CHAPTER 13: THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF WORLD WAR II

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 13: The Causes and Consequences of World War II

13.1: Introduction

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Figure 13.1 The Battlefields of WWII. A German soldier prepares to throw a grenade at opposing Russian forces during Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. (credit: modification of work "German troops in Russia" by National Archives at College Park/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Chapter Outline

13.1 An Unstable Peace
13.2 Theaters of War
13.3 Keeping the Home Fires Burning
13.4 Out of the Ashes

The devastation and dislocations of World War I were so profound that much of Europe was hard-pressed to recover in its aftermath. Through the tumultuous 1920s, voters worldwide looked to authoritative leaders and parties to solve their country's problems. This tendency spawned a new approach to governance in the form of fascism and totalitarianism, which gained power and influence in many places across the globe. The resulting regimes propelled the world to a bloodier and more devastating sequel to World War I—World War II. The second global conflict in less than half a century began with Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939 and Britain and France's decision to oppose it. By the summer of 1940, western Europe had fallen to German armies, and in 1941, Germany invaded the Soviet Union (Figure 13.1). As Europe erupted in flames, on the other side of the world, the armies of the Empire of Japan swept through Asia and the Pacific, enmeshing millions more in a brutal conflict.

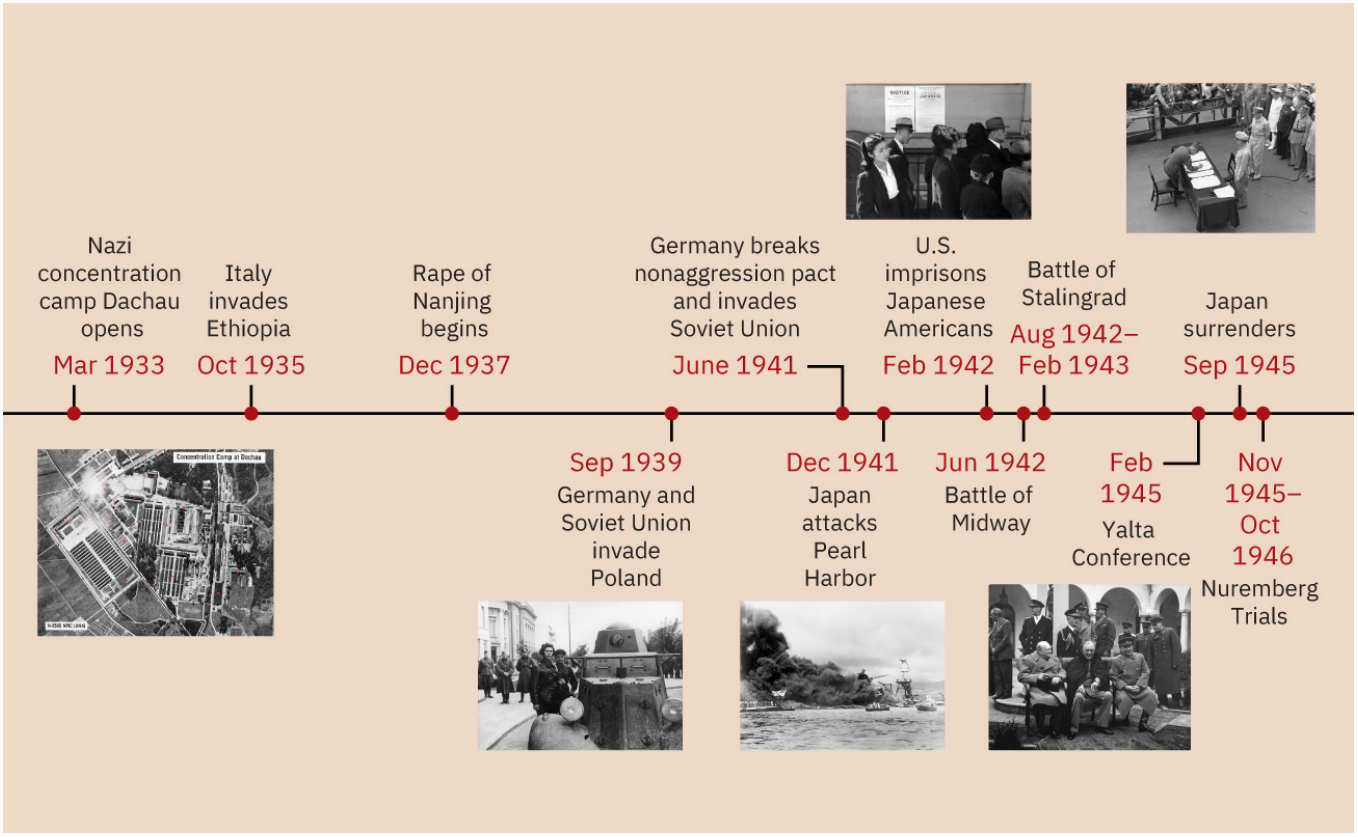

Figure 13.2 Timeline: The Causes and Consequences of World War II. (credit “Mar 1933”: modification of work “Concentration camp dachau aerial view” by USHMM, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain; credit “Sep 1939”: modification of work “The German-soviet Invasion of Poland, 1939” by Imperial War Museums/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain; credit “Dec 1941”: modification of work “WWII Pearl Harbor Attack (286467015)” by National Archives and Records Administration/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain; credit “Feb 1942”: modification of work “Japanese internment detainees” by War Relocation Authority/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain; credit “Feb 1945”: modification of work “‘Big Three’ met at Yalta” by National Archives and Records Administration/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain; credit “Sep 1945”: modification of work “Japanese surrender, Tokyo Bay, September 2, 1945” by U.S. National Archives/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

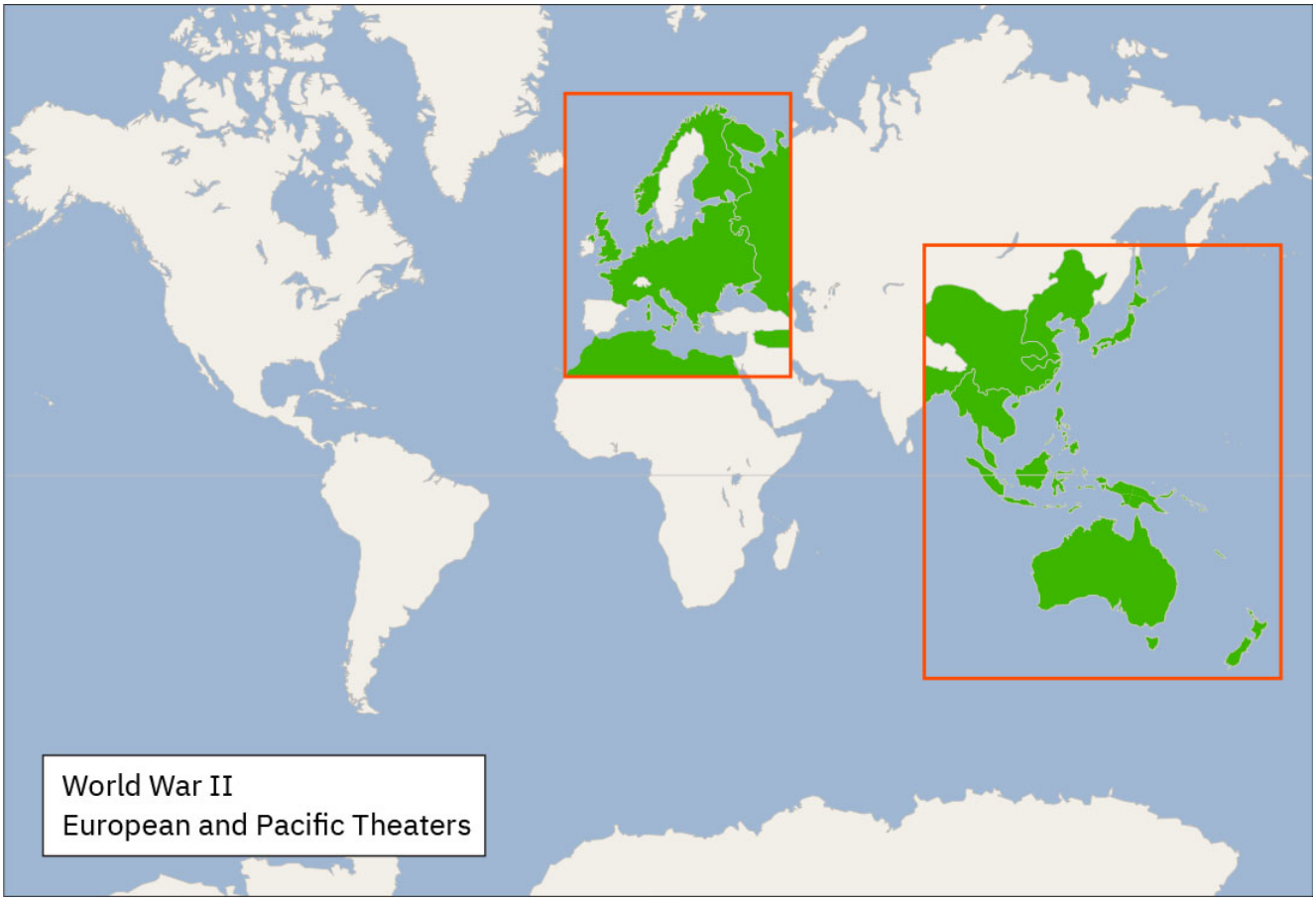

Figure 13.3 Locator Map: The Causes and Consequences of World War II. (credit: modification of work “World map blank shorelines” by Maciej Jaros/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

13.2: An Unstable Peace

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Analyze Japan’s efforts to expand its empire in Asia and the Pacific
- Discuss Hitler’s actions in the 1930s and how they led to World War II
- Explain how and why the United States was less engaged in responding to threats to peace in the 1930s
- Discuss why Japan eventually decided to attack the United States

The attempts by Western nations to build a structure of world peace with the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations ultimately unraveled during the 1930s. National and international grievances, competing ideologies, and economic self-interest all hammered away at the fragile international order.

Asia for Asians

The fight between Japan and China in the 1930s lit the fuse that made World War II a global conflict. The spark may have been Japan’s long-standing perception of Western racism, dating back to the nineteenth century and shown more recently in the rejection of Japan’s proposed racial equality amendment to the Treaty of Versailles. This had been done at the insistence of Australia and the British delegation. Part of Japan’s underlying thinking was to rid Asia of Western colonial influences, although it also clearly saw itself as the new leader of the region.

Since the end of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Japan had held the right to lease the South Manchuria Railway in northeastern China, a privilege previously held by Russia. However, Japan now claimed rights to control extensive territory in northeastern China outside the railway zone and stationed its troops in the region. In 1931, these troops detonated explosives along the track of the South Manchuria Railway and blamed the act on Chinese saboteurs. This gave Japan an excuse to invade and annex Manchuria (also called Manchukuo) on the pretext that it was defending Japanese interests. To deflect international attention from this incident, commonly known as the Mukden Incident, the Japanese provoked some sharp clashes with Chinese troops in Shanghai. A cease-fire on May 5, 1932, concluded the First Shanghai Incident.

Simultaneously, the Imperial Japanese Kwantung Army in Manchukuo continued to expand its operations and control. The army pushed southward to the Great Wall, absorbing more Chinese territory into its zone of control. Eventually, on May 22, 1933, the Japanese and China’s Guomindang government (GMD, also spelled “Kuomintang”) concluded the Tanggu Truce, forming a demilitarized zone that stretched one hundred kilometers south of the Great Wall and essentially detached Manchukuo from the nation of China. Thereafter, Manchukuo, which had rich coal and iron ore deposits, was developed as an economic engine for the Japanese Empire, securing North China, countering any spread of communism or Soviet influence, and preparing the way for a wider conflict (Figure 13.4).

Figure 13.4 A Disputed Territory. Beginning in 1933, the Tanggu Truce between China and Japan allowed Manchukuo (Manchuria) to be developed as an economic engine for Japan. (CC BY 4.0; Rice University & OpenStax)

The nationalist GMD government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had been fighting a civil war since 1927. In 1934, GMD troops displaced from Manchukuo by the Japanese had repositioned themselves south of the Great Wall when President Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi)[1] ordered them to attack the Chinese communists under Mao Zedong at their nearby base in Yan'an, Shaanxi Province. Chinese public opinion rejected the idea of Chinese fighting Chinese in the face of Japan's aggression. In December 1936, during the so-called Xian Incident, Chiang Kai-shek was taken prisoner in Xian, China, by Manchurian forces and forced to negotiate a cessation of the Civil War and the creation of the Second United Front—unifying the GMD and the CCP against Japan.

Tensions in North China escalated early in July 1937, as Japanese troops were conducting night exercises near the Marco Polo Bridge ten miles west of Beijing and firefights erupted between them and Chinese troops. The Japanese quickly overcame the Chinese forces and secured their control of the area around Beijing and Tianjin.

Chiang Kai-shek then decided to shift the fighting to the Shanghai region, where he had better forces and a seeming numerical advantage. The Japanese responded by mounting a major offensive, and by November 1937, the GMD forces had been badly mauled. After losing 250,000 troops, they retreated westward to China's capital in Nanjing. Japanese forces closed in on Nanjing, and Chinese troops continued to retreat westward. On December 12, 1937, Chinese resistance at Nanjing ceased, and Japanese troops entered the defenseless city, commencing a terrifying seven-week reign of terror and plunder. Foreign witnesses in the city estimated that twenty thousand Chinese women and girls were raped. Some thirty thousand Chinese soldiers who could not be evacuated were executed, and perhaps as many as twelve thousand civilians were also killed. Other historians put the number of dead at 300,000. (Such discrepancies in numbers occur because historians may disagree on which deaths can be attributed to an event.) The tragedy became known as the "Rape of Nanking" (the older spelling of Nanjing) and was taken up at the Tokyo War Crimes trials after the war.

Japan redoubled its efforts to subdue China. Having retreated farther west to defend the GMD's new provisional capital at Chongqing, some GMD armies put up stiff resistance in places, but by 1938, they had been pushed back significantly. To prevent further Japanese advances, Chiang Kai-shek ordered the opening of the dikes on the Yellow River, flooding large portions of central China, killing an estimated 400,000 people and dislocating ten million more. In December 1937, the Japanese sank the USS

Panay, a gunboat on the Yangtze River that was extracting American and Chinese civilians from Nanjing at the time. The Japanese government accepted responsibility and apologized for the *Panay* incident, paying restitution of more than $2 million (at least $37 million in today's money). Through all this, public opinion in the United States, while increasingly shifting in favor of China, was still undecided about entering any war.

The Great Depression and the rise of fascism in Europe seemed to signal the decline of the older Western-dominated world order. Japanese intellectuals, politicians, military leaders, and mass media envisioned that Japan could fashion a "new order" of regional supremacy for itself. In an August 1940 radio address, Japanese foreign minister Yosuke Matsuoka broached his vision for a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere as a blueprint for Japan's ascent to world-power status. A year later, he published a book further developing his ideas for liberating Asians from European domination and expelling the "white race bloc" suppressing Asia's destiny. By 1941, creating the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere had become the publicly articulated objective of Japan's Asian aggression, and it remained so until Japan's defeat in 1945.

Eventually, finding themselves in a stalemate in China and needing more natural resources to sustain the war and the goal of creating the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, the Japanese military and civilian governments began to consider a thrust into Southeast Asia. Such a move would inevitably mean a confrontation with the United States and its colony the Philippines. Japan conceived a desperately hopeful plan of war against the United States and an initial knockout strike on the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Peace in Our Time

In furtherance of his promise to revive Italian glory, Benito Mussolini (popularly known as *Il Duce*, "the leader") sought to expand the Italian protectorate of Somali in East Africa. A border dispute with Ethiopia, which Italy had long sought to colonize, arose in November 1934, and the Ethiopians took the matter to the League of Nations on January 5, 1935. When a full-scale Italian invasion of Ethiopia began on October 3 of that year, the League Council immediately declared Italy the aggressor, and fifty-one member nations approved sanctions against Italy. Unwilling to defy Mussolini, however, the British and French undermined the League in a secret agreement permitting Italy to absorb Ethiopia into a special economic zone. In May 1936, Italian forces took the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, and shortly thereafter, Italy formally annexed the country. In Italy, Mussolini's popularity grew, especially among Italian youth.

Britain and France were even more reluctant to confront Germany. Adolf Hitler had often pledged to scrap the Treaty of Versailles. His first step came just nine months after becoming chancellor when he conducted referenda to let the German people decide whether they wanted to remain in the League of Nations. The result was predictable, and in October 1933, Germany withdrew from the League.

By the 1930s, some in Britain and elsewhere had come to view Hitler as a deeply patriotic German seeking merely to serve the interests of his battered nation. Others saw him and his politics as potentially dangerous and unsettling to European stability. The British government did, however, negotiate with Germany to contain the size of the German navy, and France sought a Treaty of Mutual Assistance with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Using the French-Soviet cooperation as an excuse, in March 1935 Hitler publicly announced that Germany had already secretly begun to rearm in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles. On March 2, 1936, about three thousand German troops reoccupied the Rhineland, a part of Germany demilitarized by the Treaty. France feared protesting this too strongly because it did not want and was not ready to fight another war. The British public did not see the move as overtly hostile.

Though the Versailles Treaty specifically prohibited unification of Austria with Germany, Hitler moved to accomplish this anyway. Austria's prime minister attempted to stave off unification by calling for a referendum in March, but the next day Hitler preemptively sent troops into Austria. When the referendum was held, the people voted for union with Germany. Flush with his victory over Austria, Hitler continued to "gather the German people," and his eyes turned to those portions of Czechoslovakia called the Sudetenland, containing some three million ethnic Germans, including many who had been folded into that nation by the Treaty of Versailles (Figure 13.5).

