclear bomb test in the deserts of the American Southwest, Oppenheimer was appalled at the magnitude of the blast. Aware that the bomb had the capacity to kill thousands in an instant, Oppenheimer simply said, "I am become death." Others argue that the Second World War had already ushered in mass death and, indeed, a changed morality. Not only had the Holocaust killed 6 million Jews, but also the conventional bombing of Dresden had already extended well beyond military targets to civilian ones, killing 30,000 Germans in a matter of days. In the Pacific, the battle over the island of Okinawa had killed 140,000 civilians, 66,000 Japanese soldiers, and 12,000 American soldiers. In light of these numbers, some argue that dropping a nuclear bomb simply expedited an end to a tragic war.

>LOOKING AHEAD...

World War II ravaged huge parts of the world, leaving more than 60 million people dead, 38 million of them civilians. Germany had lost more than 7 million lives, and its major cities were in ruins; the Soviet Union had lost about 23 million people; and Japan

had also suffered massive losses, including more than 2 million deaths. The cities of one of the victors, Britain, lay in ruins. Furthermore, as American and Soviet troops liberated Nazi work and death camps, the world saw for the first time the extent of Hitler's Holocaust, which had killed nearly 11 million people in total, including nearly all of European Jewry. American losses in the war were comparatively small. By the end of the war, the United States had suffered 400,000 military deaths and 11,000 civilian deaths. In addition, the United States had escaped major destruction of its economic infrastructure.

Just as World War II transformed the world, it also transformed the United States' role in world affairs. Between 1939 and 1945, the United States moved from being a neutral party to being a world superpower. Diplomatic successes played as important a role as military triumphs in this development: Roosevelt's ability to take the lead role in the Grand Alliance ensured that American power would endure. But these same forces propelled the Soviet Union to superpower status as well, and as the last shots of World War II were fired, the Cold War between the world's two superpowers was just beginning, with each power soon to have nuclear weapons to fight it. It is to that battle that we now turn.

STUDY TOOLS 23

READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:

- Rip out the Chapter Review Card, which includes key terms and chapter summaries.

ONLINE AT WWW.CENGAGEBRAIN.COM, YOU CAN:

- Collect StudyBits while you read and study the chapter.
- Quiz yourself on key concepts.
- Find videos for further exploration.
- Prepare for tests with HIST5 Flash Cards as well as those you create.
- Read a 1941 Lindbergh address to the America First Committee.
- Listen to the "Four Freedoms" speech.
- Hear Roosevelt's war message to Congress, December 8, 1941.
- View a series of images of the restored Topaz Internment Camp.
- Read about eight women who came to the front.
- See a video of news coverage of D-Day.
- View a series of images of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

CH 23 TIMELINE

- ▶ 1931 Japan invades Chinese territory Manchuria.
- ▶ 1933 Hitler's National Socialist Party ascends to power in Germany.
Italian dictator Benito Mussolini invades and conquers Ethiopia.
FDR's "good neighbor" policy renounces past invasions.
- ▶ 1936 Hitler defies Treaty of Versailles and rearms demilitarized zone west of Rhine.
- ▶ 1937 Japan launches full invasion of Chinese mainland.

What Else Was Happening

1938 Germany annexes Austria.
France and Britain consent to German annexation of western Czechoslovakia.

1939 **March:** Hitler breaks Munich Agreement and marches into Czechoslovakia.

August: Hitler and Stalin make secret nonaggression pact, plan division of Poland.

September 1: Hitler declares war against Poland and launches invasion.

1941 Lend-Lease Act provides military aid to nations attacked by Germany and Japan.
Japan occupies French Indochina; United States cuts off all trade with Japan.
Roosevelt and Churchill state aim of national self-determination in Atlantic Charter.

December 7: Japan bombs U.S. naval station at Pearl Harbor, Hawai'i.

1942 **February 19:** Roosevelt orders internment of 112,000 Japanese Americans.

June: Victory in Battle of Midway turns tide in Pacific war against Japan.

October British check Axis advance in North Africa in battle of El Alamein.

1943 **November:** Stalin, Roosevelt, Churchill agree on second front against Germany in 1944.

Supreme Court finds internment of Japanese Americans constitutional in *Korematsu*.

1945 **February:** Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin discuss post-war Europe at Yalta.

May 8: Germany surrenders, Americans celebrate V-E Day.

July/August: Potsdam Conference reveals tensions between Britain, United States, and Soviet Union.

August 6: U.S. drops atomic bomb on Hiroshima, killing 160,000.

August 9: Second atomic bomb on Nagasaki kills 60,000 to 80,000 people.

1940: *Germany occupies Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Netherlands.*

June 5: *Germany invades France, captures Paris within six weeks.*

German air force targets civilians with city bombing raids in Battle of Britain.

1944: *GI Bill aids veterans in housing, employment, health care, education.*

June 6: *Allies launch largest amphibian assault in history in French Normandy.*

Capture of Iwo Jima costs lives of 6,800 Americans and 21,000 Japanese.

September 11: *Allied troops enter Germany after reclaiming France, Belgium, Netherlands.*

December: *American victory in Battle of the Bulge.*