



LOOKING AHEAD

By the summer of 1938, more and more Americans were getting their news from the radio. Every evening, millions of families gathered around their sets to learn what had happened that day. Often news reports were beamed directly from world capitals. "We take you now to Berlin," a newscaster would say. Then another, more distant voice would crackle through the airwaves.

Such newscasts were proof of how small the world had become. In the summer of 1938, they also revealed how troubled the world was. Europe was on the brink of another war. As World

Adolf Hitler's campaign of hate pulled Germany from poverty to power—at a tremendous cost. Here, he salutes his followers at a 1938 Nazi rally in Nuremberg, Germany.

WORLD

1940

1940

Selective Service Act calls men to military service.

1941

Japan attacks Pearl Harbor, December 7.

U.S. Lend-Lease Bill provides weapons to Great Britain.

United States and Great Britain declare war on Japan.

1944

Allies invade German-occupied France, June 6.

War I had shown, a conflict in Europe could threaten peace around the world.

Beginning of War

In 1919, the Treaty of Versailles forced Germany to give up large amounts of territory, and to pay heavy damages for its role in World War I. The treaty also required Germany to accept the blame for starting the war.

Four years later, the German economy collapsed. Many people could not find work. German money became worthless. When their economy collapsed again in the 1930s, Germans felt angry and helpless. Some believed that their government was too weak to deal with Germany's problems. Many people began to look for extreme answers. Some joined a party led by Adolf Hitler. This party was the National Socialist, or Nazi, party.

Hitler's Rise to Power

Hitler and the Nazis rose to power by appealing to German nationalism. They also preyed upon people's prejudices. They preached hatred, especially of Jewish people. They blamed the Jews for Germany's defeat in World War I.

The Nazis came to power in 1933. Hitler was named head of the German government, and soon made himself dictator of Germany. He banned all other political parties. Then he began jailing and



World War II was one of the most destructive wars in history. Here is Winston Churchill (1874–1965) surveying the aftermath of a bombing in London.

killing those who disagreed with him.

Hitler made it his special goal to wipe out all Jewish influence in Germany. He took away the citizenship of German Jews. But this was only the beginning. Between 1941 and 1945, he directed one of the most terrible criminal periods in human history. Under his leadership, the Nazis murdered six million European Jews, and six million other people, mostly Poles and Soviets.

As Hitler became more powerful, he began to look beyond Germany's borders. In one fanatic speech after

another, he called for a German empire that would rule the entire world. At the same time, he began rearming Germany.

In 1936, German forces marched into the Rhineland, the area of western Germany bordering France. The Treaty of Versailles had ordered that this area be **demilitarized** (kept free of armed forces). This meant that, although the land was German territory, there could be no German troops there. In March of 1938, Hitler sent German troops to take over German-speaking Austria. Britain, France, and the Soviet Union protested but took no action.

In September 1938, Hitler announced his plan to seize the Sudetenland (soo-DAY-ten-land), a western part of Czechoslovakia that contained a large German-speaking population. Hitler would go through with this plan, he said, unless the area was given to him peacefully. Despite protests from the Czechoslovakian government, leaders from

Britain and France reluctantly gave in. They let Hitler take this land. They hoped that this would prevent war.

Around the World

Germany was not the only country in the 1930s run by a power-hungry dictator. The Italian fascist (one who believes in rigid, militaristic, one-party dictatorship) leader Benito Mussolini also preached about greatness for his people. He marched armies into Ethiopia in Africa, and Albania in Eastern Europe.

In Asia, meanwhile, military leaders had become a powerful force in Japanese life. In 1931, Japanese troops seized the Chinese province of Manchuria. Fighting between China and Japan continued throughout the 1930s. Full-scale war be-

tween the two countries broke out in 1937.

These events worried many Americans. Yet they were in no mood to fight another war. Many of them now believed that the United States had been drawn into World War I by mistake. They thought that the United States should isolate itself—that is, stay clear of alliances with foreign governments.

European War

The war in Europe began on September 1, 1939. On that day, without warning, Nazi Germany attacked Poland. Germany wanted to have more territories in the East. German dive bombers and tanks quickly smashed all Polish opposition. The Nazis overwhelmed the Poles with a new form of warfare. They called it

The European Theater in World War II



Which countries came under Axis control during World War II? From what direction(s) did the Allies invade Axis-occupied Europe?

blitzkrieg, or "lightning war."

Germany, Italy, and Japan formed a war partnership known as the **Axis**. In 1940 and 1941, the Axis grew in strength. Germany took control of much of Europe. It also sent armies to North Africa. Japan was on the march in the Pacific.

In June 1941, three million German troops attacked the Soviet Union. Soviet armies were caught off guard. By early fall, the Soviets had lost 2,500,000 troops. German forces advanced along a front more than 1000 miles long. In the North, they moved toward Leningrad. In the South, they pushed into the Ukraine. Their principal goal was the capture of Moscow, the Soviet capital. However, a brutal winter set in and prevented their