Figure 13.5 The Sudetenland. Inhabited largely by German speakers, the Sudetenland wrapped around the northern, western, and southern edges of Czechoslovakia, where that nation bordered Germany and Poland. (credit: modification of work "Die Ausdehnung des Deutschen Reiches im Jahr 1939" by Demis/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

The Czechoslovaks, in the only real democracy created by the Treaty of Versailles, pinned their hopes for defense against Germany on the western nations and on treaties for mutual defense signed with France in the 1920s and early 1930s. Sudeten Germans had organized their own Nazi Party, however, and began agitating to join Germany. By 1938, it seemed that Britain and France were most concerned with avoiding another major war, so to defuse the situation, the Czechoslovak government granted the Sudeten Germans self-government. Tensions grew. As Hitler pressed for full inclusion of the Sudetenland in Germany and war seemed on the horizon, British prime minister Neville Chamberlain flew to Germany to meet with him. Hitler seemed prepared for war. Instead, Chamberlain proposed to hold a general conference to address the crisis over the Sudetenland, and Hitler agreed.

The Munich Conference was attended by Chamberlain, Hitler, French prime minister Édouard Daladier, and Mussolini (ostensibly a neutral party but one who had already assured Hitler of his support). On September 30, they produced the Munich Pact, in which Czechoslovakia granted territorial concessions to Germany, Poland, and Hungary in what has since been called *appeasement* (Figure 13.6). The hope of Great Britain and France was that Hitler would be satisfied and cease to be aggressive. The alternative meant fighting Germany, which neither government wanted.

Figure 13.6 “Peace in Our Time.” British prime minister Neville Chamberlain (center, waving a paper) presents the Munich Pact upon returning to London on September 30, 1938. (credit: modification of work “Munich Agreement” by Imperial War Museums/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

The Western world had not yet decided which was the greater threat to world peace, a fascist Germany or the communist Soviet Union. Some political conservatives in England and France hoped for a German alliance against the Soviets, as did Hitler. The British military was not confident of its preparedness for war, and the isolationist policy of the United States diminished the hope of any aid from Washington. With anxiety growing in London over Britain’s possessions in Asia and Japanese aggressions there, domestic support for negotiated solutions was widespread among liberals, and a bargain with Hitler seemed a reasonable policy. In the ensuing weeks, German troops entered the relinquished areas, and by the spring of 1939, Germany had gone on to absorb the rest of Czechoslovakia.

During these years, the Nazis were progressively implementing increasingly severe persecutions of Jewish people. First, a law enacted on April 7, 1933, banned them from positions in the civil service. That same year, the first and longest-surviving Nazi concentration camp, Dachau, was set up near Munich, intended for political prisoners (Figure 13.7). Several laws collectively known as the Nuremberg Laws were promulgated in 1935, institutionalizing Nazi racial theories and discrimination against Jewish people. A Jewish person was defined as anyone with three Jewish grandparents, regardless of whether they were active in the Jewish religious community or how deeply they identified as German. Jewish people were denied citizenship in the new Nazi-led German empire, called the Third Reich, and were forbidden to marry or have sexual relations with ethnic Germans, designated as “Aryans.” They lost the right to vote and most other political rights.

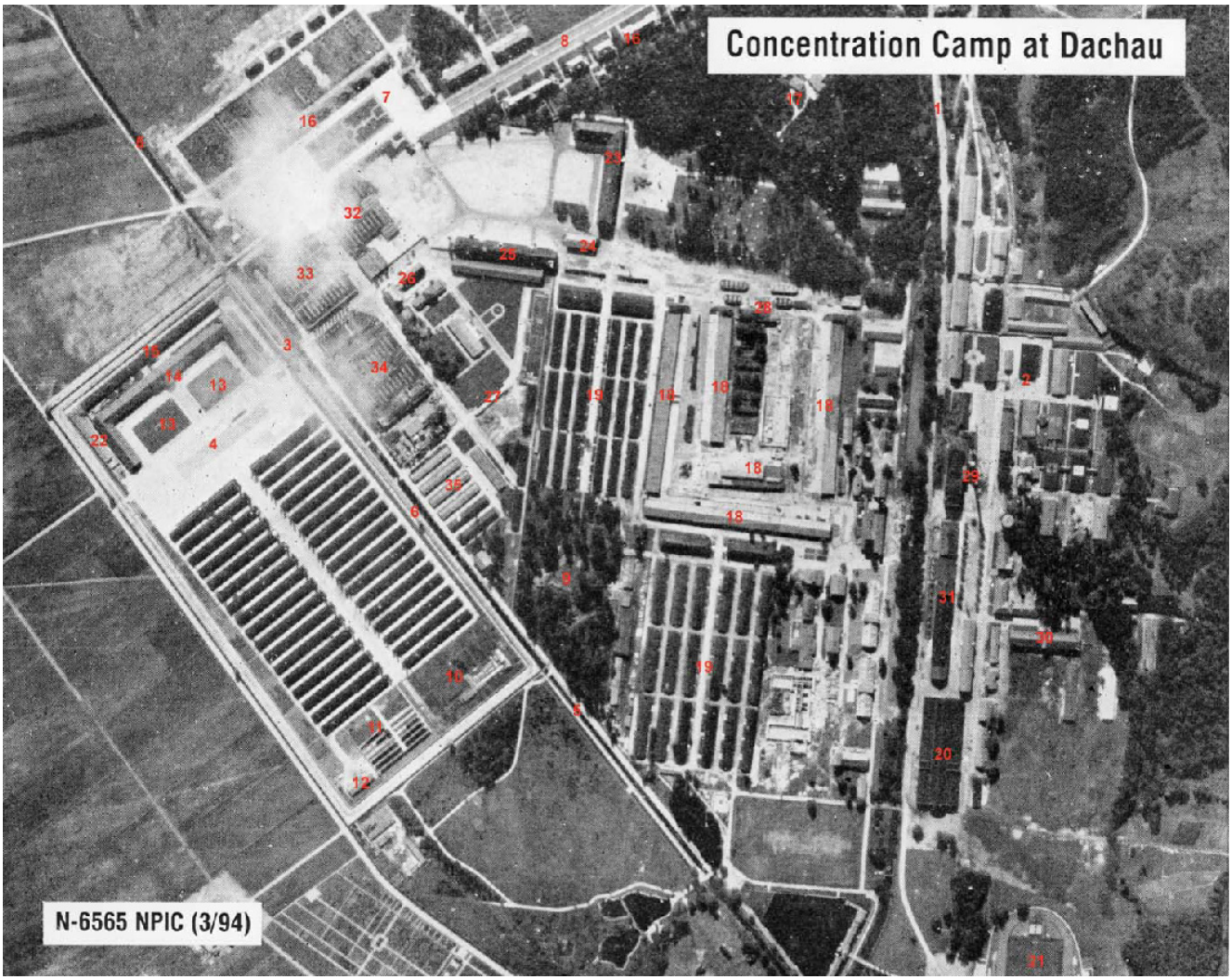


Figure 13.7 The Concentration Camp at Dachau. This U.S. Army aerial photo shows the concentration camp at Dachau, which was opened in 1933. The numbers on the photo label different parts of the camp. On the far right are barracks, a hospital, and storehouses for the troops who guarded the camp. (credit: "Concentration camp dachau aerial view" by USHMM, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Germany was becoming legally structured as an "us" versus "them" nation, and the treatment of its Jewish people demonstrated the fearsome power of the state. Two days of violent attacks on them in November 1938, ignited by the assassination of a German diplomat in Paris by a Polish Jewish man, became known as *Kristallnacht*, the "Night of Broken Glass." Almost every synagogue in Germany was torched during the rampage, as well as 90 percent of Jewish-owned businesses. Some thirty thousand Jewish males were taken into custody and sent to Dachau, which by then had been augmented by camps at Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald. All but about two thousand were released in 1939.

Kristallnacht caused a severe deterioration in Germany's international standing. In Britain, an outraged public pressured Parliament into allowing unaccompanied Jewish children under seventeen to take refuge in England. During the nine months before the war, this *Kindertransport* may have rescued as many as ten thousand children. Across Europe, many Jewish people became refugees as they fled the oppressive politics of the Nazis. A thirty-two-nation international conference was held in France during the summer of 1938 to solve the Jewish refugee crisis, but no country stepped forward to accept any such immigrants. In February 1939, a bill was introduced into the U.S. Congress to allow ten thousand Jewish children to enter the country in 1939 and another ten thousand in 1940. Though popular, the bill failed due to lukewarm political support.

In Asia, Shanghai was an option for Jewish refugees looking for a new home. The city, along with Franco's Spain, was unconditionally open to Jewish migration. Nominally still a German ally in 1939, the Nationalist government in the southwestern corner of China formulated a plan to provide a haven for European Jewish refugees. It had multiple reasons for doing so, including attracting international Jewish support and gaining favor with Britain and the United States against Japan. A number of schemes

were hatched, both by members of the GMD government and by private individuals, one even gaining the support of scientist Albert Einstein. GMD diplomats in Europe like Feng Shan Ho, consul general in Vienna, issued visas to Jewish refugees seeking to relocate to Shanghai. A Jewish community of more than twenty thousand displaced persons had reached the city by the end of the war.

In May 1939, almost one thousand Jewish refugees escaping Nazi persecution took passage on the MS *St. Louis*, a German ocean liner, heading for sanctuary in Cuba. But Cuba refused to admit them. The ship's captain then tried to get Canada or the United States to accept the refugees, but that effort failed as well. While the ship sailed around to no avail, conditions on board deteriorated to the point that it came to be called the "voyage of the damned." Finally, after a month, the ship was forced to return to Antwerp, Belgium, where most of the passengers disembarked. Ultimately, England accepted about three hundred of them, France took some, and a few more went to Belgium and the Netherlands. Of the original passengers, 70 percent survived the war, but more than two hundred were killed by the Nazis.

The ambition to expand eastward had motivated Germany for some time. The hunt for *Lebensraum*, or living space, had fueled its search for overseas colonies in the late 1800s and was an express goal of World War I. In the lands seized from countries in eastern Europe, Hitler envisioned German families settling and producing large numbers of children, supplanting the native Slavic populations. In this way, physically and culturally "superior" Germans would reclaim Europe from "inferior" Jewish and Slavic peoples. Similar ideologies meant to rationalize the displacement of a territory's residents by a supposedly superior population have appeared in history before, like Manifest Destiny in the United States and Japan's expansionist policies in Korea and Manchuria. To the east of Germany, the Treaty of Versailles had created an independent Poland and awarded parts of Germany to Poland in the process. This "Polish Corridor," in an area where many Polish people already lived, was intended to give Poland access to a port, and the German city of Danzig (Gdańsk), bordering it, was made a semi-independent city-state with its own parliament (Figure 13.8). Poland was a prime target of the Nazis as they looked for *Lebensraum*.

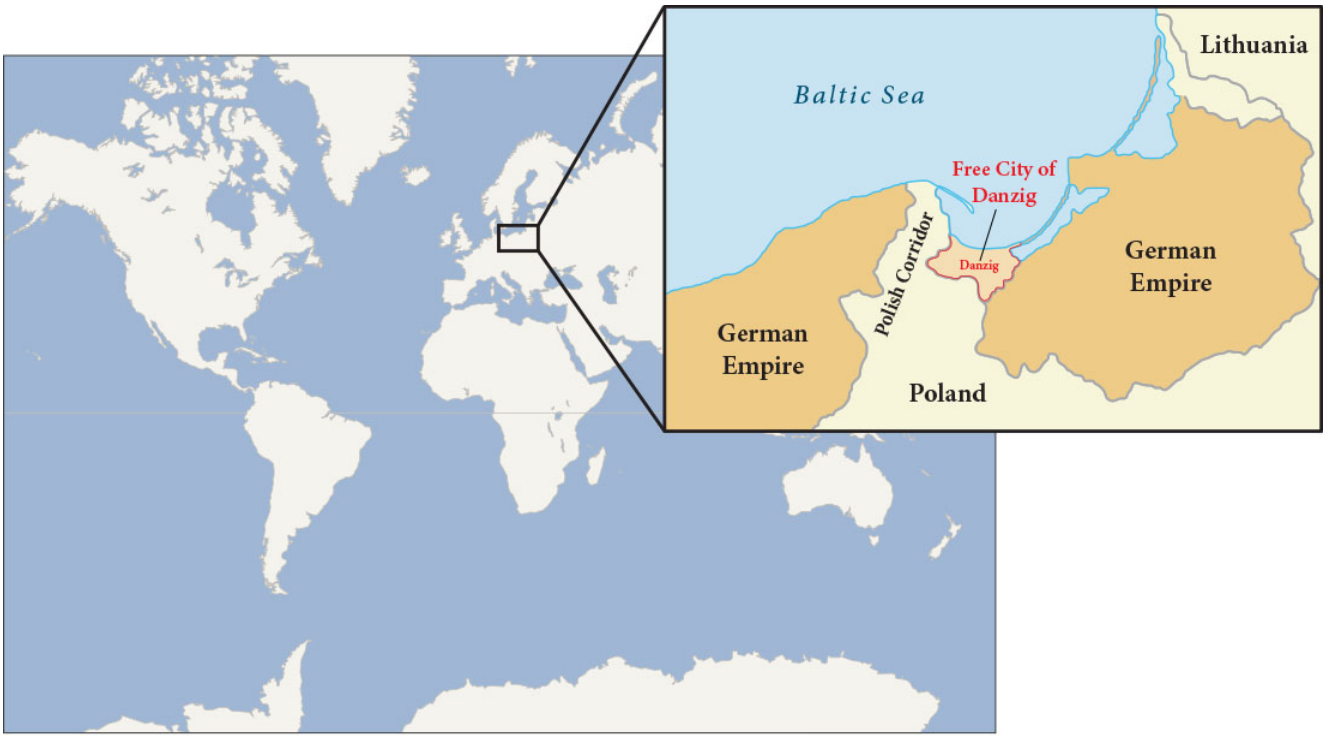


Figure 13.8 Access to the Sea. The twenty-mile-wide Polish Corridor was meant to give Poland access to a port after World War I, separating two parts of Germany in order to do so. (credit world map: modification of work "World map blank shorelines" by Maciej Jaros/Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain; attribution close-up map: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

The lessons learned from Hitler's violation of the Munich Pact spurred Britain and France to take action to protect Poland. They have also been invoked by world leaders ever since, whenever the aggression of one nation threatens the sovereignty or the territorial integrity of another. Using the example of Munich to warn against the perils of allowing one nation to invade another without opposition, whether it be Hitler's Germany or Putin's Russia, is known as invoking the Munich Analogy.

The key to whether Germany could be boxed in was the attitudes of Stalin and the Soviet Union. As early as the summer of 1938, Stalin began to think of making some sort of deal with Germany. During the following summer, relations between Germany and the Soviet Union began to improve. Stalin, aware of Hitler's musings in his book *Mein Kampf*, understood the long-term threat Germany posed and sought to buy time to prepare for possible war. For his part, Hitler wanted to avoid Germany's World War I mistake of fighting on two fronts simultaneously. The result was the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact of August 23, 1939. In this pact, Germany and the USSR agreed not to attack one another or to assist other nations in attacking the other. Included in the agreement were secret protocols that essentially divided eastern Europe between Germany and the Soviet Union. Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and parts of eastern Poland were allocated to the USSR as a reward for cooperating with Germany in the dismemberment of Poland.

Seeing the pact as an ominous green light for a German eastward thrust, two days later Britain signed a mutual defense agreement with Poland. All things seemed ready for the German onslaught, which was launched on September 1, 1939. Britain and France fulfilled their commitment to Poland and declared war on Germany, forming the partnership known as the Allies, but not on the Soviet Union. About two weeks later, Soviet forces invaded Poland from the east. Crushed from two sides, Poland essentially ceased to exist. The European fires of World War II had been ignited.

Poland provided the Germans an opportunity to test their strategy for victory, known as *blitzkrieg* or "lightning war." It consisted of quick, massive air strikes to secure domination of the air, destroy the enemy's ammunition stockpiles and the transportation and communications infrastructure, and generally disorient the enemy and depress morale. Then a massive land invasion of troops, fast-moving armor, and heavy artillery would overwhelm defenses. The Polish army of a million troops lacked modern equipment and was saddled with older strategic thinking that urged confronting the Germans head-on. The relatively flat landscape of western Poland offered few natural barriers to traffic and suited Germany's battle plan well, enabling the Germans to successfully employ several maneuvers to penetrate and encircle.

The British quickly discovered there was no practical way to render much assistance to the Poles. Instead, they relied on the French to engage the Germans. But the French felt they could not sustain an offensive against Germany's western front. They preferred to prepare their defenses for an eventual German offensive against France. Britain joined the French by deploying the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) to defend the French-Belgian border. By then, Poland was already lost and had been folded into Hitler's plans of dominating Europe. During the winter of 1939–1940, little action took place on the French-German border save for a few clashes of patrols and reconnaissance units. That period of waiting has sometimes been referred to as the Phony War or, derisively, as the *sitzkrieg* ("sitting war").

The German advance westward began with some forays into Norway and Denmark to the north on April 9, 1940. Not wanting to provoke German invasions, both Belgium and the Netherlands declared neutrality. This disadvantaged the British and French, since they were then not allowed to coordinate defenses with Dutch and Belgian forces or station troops in their territory. The Germans then launched their full westward offensive on May 10, 1940. Within a matter of weeks, German troops had overrun western Europe, storming through the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Belgium and into France, avoiding the Maginot Line, a system of fortifications and weapons installations that had been built on the French border in the 1930s in order to protect France from another German invasion. Early in the morning of May 23, 1940, the British commander in France, seeing the perils of his position, gave the order to begin a withdrawal toward Dunkirk on the French coast. Eventually, this culminated in the extraordinary evacuation across the English Channel of much of the BEF and thousands of French and other Allied forces between June 15 and 25 using every British boat capable of crossing the Channel. The retreat saved 200,000 troops.

French prime minister Paul Reynaud resigned rather than sign the armistice agreement with Germany in June 1940. Instead, Marshall Philippe Pétain, a hero of World War I, became the prime minister of a truncated French government based in Vichy, France, that, although nominally independent, cooperated with Germany.

The remarkable success of the German blitzkrieg in Europe during the summer of 1940 presented the Japanese military with some significant strategic opportunities. For instance, the isolation of European colonies in Asia might make them ripe for seizing. Consequently, to provide for mutual defense and perhaps to frighten the United States away from giving more substantial assistance against them, Japan joined Germany and Italy in the defensive military alliance called the Tripartite Pact in September 1940. (Japan and Germany had earlier signed the Anti-Comintern Pact against the Soviet Union, which Japan saw as a rival for dominance in Asia, in 1936, and Italy had joined in a year later. Japan had parted ways with Germany in 1939, however, when the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact was signed, and a new agreement was thus in order.) The U.S. ambassador to Japan, Joseph Grew, felt discouraged in the attempt to maintain peace. He observed to a colleague in February 1941, "I saw the work of eight years swept away as if by a typhoon, earthquake and a tidal wave combined."

Sleeping Giants

Hitler planned to finish off Britain with a cross-channel invasion using air and submarine bases in both Norway, which had surrendered in June 1940, and northern France. Through the late summer and into the fall of 1940, the Battle of Britain raged in the skies over Britain as a duel between the German Luftwaffe and the Royal Air Force (RAF). The Germans initially focused their attacks on shipping in the English Channel and then began to bomb weapons-production facilities. The British gradually built up the RAF with new recruits of non-British volunteers, including a few U.S. pilots. Aided in part by the innovation of radar, which gave some advance warning of German onslaughts, the RAF prevailed. By October 1940, having lost approximately 40 percent of its planes of all types, the Luftwaffe had failed to achieve the air superiority needed to capture Britain. When the Luftwaffe shifted its focus from military to civilian targets, particularly the bombing of London, it inadvertently gave the British the opportunity to rebuild their airfields and defense plants and assemble more planes.

In the 1930s, the United States wanted to insulate itself from conflicts in the rest of the world. Aroused by dramatic hearings into the causes of the country's entry into World War I, Congress passed the Neutrality Acts in 1935, 1936, and 1937, forbidding the export of arms and the making of loans to belligerent nations. These acts effectively handcuffed the government. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who took office in 1933 just two months after Hitler became chancellor of Germany, was prevented from rendering much assistance to China against Japan, to Ethiopia against Italy, or to Republican Spain against fascist General Franco. But the 1937 Neutrality Act granted Roosevelt a little leeway. The United States could render nonmilitary assistance such as oil to a belligerent nation if that nation could both pay cash for the goods and carry them home itself.

As the world watched Hitler annex Czechoslovakia and then invade Poland, Roosevelt sought to offer more substantial military assistance to Britain and France. To beef up the defenses of the United States, Roosevelt pressed Congress to approve a two-ocean navy in 1938 and began to funnel aid to Britain and China within the confines of what was allowable. After much debate, in November 1939 Congress repealed provisions of earlier Neutrality Acts and authorized trade in military hardware on a cash-and-carry basis. With the Luftwaffe struggling in the summer of 1940, the responsibility for subduing England increasingly fell to the German submarine fleet, on the theory that England could be starved to death. Roosevelt created the Atlantic squadron in January 1939 and gradually expanded a U.S. naval patrol and escort service for shipping headed for England.

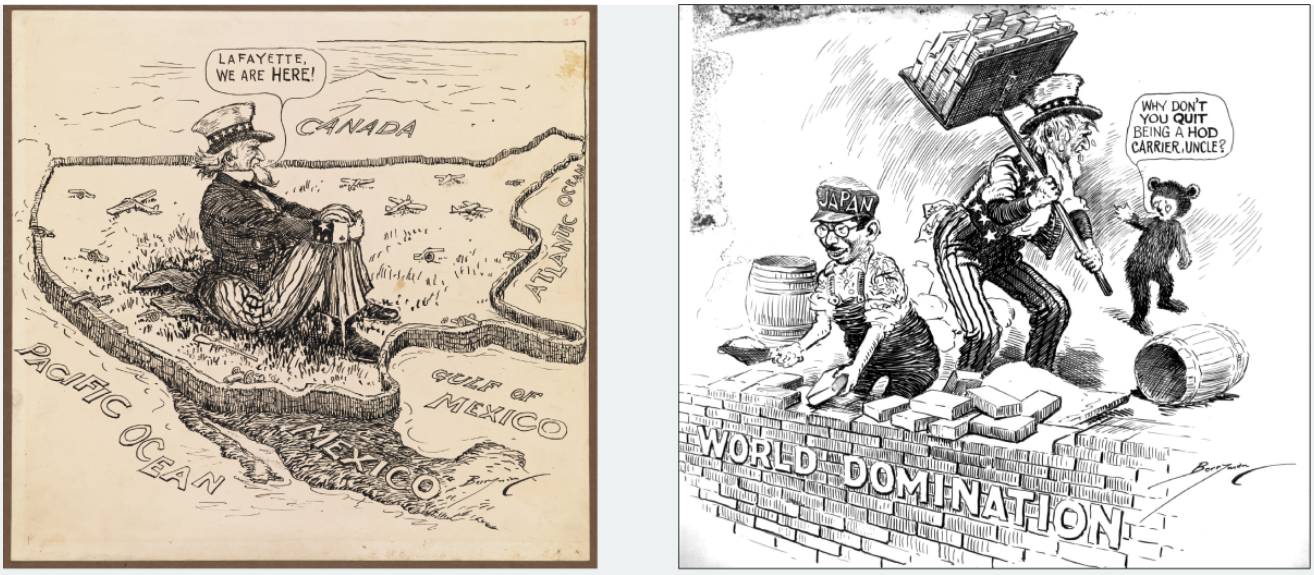
In one ten-day period in July 1940, German submarines sank eleven British destroyers, prompting the British prime minister, Winston Churchill, to appeal to the United States for help. Liberally interpreting the Neutrality Act of 1939, Roosevelt agreed to exchange fifty World War I–era destroyers for lease rights at British naval bases in Newfoundland and the Caribbean. Critics and isolationists like aviator Charles Lindbergh, a leader of the America First Committee, took Roosevelt to task. But in March 1941, the president persuaded Congress to approve the Lend-Lease Act, which allowed the government to "sell, transfer title to, exchange, lease, lend or otherwise dispose of, to any such government any defense article." The United States could now provide these materials to any country deemed vital to its own defense. It was a way to aid those countries already fighting but without taking direct military action.

Beyond the Book

The Question of U.S. Neutrality

In the 1930s, many in the United States were reluctant to find themselves embroiled in another war. As Hitler's power grew in Europe and Japan expanded its empire in the Pacific, the United States thus adopted a policy of neutrality. This continued even after Japan invaded China and Germany invaded Poland and ultimately western Europe. Although President Franklin Roosevelt favored aiding the British, his opponents in Congress feared the potential consequences. The political cartoonist Clifford Berryman created a number of cartoons in the 1930s and early 1940s whose subject was U.S. neutrality.

Examine the two cartoons that follow. In the first (Figure 13.9), Uncle Sam proclaims, "Lafayette, we are here!" words spoken by Colonel Charles E. Stanton at the tomb of the Marquis de Lafayette after U.S. troops joined the British and French in fighting World War I. (Lafayette had famously fought on the side of the colonists in the American Revolution.) In the second image, Uncle Sam is working as a hod carrier, someone who carried bricks (Figure 13.9).



(a) (b)

Figure 13.9 The Art of U.S. Neutrality. In both (a) “Lafayette, we are here!” and (b) “Uncle Sam as Hod Carrier”, cartoonist Clifford Berryman uses the image of Uncle Sam to comment on the policy of U.S. neutrality. (credit a: modification of work “Lafayette, we are here!” by Clifford Kennedy Berryman/Washington Evening Star/National Archives; credit b: modification of work “Uncle Sam as Hod carrier” by Clifford Kennedy Berryman/Washington Evening Star/National Archives)

- What is Berryman saying in these cartoons about the U.S. policy of neutrality? Does he favor it? What does he think will be its consequences?
- How does Berryman convey his ideas in the cartoons?

The defeat of Poland removed a buffer between German-occupied and Soviet territory. When Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, Stalin began to take steps to prepare the USSR for what might happen next. At the end of 1939, he launched the “Winter War” against Finland to obtain territory near Leningrad (the city formerly known as St. Petersburg or Petrograd) that would bolster Soviet defenses. In April 1941, the Soviets signed a Neutrality Pact with Japan, freeing both nations from the prospect of a multiple-front war. The Kremlin in Moscow received a continuous stream of intelligence warning of an impending invasion. After receiving one such report outlining German battle plans, Stalin called up half a million reservists. Yet, fearing to provoke the Germans into action, he was cautious with his forces.

Having detected flaws in the Soviet Union’s invasion of Poland and its struggle against Finland in the Winter War, Hitler was confident he could defeat Stalin. Betraying the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact, he assembled the largest land-invasion force in world history, more than three million troops, including contributions from countries with their own grievance against the Soviet Union such as Finland, Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Italy, Slovakia, and Spain. Operation Barbarossa began on June 22, 1941, leading the Soviet Union to formally join the Allies in opposing Germany (Figure 13.10).

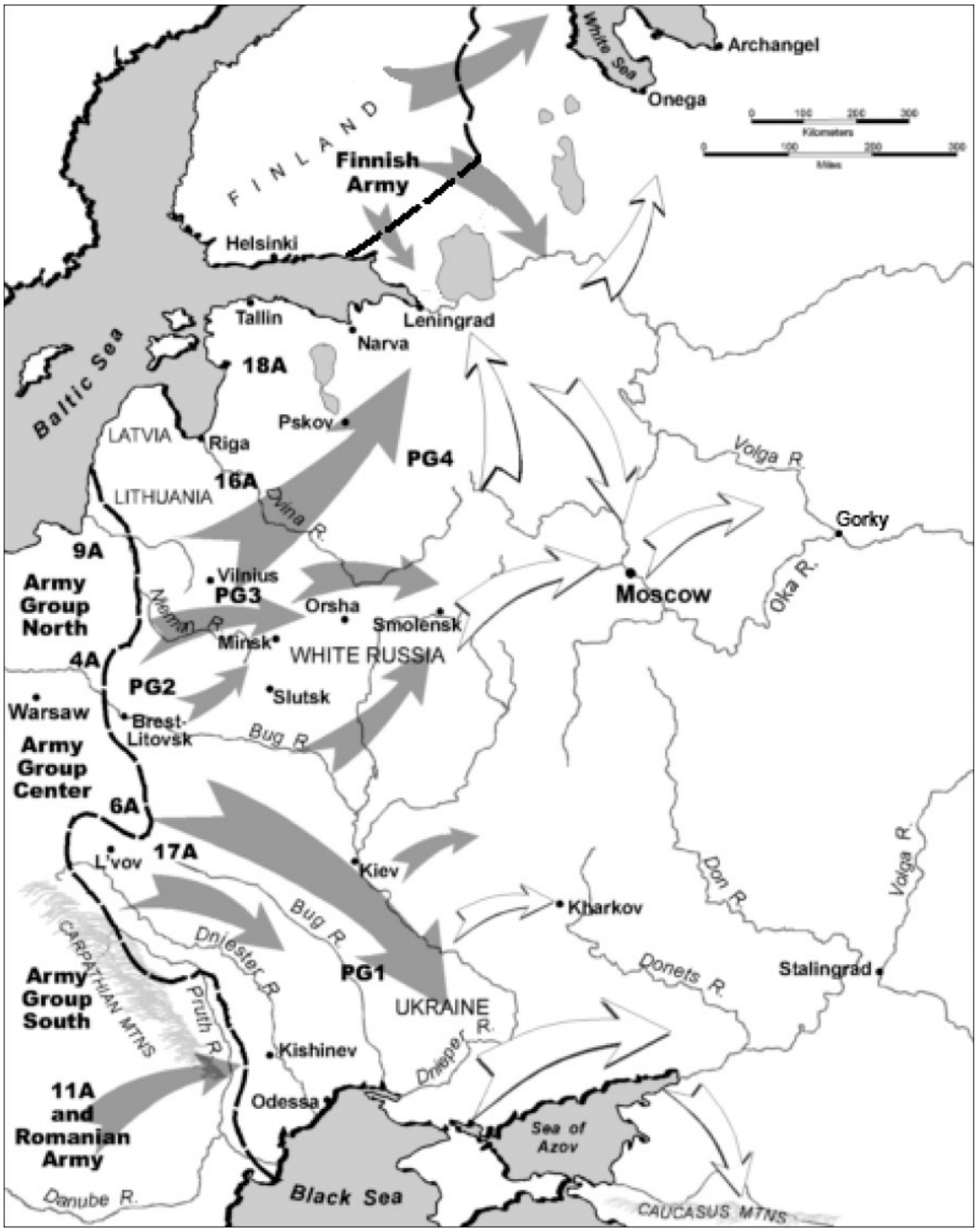


Figure 13.10 Operation Barbarossa. The goal of Hitler's Operation Barbarossa was the invasion of the Soviet Union. The arrows show the routes taken by the invading German army (field armies and Panzer groups) and its allies as they moved to capture major Soviet cities such as Leningrad and Moscow and to gain control of ports on the Black Sea. (credit: modification of work "Operation Barbarossa corrected border" by U.S. Army/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

In the first two days of the campaign, two thousand Soviet planes were destroyed on the ground. The speed of the German attack was greater than anticipated, and within weeks, Belorussia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia had been occupied by the German army, which was called the Wehrmacht ("defense power"). By August, the Germans had captured Kyiv, an industrial center that contained a large portion of the Soviet economic infrastructure at that time. By November, Hitler had gone farther into Russia than Napoleon had. The German army stood at the gates of Leningrad, on the outskirts of Moscow, and on the Don River. Of the 4.5 million troops with which the Soviets had begun, 2.5 to 3 million were lost; of their fifteen thousand tanks, only seven hundred were left. Moscow was in panic, and a German victory seemed imminent.

But serious problems arose that came back to haunt the Germans. The speed of the advance had strained the delivery of supplies. The force advancing on Moscow needed nearly thirty train shipments of fuel each day to maintain its pace, but by November, it was receiving only three. In August, a shortage of clean water had spread dysentery and cholera among the troops. When the late summer rains came, German soldiers found that they could neither drive fast (because of mud) nor keep themselves and their equipment dry. Once the Russian winter began, it became so cold that bread rations froze and had to be chopped into portions with axes.

The siege of Leningrad lasted 872 days and was one of the longest and deadliest in world history. In early 1942, nearly 100,000 people in the city starved to death each month, and some of the remaining residents resorted to cannibalism to survive. Overall, a million and a half people perished. Facing this, Stalin seems to have momentarily faltered. By the end of 1941, his head of security was instructed to send feelers to the Germans through the Bulgarian ambassador to Moscow, broaching the possibility of peace.

Link to Learning

Read some excerpts from the diaries of Leningraders during the siege of 1941–1944 in "Voices of War: Memories from the Siege of Leningrad" (presented by Russia Beyond).

With the war expanding into the plains of Russia, Churchill requested a face-to-face meeting with Roosevelt, who secretly sailed to Newfoundland in August 1941 for the purpose. This conference was the first of what have since become commonplace events in diplomacy—summit meetings of the heads of state. The two leaders produced the Atlantic Charter, a recasting of the principles articulated in Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points (1918) into eight major points that reflected British and U.S. goals for a postwar world, though not the Soviet Union's goals for Europe. It insisted on the unconditional surrender of the Axis nations—Germany, Italy, and Japan—renounced any territorial expansion, and affirmed the right of self-determination. There would be freedom of the seas, reduced barriers to free trade, and promotion of social welfare through economic cooperation. Peace would be promoted through the disarmament of aggressor nations.

The Attack on Pearl Harbor

Trying to pressure the Japanese into ceasing their aggression, in August 1941 the United States imposed sanctions including an embargo on oil and gas sales to Japan. This action further reinforced Japan's plan to turn to the South Pacific to absorb the natural resources of the crumbling European imperial regimes and the Philippines, a U.S. colony. Seeing the United States as a soft enemy unwilling to make the sacrifices needed to win a war, Japan planned a surprise assault on the naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, while last-ditch efforts at a diplomatic settlement between Tokyo and Washington were taking place. The United States wanted Japan to ultimately withdraw from China, to which it would not agree, and Japan felt the United States would not be open to further negotiations. Its leaders decided they had to move against the United States while they still could.

U.S. intelligence services had broken various Japanese codes, and by late November 1941, warnings were being sent to U.S. forces that war with Japan was likely, with the Philippines as the probable target. Early in the morning of December 7, a Japanese task force successfully eluded detection in a surprise attack that devastated the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbor, sinking or damaging eight battleships and damaging other smaller craft, destroying or damaging approximately three hundred aircraft, killing more than two thousand people, and injuring more than one thousand others. Near-simultaneous attacks were launched on U.S. bases in the Philippines, Guam, and Wake Island. The following day, Congress voted unanimously to declare war on Japan. A few days later, following Germany's and Italy's declarations of war against the United States, the country entered the war in Europe as well on the side of the Allies. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, China also joined the Allies, but it did not join in the fighting in Europe.