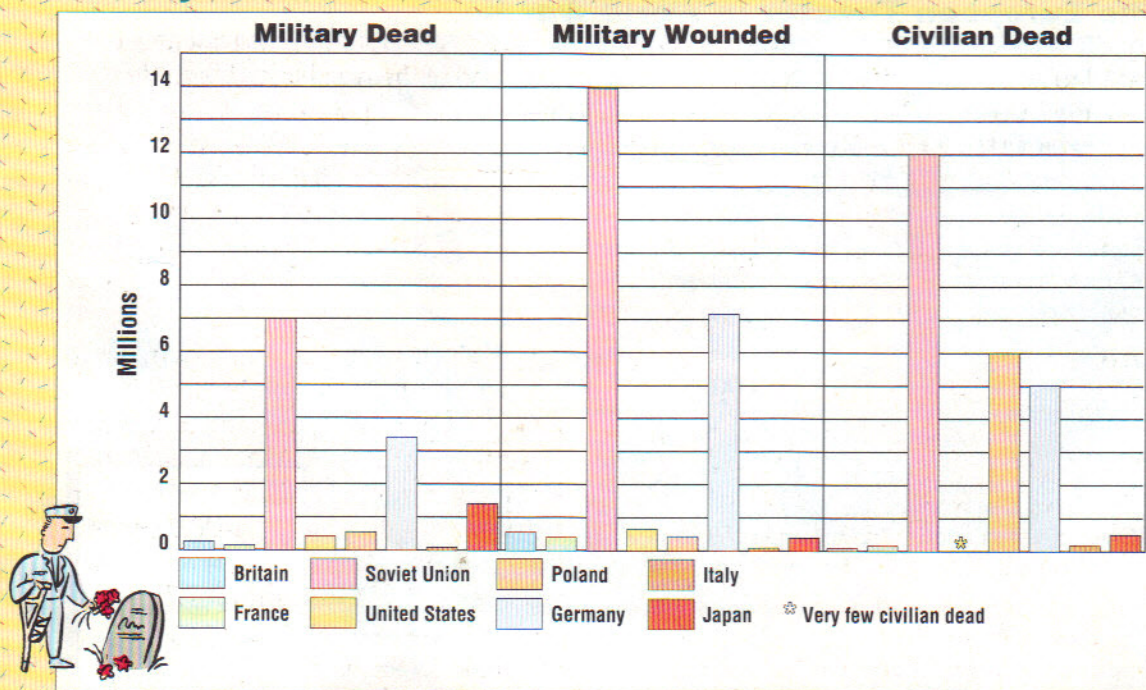
taking Moscow. The German advance stopped, and the Soviets counterattacked.

In the spring of 1942, the Germans resumed their offensive. In the South, they headed for Stalingrad. Soviet forces surrounded the German army, which was trying to capture the city, and forced it to surrender.

The German defeat at Stalingrad was a great turning point in World War II. The tide of Nazi conquest began to recede. From then until the end of the war, Nazi Germany would be on the defensive.

The Soviet Union, under the leadership of Joseph Stalin, joined Britain, Canada, Australia, France, and other nations in fighting Germany. These nations became known as the **Allies**. By 1941, Britain had

Military and Civilian Casualties in World War II



What nation suffered the most civilian deaths during World War II? The most military deaths? Why were there so few American civilian deaths? How might the number of Soviet casualties in World War II have affected their attitude towards war? How might American attitudes towards war be different?

a new prime minister, Winston Churchill, who led Britain through its darkest years in fighting Nazi Germany. Some Americans believed the United States should join the Allies. Others said the United States should not get involved in other countries' wars.

Pearl Harbor

On December 7, 1941, Japan forced the U.S. into action. Japanese war planes attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The next day, the United States declared war on Japan. Three days later, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States.

American forces were soon fighting a war on three continents. At first, the United States suffered military setbacks. In the South Pacific, Japan had taken over most of the important islands and coastal regions. In 1942, however, American ships and planes reversed Japan's momentum.

American forces landed in North Africa late in 1942. They joined the British in defeating Germany's Afrika Korps. Meanwhile, in Eastern Europe, the Soviets suffered huge losses, but finally stopped Hitler's armies.

In 1943, Allied troops invaded Italy and forced it to surrender. The next year, other Allied forces crossed the English Channel from Britain into Nazi-held France. The invasion hastened the end for the Nazis. It took almost a year more of fighting, but finally the Allies defeated the Nazis, and Hitler was dead.

Results of War

On the home front, the war affected most Americans. Almost everyone knew someone fighting in the war. Most of the economy shifted toward the war

effort. Many consumer goods, such as sugar, coffee, gas, and tires, became strictly limited.

Many new jobs were created as a result of the war. In addition, millions of women went to work in these new war-related industries.

One of the saddest effects of the war on the home front was the nation's treatment of Japanese Americans. Due to the unfounded fear that people of Japanese descent might try to help Japan win the war, many Japanese Americans were forcibly moved to military camps. Called **relocation centers**, these centers in isolated areas of the West were nothing more than prison camps. They were surrounded by barbed wire and watchtowers. More than 110,000 people were rounded up, about 70,000 of them U.S. citizens.

Franklin D. Roosevelt did not live to see the end of the war. He had been the American member of the Allied leaders known as the Big Three that also included Churchill and Stalin. FDR died before the Allies defeated the Axis. The Big Three had met throughout the war years to plan strategy against the Axis. When FDR died suddenly in April of 1945, Vice-President Harry S. Truman followed him as president.

Truman decided to use the atomic bomb against Japan. The bomb ended the war in the Pacific, but it began a new, deadly era in human history.

At war's end, most of the Allies were exhausted, and the Axis powers were in ruins. Some 45 million people had died. Among them were 400,000 Americans. The United States had become the most powerful nation in the world. However, the United States could no longer think of returning to its isolated past.