U.S. military planners had estimated that it might take nine million troops organized in more than two hundred divisions to secure victory in Europe and Asia. A massive recruitment and draft program had to be instituted to expand the army and prepare it for combat. Eventually, recruitment efforts expanded to African Americans, women, Native Americans, and thirty-three thousand Japanese Americans. Leadership of the troops fell to Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was rapidly promoted through the ranks to become a key aide to Chief of Staff George C. Marshall and commanding general of the European theater of operations.

Footnotes

- 1When Chinese words are written using the English-language alphabet, one of two systems is typically used: pinyin or Wade-Giles. The pinyin system is preferred by the People's Republic of China, and most Chinese names in this textbook are written in pinyin. In the case of Chiang Kai-shek, the textbook's editors decided to make an exception and spell his name according to the

Wade-Giles system because this is how his name appears in most other history textbooks. Jiang Jieshi is how his name would be written in pinyin.

13.3: Theaters of War

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the Allied and Axis operations in Europe and Africa during World War II
- Explain why the Battles of Stalingrad and Midway are considered turning points in World War II
- Discuss U.S. operations in East Asia and the Pacific during World War II
- Describe the evolution of the Holocaust after the German invasion of Poland

World War II was perhaps history's most globalizing event. Troops fought battles on three continents, in the air, and at sea. Britain and the United States planned early in the war to focus on defeating Italy and Germany before Japan but left the Soviet Union to battle Germany alone. In Asia, the "liberation" of the inhabitants of European and U.S. colonies by Japanese troops only replaced Western rule with Japanese rule, igniting or giving impetus to nationalist movements. Fought on so many fronts, World War II proved to be the deadliest conflict in history. Among those who perished were millions of noncombatants, including the victims of the Nazi death camps. The experiences of survivors shaped the rest of their lives and the course of the societies to which they returned.

Europe and Africa

Beginning in 1938 and through the spring of 1941, U.S. military leaders produced several plans of action in the event of war with the Axis powers. Immediately after winning an unprecedented third term in 1940, Roosevelt was briefed by his chief of naval operations, Admiral Harold R. Stark, who advised him that the best military strategy was "Plan D"—a Europe First plan. This focused the United States and Britain on defeating Germany and Italy first and adopting a defensive posture against Japan if it entered the war.

Mussolini decided to expand his African holdings and in August 1940 occupied British Somaliland, threatening the British in Egypt. The British counterattacked. Losing ground in Africa from June through December 1940, Mussolini turned his eyes on the Balkans. In October 1940, expecting an easy victory, Italian units invaded Greece but were badly defeated. To forestall further disaster, Hitler dispatched General Erwin Rommel and his Afrika Korps to duel with the British in northeast North Africa. Not only did Germany wish to support its Italian ally, but it also sought to gain control of the Suez Canal and guarantee its access to Middle Eastern oil, which would be crucial in winning the war. To further aid his faltering ally and deal with an anti-German uprising in Yugoslavia, Hitler postponed his invasion of the Soviet Union by several weeks and invaded Greece on April 6, 1941.

Fearing that any substantial British effort against the Germans in Norway or northern France would become a slaughter, Winston Churchill conceived Operation Gymnast, a plan to engage the Germans in northwest Africa instead. On a military mission to London in July 1942, General Eisenhower was deeply disappointed in Churchill's approach, considering how badly the Soviets were suffering from German offensives. General George C. Marshall favored opening a front in northern Europe in order to draw German resources away from its attack on the Soviet Union before the Soviets collapsed. But Churchill prevailed, and the Allies, now including the United States, invaded French North Africa (Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia) in November 1942. Key British possessions Egypt and the Suez Canal were saved, and in a January 1943 summit meeting at Casablanca in French Morocco, Churchill and Roosevelt planned the next phase of the war, Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily. This choice disappointed Stalin, who had been hoping for an invasion of western Europe instead, to draw German troops away from the fighting in the east and the Soviet Union.

All the while, desperate battles were being waged on the eastern front in the Soviet Union. In August 1941, given the initial success of the German invasion and poised to capture Moscow, Hitler delayed the advance to decide strategy. The German general staff wanted to drive directly for Moscow and take it before winter. Hitler, however, diverted a significant part of his forces to the south. Both Allied and Axis thinkers had long recognized the strategic military importance of oil. For some time prior to the war, the British government had interjected itself into the politics of Iraq, Persia, Afghanistan, and Egypt for this reason. The Germans too had taken a keen interest in the Middle East and central Asia in the 1930s. In 1925, in Iran, Reza Shah had consolidated his rule and commenced a program of modernization, increasing ties with Germany and employing hundreds of Germans.

To block potential German access to Iranian oil, the British first demanded the possibly pro-German Shah expel Germans and sever ties with Berlin. Taking no chances, British and Soviet forces then invaded Iran in August 1941. Iranian resistence collapsed in a couple of days, and Reza Shah was forced to abdicate in favor of his son Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The Germans were expelled,

and the Allied occupation lasted until 1946. During those years, Iran became a funnel through which much Allied aid, especially from the United States, was delivered to Stalin as he struggled to hold out against the Wehrmacht.

By 1939, the global supply of oil was in the hands of seven oil conglomerates—none of which were German. Consequently, Germany was heavily reliant on Romanian and Soviet oil between 1939 and 1941. The oil fields in the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan, one thousand kilometers from Stalingrad, looked like a possible solution, so the German army moved to capture the city of Baku, the center of the Soviet oil-drilling industry. Thus, both winter and the German drive for oil saved Moscow.

In the summer of 1942, the Germans resumed the offensive on all fronts but were unable to get far, except for approaching Stalingrad. Hitler was determined to take the city and Stalin to hold it. In July, Stalin issued Order No. 227 forbidding Soviet troops from retreating: “Not one step backwards!” By the fall of 1942, German troops had actually broken into Stalingrad, but their progress thereafter was gruesomely slow and difficult. For more than two months, the Battle of Stalingrad raged with ferocity, sometimes building by building (Figure 13.11).

Figure 13.11 The Battle of Stalingrad. In 1942, these Russian fighters battled German troops for control of Stalingrad from within the ruins of a bombed building. (credit: “Stalingrad war 1942” by Unknown/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Having assembled sufficient forces, in November 1942 the Soviet Red Army counterattacked at Stalingrad and managed to trap the Germans in a noose. The only way for the Germans to resupply was by air, which was far too limited to sustain them for very long. Despite being specifically forbidden to do so, on January 31, 1943, German field marshal Friedrich Paulus surrendered what was left of his Sixth Army. The Soviets captured close to 100,000 German troops. Total casualties in the battle had reached nearly two million, including substantial numbers of civilians. The Battle of Stalingrad stopped the German advance into the Soviet Union. It was the first clear defeat for Hitler’s Germany and the turning point of the war in Europe, setting the Nazis on a defensive course for the remainder of the war.

From the time of his first meeting with Churchill in August 1942, a frustrated Stalin had been calling for a second front against the Nazis in Europe. In the summer of 1943, the Soviets, fresh from saving Stalingrad, went on the offensive against the Germans. The ensuing Battle of Kursk was the biggest land battle of the war and the largest tank battle in history. The Soviet victory damaged Germany’s war-making capacity by compromising its armaments.

Mussolini had insisted on contributing 200,000 troops to the invasion of the Soviet Union, and by early 1943, half of them had become casualties. Allied victories in North Africa and Sicily, along with the Allied bombing of Rome in July 1943, further

humiliated Mussolini. In Italy, a coalition of former fascist supporters, military officers, the few surviving liberal politicians, and the king himself reached the conclusion that Mussolini must go. The Grand Fascist Council met for the first time in three years on July 24, 1943, and voted overwhelmingly to remove him from power and place him under arrest.

A government was formed under Marshal Pietro Badoglio, who initiated secret negotiations with the Allies. The Allied invasion of the mainland of Italy at the beginning of September provided the impetus for Italy's surrender on September 8, 1943. Four days later, Hitler had German special forces rescue Mussolini. German troops already in Italy then moved to disarm the remnants of the Italian army and established a government called the Republic of Salo in northern Italy, with Mussolini as its figurehead. However, Italian communist partisans captured and executed Mussolini in April 1945.

Earlier, with Iran secured through the Allied invasion, Tehran had been the site of the first of the World War II conferences between the "Big Three": Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin. From November 28 to December 1, 1943, the Tehran conference addressed relations between the Allies, relations between Turkey and Iran, operations in Yugoslavia, the fight against Japan, and plans for the postwar settlement. A protocol signed at the conference pledged the Big Three's recognition of Iran's independence. The Big Three also agreed on a cross-channel invasion of Europe scheduled for May 1944, in conjunction with a Soviet attack on Germany's eastern border. Stalin dominated the conference, using Soviet victories to get preliminary agreements on the borders of Poland after the war. Churchill and Roosevelt also consented to the USSR setting up governments sympathetic to itself in the Baltic states. Roosevelt and Stalin continued their discussions of a general international organization that had been proposed a few months earlier.

East Asia and the Pacific

When the Japanese invaded the Philippines beginning in December 1941, the limited U.S. and Filipino forces put up stiff resistance in jungle fighting. Outnumbered, however, they surrendered their positions on the Bataan Peninsula on April 9, 1942. The command headquarters surrendered at Corregidor Island nearly a month later. The resulting sixty-mile forced march to an internment camp led to the deaths of more than a quarter of the estimated eighty thousand Allied prisoners and became known as the Bataan Death March. Over the course of the war, the Japanese held approximately 140,000 Allied troops under severe conditions at various camps in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and on the Japanese home islands. By the end of the war, as many as thirty thousand had perished there.

Five months into 1942, the Japanese had gathered a significant portion of Burma, Malaya and the Straits Settlements, Indonesia, French Indochina, and the Philippines into the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (Figure 13.12). While deconstructing White colonial rule, the Japanese began to systematically exploit the liberated areas for their resources in support of a greater Japan. However impressive the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was on paper, however, the Japanese military and civilian administrators were hard-pressed to solve significant problems. The extent of the area under control and the size of the captive population presented governance issues, while geography severely strained communication and transportation networks. Puppet regimes were an attempt to solve some of these problems, such as the collaborationist regime in China under Wang Jingwei in 1940, the Ba Maw government in Burma during the Japanese occupation, and the administration of José P. Laurel in the defeated Philippines.

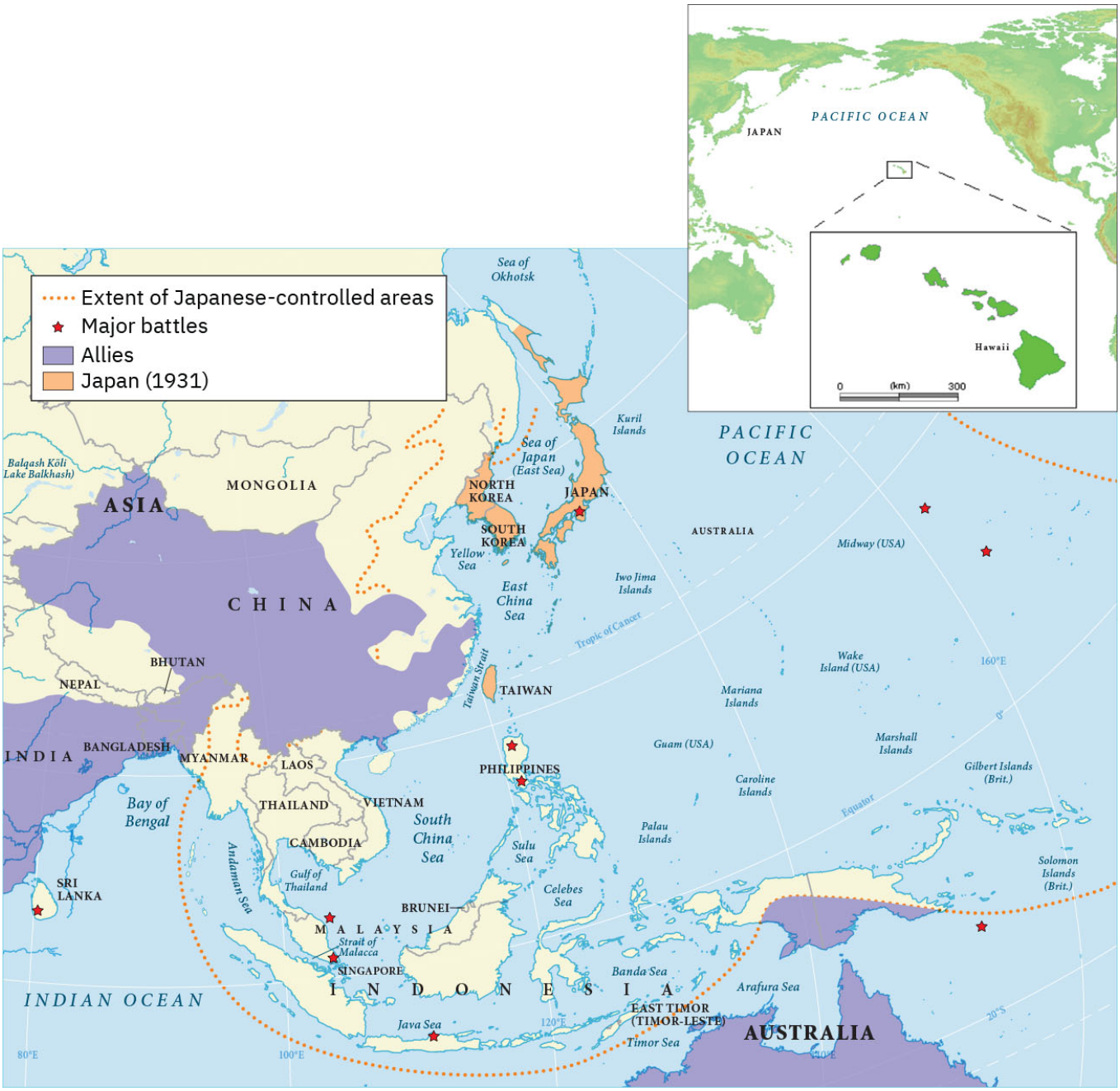

Figure 13.12 Japan in the Pacific Theater. Between 1937 and 1942, Japan launched attacks against and gained control of far-flung territory throughout East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific. (attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license; credit upper-right: modification of work "Locator map of the Big island of Hawai'i" by M. Minderhoud/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Successes were short-lived, however, because in June 1942, the United States decisively won what became the turning point of the war in the Pacific—the Battle of Midway, which stopped Japan's advance across the Pacific. The Japanese lost four aircraft carriers and a heavy cruiser, and other ships were severely damaged. The balance of power clearly shifted toward the Allies, and the Japanese navy never recovered its momentum.

Pursuing an island-hopping campaign to roll back Japanese seizures of land, the United States frequently had to engage the Japanese in dense jungle terrains. For years, the Japanese army had relied on a doctrine that heroic determination would overcome the technology and other advantages of any foe. Thus, fierce Japanese resistance extended these battles, as in the Battle of Guadalcanal, which raged on the Pacific island for six months between August 1942 and February 1943 before Japan finally retreated.

The Japanese military made many missteps across the Pacific. An early attempt to capture part of the Aleutian Islands failed. The defensive perimeters of Japan's home islands were constantly redrawn over 1942 and 1943. Without reevaluating its strategies, Japan transferred forces from China to plug holes punched in this perimeter. Its total losses in the China campaign, from its initial invasion in 1937 to its surrender in 1945, approached 500,000. (The Chinese lost as many as ten million. Historians disagree regarding how many millions of people were displaced by the war.) An attempted Japanese invasion of India beginning in March 1944 was called off after massive losses in July 1944. The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere began to evaporate into chaos and confusion. Because Prime Minister Hideki Tojo was the face of the war party both abroad and at home, it seemed clear that no peace settlement with the Allies was conceivable if he were in power. Therefore, in July 1944, having lost the support of the emperor for the failure of his strategies, Tojo was forced to resign.

Though the war proved devastating to China, with a severe loss of population, it was able to continue its fight against the Japanese. The western Allied powers hoped China could play a major role in defeating the Axis powers. To that end, Chiang Kai-shek was invited to a conference in Cairo along with other Allied leaders in 1943. In the last phase of the war, Chinese forces were able to advance through Burma and reopen the major road between China and India. Further offensives took back other Japanese-held territory. By the end of the war, China had reclaimed all the land Japan had occupied and emerged as a significant country in world affairs.

South and Southeast Asia

As Japan moved through Southeast Asia, it promised the inhabitants that it ultimately supported independent governments there. In fact, new governments were established in Vietnam, Burma, and other places, and though they were always clearly under the thumb of the Japanese military, there was some optimism that "Asia for Asians" might prove to truly work (Figure 13.13).

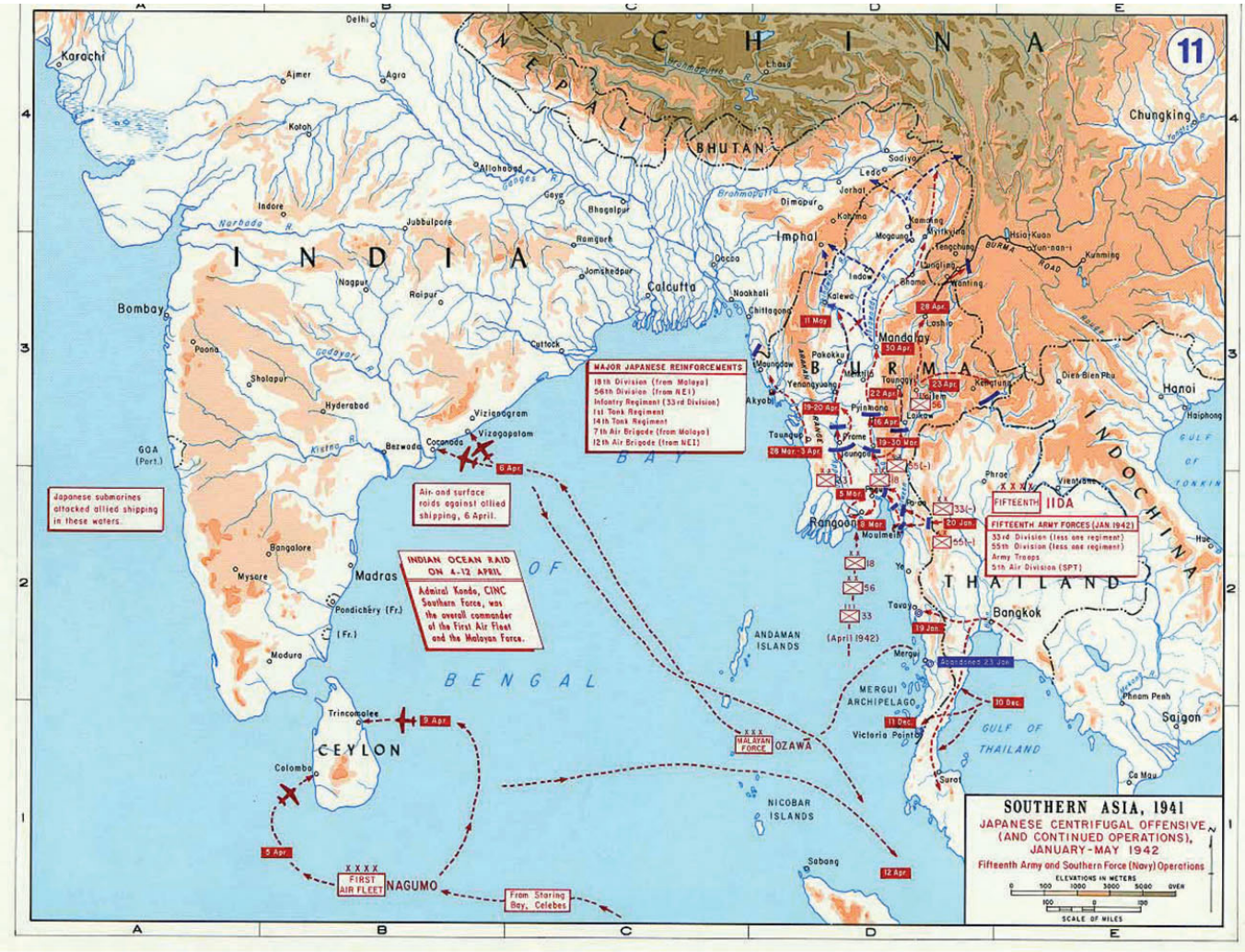

Figure 13.13 Japan in Southeast Asia. In an effort to drive the British out of their colonial possessions in South Asia and gain control of them for their own use, the Japanese launched numerous attacks in the region. This map shows that the Japanese focused their offensive in the region on Burma in particular. (credit: "Pacific War - Southern Asia 1942" by U.S. Army/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

In many ways, however, the colonial experience continued for these areas, because their natural resources were simply redirected to the Japanese government's needs rather than to Europe's. Japanese occupation proved abusive and high-handed, marked by the denigration of local religions and customs and sometimes by physical abuse, such as against workers building the Burma-Thailand Railway. It became clear to many nationalists that they now had an enemy in the Japanese. In Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh raised his nationalist (and communist) forces against the Japanese in a guerrilla war aided by the United States. In Malaysia, similar guerrilla movements developed to oust the Japanese.

The 1935 India Act had granted significant autonomy to the British provinces of India and introduced directly elected provincial assemblies. Fascism, communism, and nationalist desires for full independence all gained adherents among Indians beginning to more fully engage in politics. The political parties in India were either frustrated over broken British promises or anxious to see what rewards India might obtain for active and full support of Britain. For example, the Muslim League often leveraged its support for Britain for political advantage against the Hindu majority population.

Meanwhile, by mid-1940, anti-British sentiments had begun to erupt across India. In the summer of 1942, while Japanese and Allied forces were sparring in neighboring Burma, Britain's security concerns about India grew, and its attempts to repress Indian agitation heightened political tensions there. In August 1942, the Congress Party, the largest political party in India, granted leadership to the committed nationalist Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi and supported his nonviolent "Quit India" movement. Immediately the British arrested Gandhi and other Congress Party leaders and detained them through most of the war.

A devastating famine in Bengal reached a peak in 1943. It was caused by the dispatch of Indian food supplies to support the war effort in Europe, natural disasters toward the end of 1942, an influx of refugees fleeing the Japanese offensives in Burma, and general governmental mismanagement. The famine added fuel to the Indian desire for independence.

Continuing to assert its intention to liberate Asia from White rule, Japan successfully recruited the support of the Indian nationalist Subhas Chandra Bose, a political rival of Gandhi and former president of the Indian National Congress. Bose assembled a Free India Legion of fighters that eventually grew into the Indian National Army (INA), about forty thousand strong. Fighting to liberate India, the INA assisted Japanese military operations in Burma. When the Japanese seized the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal in 1942, they set up Bose as the leader of the Provisional Government (Azad Hind) of India, and the State of Burma became another subordinate partner and ally in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere until Japan's defeat in 1945.

The Holocaust

Jewish people had been deeply assimilated into German society and culture since the Enlightenment. But anti-Semitism had been an undercurrent in European history for centuries, and anti-Jewish propaganda and scapegoating began to surface after Germany's defeat in World War I. It continued through the encouragement of the Nazis in the 1920s and 1930s. Joseph Goebbels was the master of Nazi propaganda, charged with convincing Germans that Jewish people were an existential threat. A constant drumbeat in all forms of media began, persuading Germans to accept three propositions meant to morally justify anti-Jewish actions. First, Jewish people were a problem. Second, they were like vermin (a tactic of dehumanization). Third, eliminating them would make for a better Germany and a better world.

When the Wehrmacht streamed into Poland in 1939 and encountered the largest Jewish population in the world, the Nazis had the opportunity to begin the genocide known as the Holocaust on a huge scale. Special execution squads called the *Einsatzgruppen* ("operational groups") followed the advancing German troops, killing enemies and undesirables—largely Jewish people. Jewish people were gathered in ghettoes for better control and subjected to forced labor. The largest was the Warsaw ghetto, which by 1941 housed 441,000 people. That same year, six major concentration camps were established, and railroad lines were built specifically to transport prisoners to them. There had been anti-Jewish pogroms (massacres) in Poland before the war, and some Polish citizens joined these German extermination activities.

In Their Own Words

Einsatzgruppen

Following Germany's surrender in May 1945, a military court was convened in the city of Nuremberg to try Germans accused of war crimes. During questioning by Colonel John Harlan Amen, a U.S. Army intelligence officer and lawyer, Otto Ohlendorf described the work of *Einsatzgruppen* in the Soviet Union. (Ohlendorf, thirty-eight years of age, who was head of the Nazi agency in charge of intelligence and security, was found guilty of war crimes and executed.)

> *COL. AMEN: What were [the] instructions with respect to the Jews and the Communist functionaries?*
>
> *OHLENDORF: The instructions were that in the Russian operational areas of the Einsatzgruppen the Jews, as well as the Soviet political commissars, were to be liquidated.*
>
> *COL. AMEN: And when you say "liquidated" do you mean "killed?"*
>
> *OHLENDORF: Yes, I mean "killed."*
>
> . . .
>
> *COL. AMEN: Do you know how many persons were liquidated by Einsatz Group D under your direction?*
>
> *OHLENDORF: In the year between June 1941 to June 1942 the Einsatzkommandos [men working for the Einsatzgruppen] reported ninety thousand people liquidated.*

COL. AMEN: Did that include men, women, and children?

OHLENDORF: Yes.

. . .

COL. AMEN: Will you explain to the Tribunal in detail how an individual mass execution was carried out?

OHLENDORF: A local Einsatzkommando attempted to collect all the Jews in its area by registering them. This registration was performed by the Jews themselves.

COL. AMEN: On what pretext, if any, were they rounded up?

OHLENDORF: On the pretext that they were to be resettled.

COL. AMEN: Will you continue?

OHLENDORF: After the registration the Jews were collected at one place; and from there they were later transported to the place of execution, which was, as a rule an antitank ditch or a natural excavation. The executions were carried out in a military manner, by firing squads under command.

COL. AMEN: In what way were they transported to the place of execution?

OHLENDORF: They were transported to the place of execution in trucks, always only as many as could be executed immediately. In this way it was attempted to keep the span of time from the moment in which the victims knew what was about to happen to them until the time of their actual execution as short as possible.

COL. AMEN: Was that your idea?

OHLENDORF: Yes.

. . .

OHLENDORF: Some of the unit leaders did not carry out the liquidation in the military manner, but killed the victims singly by shooting them in the back of the neck.

COL. AMEN: And you objected to that procedure?

OHLENDORF: I was against that procedure, yes.

COL. AMEN: For what reason?

OHLENDORF: Because both for the victims and for those who carried out the executions, it was, psychologically, an immense burden to bear.

—Nuremberg Trial Proceedings, Volume 4

- How well organized do the mobile death squads seem to have been?
- What tactics were adopted to prevent the prisoners from resisting their fate?
- Does Ohlendorf seem to show any remorse for his actions? Explain your answer.

The concentration camps were simultaneously labor and death camps. In 1941, Adolf Eichmann, a leader of the German SS (the Nazi Party's elite paramilitary corps), noted the challenges of the coming winter: "the Jews can no longer be fed. It is to be

seriously considered whether the most humane solution might not be to finish off those Jews not capable of labour by some sort of fast-working preparation." In January 1942 at the Wannsee Conference, the Final Solution to the "Jewish question" was discussed. It was decided that German state policy would be to eliminate European Jewish people by working them to death, starving them, or otherwise exterminating them. They were persecuted in place or sent to death camps.

Auschwitz in western Poland was the largest of the death camps, originally constructed in 1940 to hold Polish political prisoners. It became a death camp in 1941 when Polish and Soviet prisoners were executed there. That same year, a new camp (known as Auschwitz II or Birkenau) was built nearby. Its main purpose was to kill Jewish people who were brought on freight trains from all over Europe. Other camps also existed at Auschwitz, including labor camps where prisoners worked for the chemical company I.G. Farben. Some 1.3 million people were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau before Heinrich Himmler, the leader of the SS, ordered the camp closed and evacuated in January 1945 as the Soviet army rapidly advanced on it. Of these 1.3 million, 1.1 million would die there. The vast majority, nearly one million, were Jewish. Most were murdered with poisonous gas, usually immediately upon arrival. Others were shot or beaten to death or died from disease, starvation, or exhaustion caused by hard labor.

Link to Learning

You can take a virtual tour of Auschwitz and its sub-camps. At the bottom of the page, select one of the sub-camps within Auschwitz; clicking on "map" will give you an aerial overview of each camp.

Other gas chambers were constructed at Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka in 1942, and arriving prisoners deemed unsuitable for work were usually sent almost directly to the "showers," actually gas chambers. The systematic implementation of these policies required the collaboration of tens of thousands of people from across Europe, which culminated in the murder of more than six million Jewish people and at least three million members of other minority groups, including gay and Roma people, communists, socialists, and Jehovah's Witnesses, before the war was over. Historians disagree about how many died in the camps, and the true number will likely never be known.

There were many instances of resistance, such as the Warsaw ghetto uprising in 1943. This was ruthlessly crushed by the Germans, however, resulting in the deaths of thirteen thousand Jewish people. Unsuccessful uprisings also took place in three of the concentration camps, one of which, in Sobibor, perhaps saved some lives by forcing the closure of the camp. Beginning in 1942, Irena Sendler, a member of the Polish Underground Resistance, participated in the Great Action in the Warsaw ghetto to smuggle out Jewish children. She is credited with saving some 2,500 children before she was discovered. Oskar Schindler, a member of the Nazi Party, ran a factory in Poland and worked to shield his Jewish workers from the Nazis, saving the lives of thousands. Loukas Karrer, the mayor of the Greek island Zakynthos, saved the island's entire Jewish population of 275 by refusing to surrender them and then hiding them. In Bulgaria, Dimitar Peshev, the deputy speaker of the National Assembly, had supported anti-Semitic legislation, but he refused to accept the German request to deport forty-eight thousand Jews and got the government to rescind the order. Still, the Nazis sent millions to their deaths.

13.4: Keeping the Home Fires Burning

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe life on the home fronts in World War II
- Explain how the war affected women's lives in the Axis and Allied nations
- Describe how new technologies developed during World War II and affected its outcome

Those left behind on the home front during the war followed the fates of their absent loved ones wherever they were. They often coped with shortages of needed items and new workloads as the conflict continued year after year. Research also continued at home as the countries engaged in the war sought to gain an advantage over one another. As a result, new technologies and scientific understandings emerged that affected not only the war and its outcome but the postwar global society as well.

Life on the Home Fronts

For European countries in World War II, the distance between the battlefield and the home front was often very short or nonexistent. Total war, fought using all available resources with no restrictions on weapons or their targets, took the conflict to millions. The occupation of territory and the resulting resistance movements meant that homes, farms, and factories became minor battlefields. Places farther from actual combat, in Africa and the Americas, were more traditional home fronts.

Partisan resistance groups sprang up, the largest among the Dutch, the French, the Polish, the Soviets, and the Yugoslavs. On December 7, 1941, Hitler responded to this resistance with his "Night and Fog Decree" in which he stated that people threatening German security should disappear into the night and fog. Consequently, thousands of brutal reprisals for resistance were visited on local populations. In the Kragujevac massacre in October 1941, Germans killed 2,700 Serbians in retaliation for a partisan attack that had killed ten German soldiers and wounded another twenty-six. Such brutality sometimes recruited more resistance. In Yugoslavia, for example, German cruelty enabled Josip Broz Tito to recruit and lead 650,000 people against the Germans, tie down thirty-five German divisions, and destroy eighteen thousand supply trains. In the Soviet Union, the Germans faced perhaps 150,000 partisans. In the Netherlands, railroad workers went on strike in support of Allied offensives in the winter of 1944, and the Germans retaliated by cutting off their food supplies, leading to thirty thousand deaths by starvation.

The experiences of Europeans under German occupation varied greatly depending on their place of residence (rural or urban), social class, and ethnicity, as well as on the state of the national economy. Since most resources were funneled toward the Germans and away from local populations, much of Europe had to solve the problems of food shortages, rationing, and black markets. In the more industrialized countries, German policy sought to largely maintain the economies and just redirect them toward German needs. In Norway, for example, the Nazi collaborator Vidkun Quisling ruled as minister president in partnership with Josef Terboven, a German civilian administrator. The country lost all its foreign trade partners, and its entire economy became tilted toward Germany. The result was that only about 40 percent of Norwegian production was left for consumption by Norwegians, necessitating rationing (Figure 13.14).

Figure 13.14 Shortages and Rationing. Because occupied Norway's production was redirected to supplying German needs, Norwegians lined up for scarce and rationed goods in Oslo in 1942. (credit: modification of work "Oslo queue ww2" by United States Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs division/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Where economies were less modern, it was difficult to increase production. Laborers were lost, either through death or because they were sent to Germany to work. As many as twelve million forced laborers from twenty different countries, mostly in eastern and central Europe, fell under German control, further depressing the production of civilian goods. Despite German hopes, eastern Europe exported to Germany only 800,000 tons of bread over the course of the war, and hunger and starvation became common experiences for resident populations. In Greece, the appropriation of foodstuffs led to a famine that killed a quarter of a million people in the winter of 1941–1942, including 90 percent of the babies born.

Across the globe, the rationing of food and products useful to the war effort affected life on the home fronts. The Germans instituted a four-year economic plan in 1936, and rationing began in August 1939. The first few years of the war brought little change in their standard of living, but by early 1945, rationing had grown uncomfortably tight. The Italians too had to adjust to rationing, which began in 1939 and progressively diminished the standard of living. In 1943, major labor strikes took place in protest against these measures in Italy, even in war-related industries. In the Soviet Union, the loss of Ukraine and other grain-producing areas necessitated strict rationing. China's agricultural economy had been severely disrupted by the Japanese invasion in the 1930s, and the war did little to improve the situation. Food shortages in Japan were severe, and by 1944, the population was surviving on eight ounces of rice a day.

Rationing was a fact of life in Allied countries as well. In Britain in 1939, oil and gasoline were rationed first, then a year later foods such as bacon, butter, meat, cheese, and eggs were rationed. In 1940, the Ministry of Food established canteens in factories and schools throughout the country to provide food and regulate its distribution. In the United States, the Office of Price Administration had been established in August 1941. It commenced rationing sugar, meat, butter, gasoline, tires, and canned goods three weeks after Pearl Harbor.

Many nations sent their children abroad to safer areas. During the blitz of London, one million British children were evacuated to the countryside or to Canada. By 1942, the Germans, the Soviets, and the Japanese had sent hundreds of thousands of children out of their major cities, and sometimes their civilian parents as well.

The governments of nearly all the combatants sooner or later assumed command of their economies to direct labor and resources to their war efforts. As early as the mid-1920s, the Italian government had begun direct intervention in the economy, and by 1939,

Italy had the second-highest percentage of state-owned enterprises in the world; only the Soviet Union had more. The Soviets had instituted state control and a centrally commanded economy in 1928 with the goal of industrializing rapidly. When the Germans attacked, about a third of the western portion of the nation, with most of the Soviet industrial base, fell into German hands. In anticipation of a conflict with capitalist nations, the Soviets had begun to establish industrial bases east of the Ural Mountains. During World War II, they intensified their efforts to save their industrial centers and moved twenty-five hundred factories and twenty-five million people east of the Urals, out of reach of the Wehrmacht. Steadily, Soviet productive capacity regained its balance and began to achieve impressive results.

Germany's four-year plan, begun in 1936, carried them into the early stages of the war, and in 1942 the economy was kicked into high gear. The Luftwaffe had taken delivery of 8,300 aircraft in 1939, a number that exploded to a peak of 39,800 by 1944. British factories similarly began turning out tens of thousands of planes in the last years of the war. The Japanese shifted to turning out planes to defend the nation from air attacks, and work on battleships and cruisers ceased altogether.

Government efforts to spur production led to nearly full employment in many nations. In the United States, unemployment dropped from 15 percent in 1939 to 1 percent in 1943 as seventeen million new civilian jobs were created. Workers achieved a nearly 100 percent increase in productivity and output. All these changes transformed the human landscape as workers from across the United States, and increasingly women and African Americans from the south, were drawn into defense industry work. Half the world's war production came from the United States. The Lend-Lease program sent material and foodstuffs to forty Allied nations, mainly Britain and the Soviet Union but also other nations from Brazil and Belgium to Iran and Uruguay.

Total war meant that the enemy's productive capabilities were fair targets for destruction. While the air raids on Britain often targeted civilian locations, the Allies initially attempted a program of strategic bombing of Axis locations in Europe. The plan was to disrupt industrial production, though reality often fell short of this goal. Bombs missed targets and hit purely civilian ones or simply did not inflict the necessary damage on a factory. Naples sustained nearly two hundred attacks from 1940 to 1944. The Royal Air Force conducted nighttime bombing campaigns over German cities, similar to those Germany carried out over England. The multiday attacks on Dresden by more than one thousand British and U.S. bombers in February 1945 dropped high explosives and firebombs on the center of the city, destroying most of it and killing more than twenty-five thousand people. Some of these bombing runs were deliberately aimed at civilian targets.

The danger air raids posed to civilians was clear. Air raids killed 60,000 British people and injured 86,000 during the Battle of Britain. Nationwide German wartime losses reached 305,000 killed and 800,000 injured, with five million rendered homeless. The Allied bombing of Japan was severe as well. The U.S. Air Force destroyed sixty-nine Japanese cities. The March 1945 raid on Tokyo alone killed between 80,000 and 100,000 people and destroyed the homes of a million more. By 1945, Japan was on the verge of economic collapse.

But life was more than just working in war plants and rationing. Everywhere people tried to maintain some semblance of ordinary life through diversions and entertainment. Radio programming kept them informed and entertained. In England, "We'll Meet Again," probably the most popular wartime song, came out in 1939. The Germans banned jazz, but wherever they went, U.S. soldiers, known as GIs, introduced locals to jazz and the jitterbug, popular back in the States.

Movies were produced everywhere as both propaganda and distraction. German, Italian, Japanese, and Soviet films leaned heavily toward propaganda. Most German films were pro-war and heroic in theme, with significant portions of anti-Semitic propaganda. In general, the Japanese discouraged distractions from the war effort. Bars had their hours cut to restrict frivolous activities, but movie houses remained open. Japanese pro-war and propagandistic movies began to appear as early as 1937, starting with *Marching Song* about the fighting in China. Beginning in 1941 and often thereafter, many Japanese movies focused on Koreans who volunteered and heroically served the greater cause of Japan. Movie theater attendance in Britain increased 50 percent in 1944 and 1945, and in the United States it also reached new highs.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had unleashed a cascade of racist assumptions about the Japanese, and it was generally feared that Japanese Americans living in the United States might engage in espionage or sabotage. Executive Order 9066, issued by President Roosevelt in February 1942, authorized West Coast military commanders to exclude from designated military areas anyone deemed a threat to national security. It thus allowed the widespread forced relocation of tens of thousands of Japanese and Japanese American families into ten relocation camps administered by the War Relocation Authority from 1942 until 1946 (Figure 13.15).

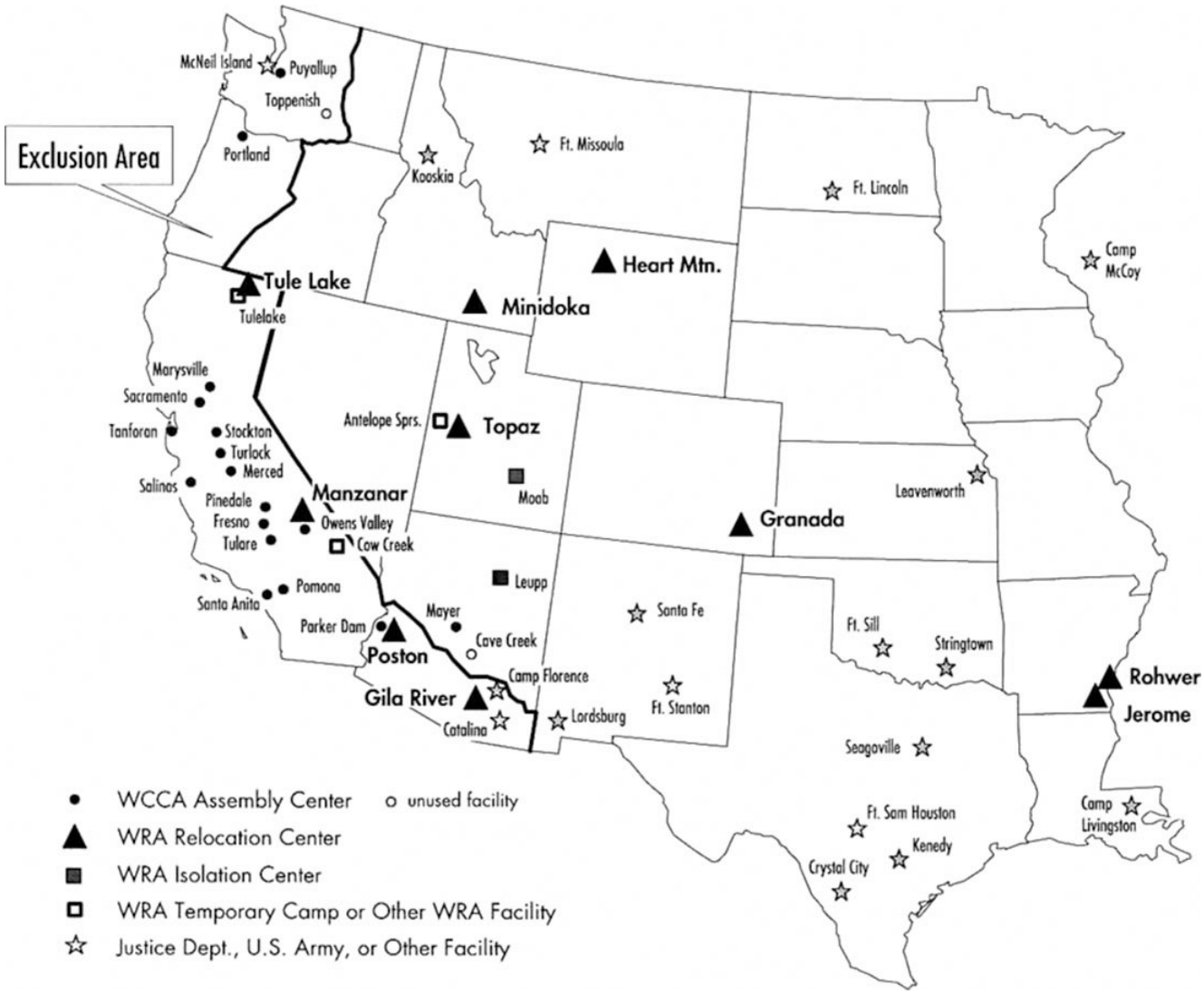

Figure 13.15 The Enforcement of U.S. Executive Order 9066. This map shows the sites of relocation camps set up for forcibly displaced Japanese Americans during World War II. (credit: "Map of World War II Japanese American internment camps" by National Park Service/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

The internees at these camps, many of them U.S. citizens, were forced to abandon their homes and businesses, and most never recovered them. Conditions in the camps were bleak. Families were separated, and men were often sent to different locations for investigation and interrogation. Most internees complied, many desiring to show their loyalty to the United States. Some even volunteered for and were later enlisted in the army. Others, however, felt betrayed and denounced the United States. An even smaller group were deemed recalcitrant and repatriated to Japan during and after the war.

In 1944, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the relocation, but in the early 1980s, the federal court system reconsidered the issue. Several Japanese Americans who had been convicted for not complying with the executive order in the 1940s saw their convictions overturned, and in one case vacated. Fred Korematsu, a U.S. citizen, had been arrested in 1942 for defying the exclusion order and fought the abridgment of his civil liberties for forty years. His was one of the convictions finally overturned in the 1980s. In 1988, the U.S. government formally apologized to the people who had been interned and awarded $20,000 in reparations to each survivor. In an interview in 2000, Korematsu said, "I'll never forget my government treating me like this. And I really hope that this will never happen to anybody else because of the way they look, if they look like the enemy of our country."

While most Latin American countries did not participate in combat in the war (Brazil was an exception), none could avoid the harsh realities of the conflict. All became more dependent on trade with the United States and were subject to the shortages, rationing, and price controls that came along with the dearth of needed items on the home front. Some areas saw increased

economic opportunity at home, such as Panama, where the canal had become extremely busy during the war as goods were transferred from ocean to ocean.

Along with becoming a theater of battle in its northern lands, Africa was also drawn into World War II when Africans were enlisted into the armies fighting fascism. More than a million African soldiers fought in Europe, North Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific or provided labor for colonial forces during the war. Most were forcibly recruited and paid far less than White European soldiers. The colonial holdings of the European powers throughout the continent meant that Africa's resources were available for the war effort. African labor, for instance, was essential in maintaining the production of such strategic materials as coal, tin, rubber, and food. Mobilizing African comunities for support forced colonial regimes to deal with resentments associated with rising prices, increased taxes, inflation, and control of the economies. Increased urbanization of the continent also offered populations greater freedom of action and expression, calling colonialism into question. Brazzaville was the capital of Free France (France's collected colonial territories) under Charles de Gaulle, and issues of subjugation and racism came into stark relief. Many Africans saw their loyal contribution to the Allies as a down payment for greater self-determination and independence after the war.

Women Mobilized for War

The status and roles of women underwent seismic shifts around the world because of the war. In belligerent nations, with so many men sent to the far-flung fronts, women represented a large available pool of labor that could be tapped, and they increased their participation in their nation's economies significantly.

In 1939, women made up 37 percent of the German workforce, but because the Nazis encouraged them to be homemakers and resisted recruiting them to work, their participation in labor declined between 1939 and 1941. In 1942 when Germany geared up for war, however, more women went into the factories, and their share of the workforce climbed to about 50 percent. From its initial rise to power, the German Nazi regime had also promoted schemes to increase marriages and births, for which economic incentives were offered, while birth control was outlawed.

By 1945, women in the Soviet Union constituted 55 percent of the total workforce. In addition, about 800,000 women served in frontline combat positions, mostly as medical workers. Lyudmila Pavlichenko was a sniper credited with killing 309 enemies. The Soviet women's air unit called the Night Witches conducted more than twenty-three thousand bombing runs during the war. The war years led to the death of as many as twenty-five million Soviet citizens. Therefore, the role of motherhood also gained new importance during the war. In July 1944, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet created the Order of Maternal Glory and the title of Mother-Hero. There were financial incentives for having two or more children.

The Japanese also rewarded women for having children. The 1940, National Eugenics Law prohibited abortion or sterilization for any reason except eugenics (a discredited strategy that focused on cultivating desirable characteristics in a population). Women were encouraged to marry young, have many children, and fulfill their natural role as mothers. Those who did were rewarded, but women aged eighteen to twenty-five were also conscripted into the labor force beginning in 1943.

The Japanese military held views about the needs of men and the subservience of women that led to a vast system of forced prostitution and sexual slavery. Korean and Chinese women were the first to suffer, but the system spread wherever Japanese troops were, victimizing perhaps as many as 400,000 women from China, Korea, and elsewhere in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. This type of treatment helped spur many women to embrace the activism encouraged by the Chinese Communist Party and to celebrate anti-Japanese actions. The nature and scope of the crimes against these "comfort women" remain controversial long after the war.

The Past Meets the Present

Uncomfortable Controversies

In the early 1990s, surviving Korean victims of sexual exploitation by the Japanese military went to court in Japan demanding recognition of their plight and compensation from the government. Through years of litigation, the Japanese court system consistently rejected their claims. The issue was revived in 2016 when twelve surviving "comfort women" (as they were called) entered South Korean courts to seek justice. In January 2021, the Seoul Central District Court rendered a decision in their favor and ordered the Japanese government to pay them $91,800 each. The Japanese government again rejected this ruling, and people on the political right in Japan, including former prime minister Shinzo Abe, argued that the women had not been forced into anything.

The charges leveled by the women were only one of the issues remaining from World War II with which Japan has yet to come to terms. Both while in office and afterward, Japanese prime ministers have paid visits to Yasukuni Shrine to honor soldiers

who died in World War II, including men convicted of war crimes such as Hideki Tojo. Japanese history textbooks, which must be approved by the Ministry of Education, largely ignore the existence of the comfort women and have downplayed or denied the role of the Japanese military in forcing civilians on the island of Okinawa to commit suicide rather than surrender after the U.S. victory there in March 1945.

- Why do you think these issues still exist?
- Why might the Japanese government wish to deny or downplay actions of Japanese troops during the war?

In 1941, all British women between eighteen and fifty years old were declared available for national service. The Women's Land Army recruited eighty thousand women for agricultural work on Britain's farms, and 400,000 served in some other form of civil defense. Eventually, eight million women participated in the British war effort.

Encouraged by their government to think of all jobs as war jobs, six and a half million American women entered the labor force during the conflict and made up 50 percent of it by the war's end. Three million members of the Women's Land Army planted and harvested food. Women also took their places behind desks in hundreds of thousands of government and office jobs and in industries where few women had made inroads in the past. By 1944, for instance, the number of women in the banking industry had doubled to about 130,000 employees. The now-famous "Rosie the Riveter" poster expressed the commitment and competence of women stepping into industrial jobs to replace the men who had gone to war (Figure 13.16). Nearly 350,000 women also served in some branch of the U.S. military during the war.

Figure 13.16 Women on the Home Front. The famous poster of "Rosie the Riveter" symbolized the many women in the United States who were rolling up their sleeves to serve the nation during the war. (credit: "We can do it!" by U.S. National Archives and Records Administration/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Scientists at War

World War II, like World War I, brought about scientific and technological developments that soon became matters of life and death. The nature of total war itself prompted a transformation in the relationship between states and scientists. Governments invested in the development of lethal and nonlethal technologies that ultimately became essential to the war and national security. In the fall of 1939, the British scientific community rapidly shifted its focus from matters of pure research to work aiding the war effort.

Advances in the understanding of radio waves led to the development of radar, providing advance warning of enemy attacks. Other advances injected more and better electronics such as microwaves and early versions of digital computing devices into a wide

range of military applications, laying the foundation for the commercial proliferation of electronics into everyday life after the war. Allied efforts to break the Nazi spy codes inspired the birth of the first rudimentary computers. The British mathematician Alan Turing and a team of scientists working for the British Secret Service set out to break the seemingly unbreakable Nazi Enigma code. In the process, they built an electromagnetic device that could cycle through hundreds of thousands of possible key/letter combinations in intercepted Nazi messages and eventually succeeded in breaking the code. Another breakthrough in computing was ENIAC, the Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer, which was first developed to calculate artillery trajectories for the U.S Army and performed its calculations at electronic, not mechanical, speed. It is estimated that by 1955, ENIAC had completed more calculations than humans had ever solved to date.

Link to Learning

Long-term results of World War II include the beginning of computerization. Alan Turing predicted that someday machines would be able to pass the Turing test, which he called the imitation game. That is, machines would behave in ways that were indistinguishable from human actions. This video explains the Turing test in more detail. Presented in this video is an example of the logic of artificial intelligence as demonstrated in "Sophia answers the Trolley Problem."

Advances were made in life-saving scientific and medical techniques as well. A major medical development during the war improved the use and mass production of the antibiotic penicillin. Another life-saving advance was the achievement of Charles Drew, an African American physician who developed the process of rendering blood plasma, making it easier to store it for longer periods of time and offering an effective replacement for whole-blood transfusions. But racial bias entered the picture in 1941 when the American Red Cross agreed with a War Department decision to label blood and plasma as either "White" or "Negro." Dr. Drew resigned from the National Blood Bank as a result of this racist and unscientific policy.

Few developments were more dramatic than the massive mobilization of scientific and civilian resources for the building of the atomic bomb. In December 1938, German physicists Otto Hahn and Fritz Strassmann accidentally split atoms and discovered nuclear fission. A few months later, the Germans established a secret weapons program called the Uranium Club to create an atomic bomb. Seeing the implications of Hahn's work, German-born physicist Albert Einstein, who had recently immigrated to the United States, sent a letter to President Roosevelt that had been written by physicist Leo Szilard, warning Roosevelt of this research and urging an increased U.S. commitment to conducting its own.

By the late 1930s, British and other scientists became convinced that an atomic bomb was possible, and teams of physicists, some of them refugees from Nazi Germany, assembled and began experiments with nuclear chain reactions, the catalysts of an atomic explosion. In August 1942, the U.S. government boosted this effort with its top-secret Manhattan Project. At dozens of sites across the United States, from Los Alamos in New Mexico to Oak Ridge in Tennessee and Hanford in Washington State, 600,000 workers embarked on a frenetic race to build the world's first atomic bomb. Meanwhile, Germany and Japan were also attempting to build their own. The German effort was hindered by technical and other problems. For example, top German scientists had fled Germany, and some were assisting the Manhattan Project. Further, Hitler preferred to support the development of V2 bombers for the air war with England rather than an atomic bomb. In 1941, the Japanese commissioned physicist Yoshio Nishina to begin working on an atomic bomb, calling the project Ni-Go. But lacking any information shared by the Germans and suffering under successful U.S. air raids, the project did not make much progress.

Eventually, in July 1945, the Manhattan Project bore fruit, and a bomb was successfully detonated in the Trinity Test at Alamogordo, New Mexico. William L. Laurence, the official historian of the project, described this first successful trial of an atomic weapon: "On that moment hung eternity. Time stood still. Space contracted to a pinpoint. It was as though the earth had opened and the skies split. One felt as though they had been privileged to witness the Birth of the World—to be present at the moment of Creation when the Lord Said: Let there be light." President Roosevelt had died suddenly in April 1945, succeeded by Vice President Harry S. Truman. It fell to Truman to decide whether to use the new weapon or not.

13.5: Out of the Ashes

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Describe the final stages of the war in Europe
- Identify the components of the agreements reached at Yalta and Potsdam
- Analyze the decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan
- Discuss the efforts to transform Japan after its surrender

Just as it did after World War I, immense hope prevailed after World War II that genuine and lasting peace might arise. The future of the globe itself seemed to hang in the balance if humans could not avoid using violence to solve their problems. However, the use of nuclear weapons to end the fighting in the Pacific meant the postwar world had to grapple with new ethical and technological concerns. The rebuilding of war-torn and defeated countries added a new dimension to what victory looked like.

Victory in Europe and Plans for Peace

For more than five years after they met in Newfoundland and produced the Atlantic Charter's plan for the end of the conflict, Roosevelt and Churchill exchanged more than 1,700 letters and messages and held many high-level meetings to closely coordinate their efforts at every level. At a specialized conference held at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in 1944, representatives of forty-four Allied countries together hammered out the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund, both intended to secure economic security and stability after the war.

As Allied troops marched toward the German border, however, their coalition began to fray. On a visit to Stalin late in 1944, Churchill signed the Percentages Agreement in which the two decided to divide up eastern Europe into spheres of influence, with Britain getting a 90 percent share of Greece, the USSR getting 90 percent of Romania, and both holding 50 percent of the political power in Hungary and Yugoslavia. Churchill thought Stalin should burn the document afterward because "it might be thought rather cynical if it seemed we had disposed of these issues, so fateful to millions of people, in such an offhand manner."

Finally, several months after the Soviet victory at Kursk, General Eisenhower prepared to open a second front in the European theater of the war. By May 1944, the German military was facing a dilemma. The Soviet Red Army was relentlessly rolling back German positions in the east, and it seemed obvious that the British and U.S. troops were preparing for an invasion of the continent. Given the brutality of the battles on the eastern front, the Germans chose to retain 228 divisions to counter the Soviets and assigned the defense of Europe to fifty-eight divisions, only fifteen of which were in the vicinity of Normandy, France.

Normandy, however, was the secret site of the coming invasion. After months of assembling and training troops, the Allies began their invasion of France at 2 a.m. on June 6, 1944—D-Day. Having assumed responsibility for nearly every detail but not convinced he had done enough, Eisenhower wrote a letter of resignation the night before in case things did not go well. But they did. By the second day of the operation, approximately 160,000 Allied troops with considerable armor were linking up in a continuous line through Europe and punching holes in German defenses. Paris was liberated just two months later.

A race to capture Berlin then began, with Allied generals vying for the honor of getting there first. As British and U.S. troops approached from the west, the Soviets closed in on the city from the east. While clearing out German forces west of the Rhine River, Eisenhower decided to pause for resupply and prepare for the final push to Berlin.

Hitler believed there might still be hope for a German victory if he could divide the Allied armies from each other. Four days later. he committed 200,000 troops, one thousand tanks, and large numbers of aircraft to the Battle of the Bulge in a forested region of the western front. Eisenhower later admitted the Germans had indeed achieved a tactical surprise in this offensive by penetrating Allied defenses by some fifty miles. Despite the German successes, however, he felt that by capitalizing on their fatigue, he could stem the tide of the war. Germany had in fact suffered major losses in what proved to be their final European offensive and another turning point in the war.

With the conflict nearing its end, the Big Three met again to plan the peace at the Yalta Conference in the Soviet Crimea from February 4 to 11, 1945 (Figure 13.17). Roosevelt's agenda asked for Soviet support in the U.S. Pacific War against Japan, specifically in invading Japan. He also hoped for support for the creation of a new institution—the United Nations—that would be modeled on the premise of collective security but would be a stronger body than the League of Nations had been. Churchill pressed

for free elections and democratic governments in eastern and central Europe (specifically Poland), while Stalin demanded a Soviet sphere of political influence in eastern and central Europe.

Figure 13.17 The Big Three. The Allies were represented at the Yalta Conference in 1945 by (left to right) Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Britain, U.S. president Franklin Roosevelt, and the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. (credit: "'Big Three' met at Yalta" by National Archives and Records Administration/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

Stalin promised free elections in Poland, despite having recently installed a government in Polish territories occupied by the Red Army. His preconditions for the Soviet Union's declaring war against Japan were U.S. recognition of Mongolian independence from China and of Soviet interests in the Manchurian railways and Port Arthur. These were agreed upon without Chinese representation or consent, and Stalin promised that the Soviet Union would enter the Pacific War three months after the defeat of Germany. Roosevelt met Stalin's price in the hope that the USSR could be dealt with after the war via the United Nations, which the Soviets had agreed to join.

In the Declaration on Liberated Europe, the three leaders agreed that all original governments would be restored in the invaded countries (except France, Romania, and Bulgaria and the Polish government-in-exile in London), and that all displaced civilians would be repatriated. Other key points of the meeting were reaffirmation of the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany, and of the division of Germany and Berlin into three occupied zones (later expanded to four).

Germany was to undergo demilitarization and denazification and make reparations, partly in the form of forced labor by German prisoners of war and others who would work in agricultural and industrial roles in both Eastern and Western Europe after the war. At the same time, Nazi war criminals were to be hunted down and brought to justice. Stalin insisted that given the pain and destruction the Germans had visited upon the Soviet Union, reparations ought to go to the nation that had suffered the most. Resolution of this issue was postponed to a future conference. After Yalta, Eisenhower conferred with Moscow and laid out a plan, adhering to the Yalta Agreement, for the exact placement of the postwar occupation zones in Berlin. Eisenhower knew the German leaders were preparing to move to another city, making Berlin of only psychological significance.

On April 30, 1945, Hitler and his wife of one day, Eva Braun, committed suicide. Various German commanders then began surrendering to Soviet or Allied forces. Hermann Göring surrendered on May 6, and the next day the chief of staff of German forces, General Alfred Jodl, unconditionally surrendered all German forces. Victory in Europe had been achieved.

Advancing Soviet armies had begun the process of liberating the death camps in July 1944, and in January 1945, they freed those held in Auschwitz. In April, U.S. and British units liberated Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen, and Dachau. Eisenhower and his staff went into the camps on a number of occasions. To make sure the world became aware of German inhumanity, Eisenhower arranged for American and British reporters to tour the camps as well.

Link to Learning

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum has preserved recorded testimony of Holocaust survivors recounting the end of their imprisonment and their life after liberation.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Early in 1945, the Japanese army and navy agreed to adopt the first joint operational plan in their histories. Operation *Ten-go* ("heaven") called for suicide attacks by land and air units for defense in the Pacific, and a month later these attacks were combined with the *shukketsu* ("bleeding") strategy in the Battle of Iwo Jima.

Throughout the war, the Japanese had believed that high casualties would dishearten U.S. troops, who they felt could not tolerate suffering and loss. On Iwo Jima, the Japanese sacrificed twenty-one thousand soldiers and inflicted twenty-six thousand casualties on U.S. Marines (seven thousand were killed and the rest wounded). But the U.S. troops persisted and again absorbed high casualties as they later captured Okinawa. Japan's struggle for Okinawa included the use of the island's civilians, resulting in the death of 100,000 and demonstrating the resolve to be expected from the Japanese in defense of their main islands (Figure 13.18).

Figure 13.18 Japanese Women on the Home Front. Japanese female students receive weapons training in 1945. (credit: "Kokumin Giyutai" by Unknown/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

The slogan *gyokusai* (“honorable death”), combined with *shukketsu* and commitment to the emperor, was exemplified by the kamikaze or suicide pilots, essentially human bombs trying to fend off U.S. naval forces. In the face of such near-fanatical defensive efforts, U.S. secretary of war Henry L. Stimson and General George C. Marshall, the U.S. Army chief of staff, estimated that an invasion of Japan could cost between 500,000 and one million U.S. casualties and last well into 1946. President Truman was briefed on these estimates, and they were widely discussed among the military planning circles and staff. Japan’s leaders, however, refused to consider an unconditional surrender that, among other things, may have led to the emperor’s being tried for war crimes. They came to the conclusion that an invasion of the home islands was inevitable. Private and secret initiatives were floated to persuade the Soviet Union to mediate with the United States and Britain to end the war.

Between July 17 and August 2, 1945, the final Allied summit conference took place at Potsdam, a suburb of Berlin. This time, Harry S. Truman replaced the late Franklin Roosevelt, and Winston Churchill was replaced by Britain’s newly elected prime minister Clement Attlee. Truman was already troubled by Soviet actions in Europe. He disliked the concessions Roosevelt had made that allowed the Soviets to install a communist government in Poland. He also disapproved of Stalin’s plans, made known at the Yalta Conference, to demand large reparations from Germany. Truman feared the resulting burden on Germany might lead to another cycle of rearmament and aggression.

After issuing a demand for the unconditional surrender of Japan, the conference turned toward the fate of postwar Europe. The Allied leaders agreed to demilitarize Germany and to divide the conquered nation and its capital of Berlin into four occupation zones: three in the west to be controlled by Britain, France, and the United States, and one in the east for the USSR. An Allied Control Council was created to administer occupied Germany, though the choice to make the council’s decisions unanimous later proved unrealistic. The German economy was to be decentralized and focused on agriculture and nonmilitary industries.

The debates about reparations stemming from the Yalta Conference were settled with a plan to exchange Germany’s western industrial production for its eastern agricultural production. In practice, however, this plan led to economic policies being instituted and managed by zones rather than for the nation as a whole, creating further disunity among the Allies. Finally, a program of denazification for Germany and Austria was confirmed that included punishment of war criminals. The settlement of the final borders of Poland was postponed, but Britain and the United States agreed to the transfer of designated German territory to Poland.

Truman had known little about the Manhattan Project before becoming president and now relied on the advice of his experts. They shared a widely held faith in the justice of the U.S. cause and accepted technological approaches to ending the war. Informed of the success of the Trinity Test while at the conference, Truman noted his thinking about using the bomb in his July 25, 1945, diary entry. He favored using it only against military targets, not civilian ones:

> *This weapon is to be used against Japan between now and August 10. I have told the secretary of war, Mr. Stimson, to use it so that military objectives and soldiers and sailors are the target and not women and children. Even if Japs are savages, ruthless, merciless, and fanatic, we as the leader of the world for the common welfare cannot drop this terrible bomb on the old capital or the new. He and I are in accord. The target will be a purely military one and we will issue a warning statement asking the Japs to surrender and save lives. I’m sure they will not do that, but we will have given them the chance. It is certainly a good thing for the world that Hitler’s crowd or Stalin’s did not discover this atomic bomb. It seems to be the most terrible thing ever discovered, but it can be made the most useful.*

The bomb was used, first against Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and three days later on Nagasaki, both cities populated by civilians including women and children.

A variety of factors likely influenced Truman in making his decision. The desire to save American lives perhaps played the greatest role. The desire to justify the expense of the Manhattan Project also likely influenced him. Some have suggested that Truman hoped to demonstrate to the Soviet Union the technological superiority of the United States. Others believe that a desire for revenge for Pearl Harbor also played a role. Some have suggested that a long history of anti-Asian sentiment in the United States made the use of the atomic bomb against Japan seem less horrific than its use against Europeans would have been.

Dueling Voices

Dropping the Atomic Bomb

When it became clear that the Manhattan Project had been successful, a panel of scientists led by Robert Oppenheimer, the project's head, made recommendations about the weapon they had created in a report dated June 16, 1945. A month later, physicist Leo Szilard and sixty-nine other scientists and technicians at the Manhattan Project's Chicago laboratory petitioned President Truman to use caution when deciding how to deploy the bomb.

> *The initial use of the new weapon . . . in our opinion, should be such as to promote a satisfactory adjustment of our international relations. At the same time, we recognize our obligation to our nation to use the weapons to help save American lives in the Japanese war.*
>
> *(1) To accomplish these ends we recommend that before the weapons are used not only Britain, but also Russia, France, and China be advised that we have made considerable progress in our work on atomic weapons, that these may be ready to use during the present war, and that we would welcome suggestions as to how we can cooperate in making this development contribute to improved international relations.*
>
> *(2) The opinions of our scientific colleagues on the initial use of these weapons are not unanimous . . . . Those who advocate a purely technical demonstration would wish to outlaw the use of atomic weapons, and have feared that if we use the weapons now our position in future negotiations will be prejudiced. Others emphasize the opportunity of saving American lives by immediate military use, and believe that such use will improve the international prospects . . . . We find ourselves closer to these latter views; we can propose no technical demonstration likely to bring an end to the war; we see no acceptable alternative to direct military use.*
>
> *—Recommendations on the Immediate Use of Nuclear Weapons*

> *The war has to be brought speedily to a successful conclusion and attacks by atomic bombs may very well be an effective method of warfare. We feel, however, that such attacks on Japan could not be justified, at least not unless the terms which will be imposed after the war on Japan were made public in detail and Japan were given an opportunity to surrender.*
>
> *If such public announcement gave assurance to the Japanese that they could look forward to a life devoted to peaceful pursuits in their homeland and if Japan still refused to surrender our nation might then, in certain circumstances, find itself forced to resort to the use of atomic bombs. Such a step, however, ought not to be made at any time without seriously considering the moral responsibilities which are involved.*
>
> *The development of atomic power will provide the nations with new means of destruction. The atomic bombs at our disposal represent only the first step in this direction, and there is almost no limit to the destructive power which will become available in the course of their future development. Thus a nation which sets the precedent of using these newly liberated forces of nature for purposes of destruction may have to bear the responsibility of opening the door to an era of devastation on an unimaginable scale.*

> *If after this war a situation is allowed to develop in the world which permits rival powers to be in uncontrolled possession of these new means of destruction, the cities of the United States as well as the cities of other nations will be in continuous danger of sudden annihilation. . . .*
>
> *The added material strength which this lead gives to the United States brings with it the obligation of restraint and if we were to violate this obligation our moral position would be weakened in the eyes of the world and in our own eyes. It would then be more difficult for us to live up to our responsibility of bringing the unloosened forces of destruction under control.*
>
> *—A Petition to the President of the United States*

- What are the points made by the two sides? Which do you think made the better argument?
- Do the scientists seem more concerned about the bomb's effect on the Japanese or about the consequences for the United States of using it? Explain your answer.
- In what ways are Truman's feelings about the bomb similar to those of Szilard and his supporters?
- If you had been President Truman, would you have ordered the bomb to be dropped? Why or why not?

Little Boy, as the first atomic bomb was called, was dropped on Hiroshima from the U.S. bomber the *Enola Gay*. Survivors referred to August 6 as "the day of two suns"; the blast was so bright that it burned the shadows of victims into walls and concrete. More than seventy thousand people were killed instantly. Immediately afterward, the sky turned purple and gray, even black, from the dust and debris suspended in the air. Hundreds of wooden and paper houses were ignited. Thousands of shocked and confused people whose flesh had burned off began roaming about, almost instinctively moving toward any pool or stream of water. Over the following days, months, and even years, people continued to succumb to their wounds and injuries, bringing the total deaths to more than 100,000. Three days later, Fat Man, the second bomb, similarly descended upon Nagasaki, killing forty thousand Japanese immediately. Including the aftermath, deaths there totaled seventy thousand.

Link to Learning

Not everyone was horrified by the thought of the atomic bomb being used against Japan. But lyrics of the popular song "When the Atom Bomb Fell" reveal another perspective. The song was released in 1945 after the bomb had been dropped.

Visit the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum to learn more about the effects of the bombing on the residents of Hiroshima.

Meanwhile, keeping the promise made at Yalta, after the bombing of Hiroshima the Soviets broke their nonaggression pact with Japan and invaded Manchukuo and Korea. Japanese defenses there quickly crumbled in the face of tens of thousands of casualties, ending any hope that the Soviets might act as an intermediary in some negotiated settlement with the Allies. Japan surrendered shortly after.

The Human Toll

The end of the war saw the world grapple with the conflict's astronomical human toll. Germany had suffered 5.5 million military deaths and lost as many as three million civilians. Japan lost 2.1 million military and another million civilians. China's military deaths can only be approximated but may have been as high as four million, with another sixteen million civilians. The United States and the United Kingdom emerged less battered, with 416,000 American and 384,000 British deaths. However, their ally the Soviet Union arguably suffered more than any other single country. Soviet military deaths were estimated at 8.8 to 10.7 million, and more than thirteen million civilian deaths were attributed to the war. Some of these deaths were the result of military actions; other Soviet civilians died of starvation or disease caused by wartime conditions. The German and Japanese surrenders ended the combat phase of the war. However, much work was needed to rebuild the world as the victors thought it should be.

The Aftermath: Europe

The right-wing dictatorships in Spain and Portugal, by staying out of the actual conflict, were able to avoid the reconstructive policies and action of the Allies. But fascism had been dealt a severe defeat in Europe.

The Soviets exacted retribution on the Germans largely by removing and transporting back to the Soviet Union virtually anything they considered useful to rebuilding their own industrial sector destroyed by the war. Thus, the Soviet occupation zone, which became the communist satellite of East Germany, was left with little to sustain itself. The western Allies, wanting relief from the burden of supporting destitute Germans and their largely destroyed economy, began to rebuild Germany's industries in their occupation zones. Stalin perceived these efforts as a sign of greed, continued capitalist hostility to socialism, and the West's desire to dominate the world economy.

Efforts were also made to establish some measure of justice via war crimes trials. In August 1945, Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States agreed to create the International Military Tribunal to try Germans accused of committing war crimes, crimes against peace, and crimes against humanity. The Nuremberg Trials sought justice for Germany's crimes against humanity; they lasted through 1946. Twenty-two individuals and seven Nazi organizations were indicted. Nineteen defendants were convicted and received sentences ranging from fifteen years in prison to death by hanging. Three of the Nazi organizations were ruled to be criminal organizations.

There remained the huge task of repatriating all those displaced by the war. Millions of people had been shuttled around Europe by the Germans as they drew forced labor to Germany and dispatched Jewish people and others to concentration/death camps. The Soviets demanded the return of all their citizens. The Allies agreed to the controversial "Operation Keelhaul," whereby people who had cooperated with the Germans against the Soviets, including Cossacks, Ukrainians, and Russians, were forcibly repatriated to the Soviet Union with the probability of a harsh and possibly fatal reception. Millions of others were also forcibly moved back to their "home" nations at the end of the war, such as Germans living in areas now belonging to Poland who were forced to leave for Germany. The hope was that this would help avoid ethnic tensions that might lead to another conflict. At the same time, 250,000 Jewish survivors of the Holocaust languished in camps for displaced persons because their home countries refused to take them back. About eighty thousand were eventually able to relocate to the United States, and more than 100,000 settled in the British Mandate of Palestine.

The Aftermath: Japan

On August 10, 1945, in the wake of the atomic attacks and the Soviet invasion of Manchukuo, Japanese Emperor Hirohito had informed his Privy Council that he accepted the Potsdam Declaration regarding Japan's unconditional surrender, and soon thereafter the Allies were informed to that effect. Hirohito himself followed up on August 15 with the first public broadcast any emperor had ever made to the Japanese people, saying he would bear the pain of defeat and accept the Allied terms. A month later on September 2, General Yoshijirō Umezu, the army's chief of staff, signed a surrender document aboard the USS *Missouri* at anchor in Tokyo Bay (Figure 13.19).

Figure 13.19 The Japanese Surrender. General Yoshijirō Umezu, chief of the Japanese Army General Staff, signed the articles of surrender for Japan aboard the USS *Missouri* on September 2, 1945. Opposite him were representatives of the Allied Powers, standing behind General Douglas MacArthur at the microphones (with hands behind his back). (credit: "Japanese surrender, Tokyo Bay, September 2, 1945" by U.S. National Archives/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain)

As supreme commander for the Allied powers, General Douglas MacArthur was ordered to exercise authority during the Allied occupation of Japan through the Japanese governmental system, including Emperor Hirohito. MacArthur charged the Japanese government to immediately repeal the Peace Preservation Law, which allowed for the arrest of anyone perceived to be posing a threat to—or critical of—the Japanese government, and to begin open and free discussion of the entire Imperial government and its institutions. Political prisoners were released, and the Special Police were disbanded. On New Year's Day 1946, the emperor publicly disclaimed his divine status: "The ties between us and our people have always stood upon mutual trust and affection. They do not depend upon mere legends and myths. They are not predicated on the false conception that the Emperor is divine and that the Japanese people are superior to other races and fated to rule the world."

In Tokyo, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East emerged from the Potsdam Declaration. (Since the Soviet Union had not declared war on Japan at that time, it was not a party to the agreement.) The trials began in 1946 and lasted until November 1948. Eighteen members of the Japanese military and nine senior politicians were indicted. All were found guilty but one, who was found mentally unfit to stand trial; six were executed and the rest sentenced to prison.

For six years, from 1946 to 1952, the United States dominated the occupation of Japan. General MacArthur and his occupation authorities partnered energetically in almost all aspects of Japanese politics, economics, and society to try to reform and rebuild Japan. The overall goals of the occupation were demilitarization, democratization, and the fostering of respect for fundamental human rights. The Constitution imposed by MacArthur and his Government Section in 1947 was the sort of fundamental change no single group in Japan itself could have effected. The fact that it has survived virtually unchanged suggests that the Japanese themselves came to terms with it and bent the system to reflect their habits of mind and politics. The emperor was made a figurehead, "the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people." Real sovereign power was vested in the people via the Diet, an

elected two-chamber legislature. An extensive Bill of Rights guaranteed academic freedom, women's suffrage, the right to choose residence, collective bargaining, and full employment.

Demilitarization was immediately begun, and the Japanese accepted that a realistic appraisal of world conditions after World War II strongly suggested force was not a good way to protect Japan and secure access to economic resources. The preamble to the Japanese Constitution begins, "We, the Japanese people, desire peace for all time." Land reform began to make more small farmers owners of their farms instead of renters, and union membership was supported in the industrial sector, but many large corporations remained and were deliberately not broken up. Japan was severely limited militarily; no Japanese army was allowed, nor was Japan permitted to go to war in the future.

Attempts took place across the globe to achieve some form of just and lasting peace. One glimmer of hope was the United Nations, an international body agreed to by the Allied leaders during wartime conferences and finally established in New York City in April 1945. The United Nations was pledged to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small . . . to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom."

Judicial actions in both Germany and Japan were the beginning of attempts to define such concepts as genocide and crimes against humanity, as a way to counter the possibility that the conflict had actually normalized total war, mass violence, brutalization, and totalitarianism. The war had also brought into stark view the cruel consequences of racism and racist ideologies. Even liberal democracies could be poisoned by such thinking, as was revealed in the United States by the groundless displacement of Japanese residents and nationals and Japanese American citizens.

As another aftermath of the war, women worldwide found themselves enjoying some of the freedoms and responsibilities of their fuller citizenship and participation in their nation's fortunes. And populations in Africa and Asia, feeling they had earned liberation from prewar colonialism, began to reach for more self-determination and national legitimacy. It was widely felt that the struggles and sacrifices of so many could not and should not have been in vain.

13.6: Key Terms

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Atlantic Charter

a statement of British and U.S. goals and objectives for the world after World War II; negotiated by British prime minister Winston Churchill and U.S. president Franklin Roosevelt

ENIAC

the first programmable electronic digital computer, built by the United States during World War II

Executive Order 9066

a presidential order that led to relocation and internment of more than 100,000 Japanese Americans during the war

Final Solution

the Nazi plan to eliminate the Jewish population of Europe; developed by senior bureaucrats at the Wannsee Conference

German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact

a 1939 agreement between Germany and the USSR in which the two nations agreed not to attack one another or to assist other nations in attacking the other and to divide portions of eastern Europe between them

Holocaust

the Nazi genocide that resulted in the murder of more than six million Jewish people and at least three million members of other, non-Jewish minority groups

Lebensraum

a German term meaning “living room” and referring to lands seized from countries in eastern Europe in which Adolf Hitler envisioned settling German families to supplant the native Slavic populations

Lend-Lease Act

U.S. legislation enacted to provide military assistance to nations important to its defense

Manhattan Project

the U.S. project to build an atomic bomb

Munich Pact

an agreement reached in 1938 in which Czechoslovakia granted territorial concessions to Germany, Poland, and Hungary in the hopes that Adolf Hitler would cease his aggressions

Nuremberg Laws

a series of laws promulgated in Germany in 1935, institutionalizing Nazi racial theories and discrimination against Jewish people

Nuremberg Trials

the formal postwar prosecution of German war crimes

Percentages Agreement

the agreement between Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin about how to divide political influence in Eastern Europe after the war

Trinity Test

the first successful U.S. test of an atomic bomb

13.7: Section Summary

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13.1 An Unstable Peace

As the 1930s unfolded, it became clear that peace would not last for long. Japan's advances through China and its violent attack on Nanjing showed that its military-dominated government would continue to press aggressively for more territory.

The rise of fascism in Italy and Germany continued unchecked. The Nazis were able to manipulate the situation to their diplomatic advantage and gain British and French acquiescence to the takeover of Austria and the Sudetenland (in Czechoslovakia) before any war began. The outbreak of World War II unveiled the Nazi military juggernaut, with several European countries quickly falling to Nazi control and Britain becoming an embattled country that sought new support and assurances from the United States. The Japanese attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor in the Pacific in 1941 made the United States a full participant in the global war.

13.2 Theaters of War

The United States and Great Britain engaged Hitler in actions in North Africa throughout 1942. The Allied successes there and in Italy helped destabilize Mussolini's fascist government in Rome, and he was removed from power in 1943. On the eastern front, the Soviet Union fought protracted battles against the Nazis, with significant losses of civilian and military lives.

The United States continued to move against Japan's holdings throughout the Pacific and was able to retake numerous islands from the Japanese. These losses, especially at the Battle of Midway, called into question the military control of the Japanese government. New concerns arose in areas like India, where anti-British sentiment was growing. For some time, the Nazi government had been working toward the extermination of the Jewish people and of others it deemed undesirable. The Holocaust claimed the lives of millions of people in Europe.

13.3 Keeping the Home Fires Burning

The war had massive effects for those on the home front, whose lives changed drastically as rationing and shortages became commonplace. Many nations had to mobilize their efforts to keep industry running and materials reaching the troops on the front lines, which brought women into offices and factories in new numbers. The focus on science and technology brought innovations such as radar, early computers, and medical advancements into military applications. Not least was the Manhattan Project's work on atomic energy, which led to the construction of the first nuclear weapons.

13.4 Out of the Ashes

Even before the end of the war, the Allied powers were confident that victory would come. In a series of meetings, Allied leaders arranged the postwar world they envisioned, including by deciding how Germany would be divided. In the Pacific theater of war, the showdown between the United States and Japan concluded with the dropping of the first nuclear bombs, first at Hiroshima and then at Nagasaki. In the aftermath of the conflict, it was clear just how much had been lost. Tens of millions of people had died. Nazi and Japanese war criminals were put on trial. The governments of several countries were in shambles. But rebuilding did begin, in Japan starting with a new constitution and a new focus on demilitarization and human rights.

13.8: Assessments

13.8.1: Review Questions

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Review Questions

1 .
What was the event that caused the Nationalist Chinese (GMD) and the Chinese communists (CCP) to unite to resist Japan?

a. Xian Incident
b. Tanggu Truce
c. Japanese assault on Shanghai
d. Japanese invasion of Mongolia

2 .
What was the territory Hitler wanted from Czechoslovakia?

a. Austrian province
b. Polish Corridor
c. Reichland
d. Sudetenland

3 .
From which port were British and French forces evacuated from France to England?

a. Marseilles
b. Brest
c. Calais
d. Dunkirk

4 .
What was the German invasion of the Soviet Union called?

a. Operation Eastern Blitz
b. Operation Barbarossa
c. Operation Lebensraum
d. Operation Siegfried

5 .
Where did the first summit meeting between Roosevelt and Churchill take place?

a. Washington, DC
b. London
c. Newfoundland
d. Bermuda

6 .
The U.S. military plan for war, called Plan D, laid out what strategy?

a. hold the line
b. take Tokyo
c. Europe First
d. save Russia

7 .
The first U.S. action against Axis forces in the European theater _____.

a. took place in North Africa
b. was the invasion of Sardinia
c. liberated Norway
d. was the invasion of Spain

8 .
What was Japan’s name for its empire?

a. Liberated Asia
b. The New Asia

c. The Unification of the Eight Corners
d. The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere

9 .
What was the German military unit that followed advancing armies into eastern Europe and began eliminating enemies and Jewish people?

a. *Sturmabteilung*
b. *Einsatzgruppen*
c. *Gnadegruppen*
d. *Grausamkeitzug*

10 .
What was the turning point of the war in the Pacific?

a. the attack on Pearl Harbor
b. the Battle of Midway
c. the Battle of Guadalcanal
d. the fighting in the Philippines

11 .
What was significant about the Battle of Stalingrad?

a. It stopped the German advance into the Soviet Union and was the turning point of the war in Europe.
b. It constituted a major victory for the United States and encouraged the public to support the war.
c. It resulted in the loss of most of Britain's Mediterranean fleet.
d. It convinced Britain and the United States to invade Europe and relieve pressure on the Soviet Union.

12 .
British and American women were enlisted for agricultural work during the war as part of each nation's _____.

a. Women's Vegetable Corps
b. Women's Land Army
c. Feminine Farmers
d. Ladies Land Workers

13 .
Hitler issued orders to deal severely with partisan resistance in his _____.

a. Night and Fog Decree
b. Strike Hard Directive
c. Merciless Message
d. Kill All Command

14 .
Who was the scientist mainly responsible for building the Enigma decoding machine?

a. Charles Drew
b. Albert Einstein
c. Robert J. Oppenheimer
d. Alan Turing

15 .
Who was the Japanese American internee who fought the constitutionality of internment during the war and had his conviction overturned thirty years later?

a. Ishita Edwards
b. Fred Korematsu
c. Ishii Shiro
d. Hayashi Tadao

16 .
What was the Manhattan Project focused on?

a. anti-submarine weapons
b. the occupation of postwar Germany

c. the building of an atomic weapon
d. the inclusion of radar in all airplanes

17 .
The Germans made one final attempt to defeat the Western Allies in Europe in what battle?

a. Battle of the Bulge
b. The December Duel
c. The Forest Fight
d. Battle of Verdun

18 .
What did the Yalta Agreement reaffirm Stalin's commitment to do?

a. peacefully disarm the Red Army after the war
b. cooperate in the joint occupation of eastern European countries
c. return to Finland the land it had seized
d. enter the war against Japan three months after the defeat of Germany

19 .
What did the Japanese strategy of *shukketsu* seek to do?

a. outmaneuver Allied forces in quick movements
b. bleed the U.S. forces to dishearten them through casualties
c. punch holes in U.S. defenses and surround U.S. units
d. let U.S. forces pass through Japanese lines and then attack them from the rear

20 .
What was the forced repatriation of Soviet citizens liberated from German captivity by Allied forces called?

a. Operation Giveback
b. Operation Boomerang
c. Operation Keelhaul
d. Operation Homeward Bound

21 .
What were the three goals of the U.S. occupation of Japan?

a. pacification, liberalization, modernization
b. decentralization, deindustrialization, depopulation
c. demilitarization, democratization, recognition of human rights
d. republicanism, restitution, retribution

13.8.2: Check Your Understanding Questions

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Check Your Understanding Questions

1 .
What were the first steps Hitler took to break the Treaty of Versailles?
2 .
What happened between Germany and the Soviet Union that may have made the invasion of Poland inevitable?
3 .
What steps did the Nazis take to eliminate Europe’s Jewish population?
4 .
Why was Mussolini removed from office in 1943?
5 .
What were some of the ways both Allied and Axis nations increased their birth rates during the war?
6 .
How extensive were resistance movements during the war, and how did the Nazis deal with them?
7 .
Do you think President Roosevelt was satisfied with the results of the Yalta Conference? Why or why not?
8 .
How did the political structure of Japan change as a result of the postwar occupation by the United States?

13.8.3: Application and Reflection Questions

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Application and Reflection Questions

1 .
List the actions Japan took to carve out an empire for itself in Asia. How likely is it that the intervention of other nations could have stopped Japan's aggression? Would European nations and the United States have had the right to use military action to do so? Why or why not?

2 .
Why did no country come to the aid of Czechoslovakia when it was threatened by Germany? Explain how and why the western powers were unable to effectively enforce the Treaty of Versailles and prevent German aggression under Hitler.

3 .
How believable were Japan's claims that it was seeking to liberate the nations of Asia from Western colonialists? Explain your answer.

4 .
Should Hitler have been allowed to violate the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and remilitarize the Rhineland? If he had stopped at this point and not invaded other countries or persecuted German Jews, do you think France and Britain would have declared war?

5 .
Did the U.S. policy of neutrality invite the attack on Pearl Harbor? Why or why not? If the United States had been more active in its support for Britain, France, and China, would this have changed the way events progressed?

6 .
Analyze the factors that led to Hitler's decision to invade the Soviet Union.

7 .
Why did the Japanese military risk confrontation and possible war with the United States at the beginning of the 1940s?

8 .
Why would Churchill have preferred a Europe First strategy? Which of the Allied nations had the most to lose in the Pacific, and why?

9 .
How did popular culture like music and movies contribute to the war effort of different countries? Does popular culture still affect people's feelings of patriotism today? If so, how?

10 .
In what ways did women contribute to the war effort in their countries? In what ways did the war affect women's lives in the short term and the long term, both for the better and for the worse?

11 .
Which invention of the World War II period do you think was most important at the time? Which one is most significant today?

12 .
What was President Truman's attitude toward the dropping of the atomic bomb? Had Germany not surrendered before the bomb's development was completed, do you think the United States would have dropped it on German targets? Why or why not?

13 .
What, in your opinion, was the most significant agreement reached at Yalta and at Potsdam? Which likely caused the greatest disagreement about the Big Three? Explain your answer.

14 .
What political, economic, and social changes were imposed upon Japan by the U.S. occupation? Did these changes benefit the average Japanese person? Why or why not? In your opinion, did victory give the United States the right to remake Japanese society? Why or why not?

15 .
Were the terms imposed upon Japan after the war more severe than those imposed upon Germany? Explain your answer.