

Chapter 35

America in World War II

1941-1945

Prior to the bombing at Pearl Harbor, the U.S. had agreed to the **ABC-1 agreement** with the British. It stated that if the U.S. entered the war, then it would focus its efforts *first* on Germany. After Germany was defeated, the Allies would focus on Japan.

The Allies Trade Space for Time

For the U.S., WWII was far more complex than WWI. It had to feed, clothe, and transport its forces all over the world.

The Shock of War

National unity during World War II sped up the assimilation of immigrants into American society. Unlike in WWI, there was **almost** no government witch-hunting of minority groups in WWII. The exception to this was when 110,000 **Japanese-Americans** on the Pacific Coast forced into **concentration camps**. This was authorized by **Executive Order No. 9066**. Washington feared that they might act as saboteurs for Japan in case of invasion.

The Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the concentration camps in ***Korematsu v. U.S. (1944)***. The conservative Congress cancelled many of the New Deal programs. President Roosevelt declared in **1943** that the New Deal reform era was over.

Building the War Machine

The Great Depression was completely ended with the inrush of military orders. Under the **War Production Board (WPB)**, which oversaw U.S. war production, American factories produced an enormous amount of weaponry, such as guns and planes. The WPB stopped the manufacture of nonessential items, such as passenger cars.

The government imposed a national speed limit and gasoline rationing after America's supply of natural **rubber** from British Malaysia and the Dutch East Indies was broken.

A scarcity of consumer goods led to sharp **inflation** in **1942**. The **Office of Price Administration (OPA)** eventually brought the down prices and curbed inflation.

The **War Labor Board (WLB)** imposed ceilings on wage increases. Unhappy with the wage ceilings, some labor unions called their members to go on strike. In June 1943, Congress passed the **Smith-Connally Anti-Strike Act**. It authorized the federal government to operate industries that were under strike, like coal mines and railroads.

Manpower and Womanpower

Even with some industrial and agricultural workers being exempt from the draft, the draft left the nation's farms and factories short of personnel. In **1942**, thousands of Mexican agricultural workers, called **braceros**, were brought to America to harvest the farms of the West.

The armed services enlisted nearly 216,000 **women** in WWII. Best known were the **WAACs** (army), **WAVES** (navy), and **SPARs** (Coast Guard). Although millions of women took jobs in factories, most women continued in their traditional household roles.

Wartime Migrations

The war caused Americans to move about the country. Many blacks left the South to work in the North, and this led to racial tensions in the North. In response to demands for equal opportunities for blacks,

Roosevelt created the **Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC)** to monitor compliance with his executive order that forbade discrimination in defense industries.

During WWII, FDR gave the South a disproportionate share of defense contracts to help it become more economically developed.

In **1944**, the invention of the **mechanical cotton picker** made the Cotton South's need for cheap labor disappear. As a result of this, millions of blacks moved north.

Thousands of **Native Americans** served in the armed forces. Comanches in Europe and Navajos in the Pacific made valuable contributions as "**code talkers**," in which they transmitted radio messages in their native languages (incomprehensible to the Axis powers).

Holding the Home Front

America was not as ill-affected by the war as the rest of the world. The war substantially helped the American economy, and by the end of the war, the nation's GNP and citizens' disposable incomes had significantly risen.

The Federal government became much more involved in individual citizens' lives during WWII, and this set the stage for the future role of government.

The **national debt** rose from \$49 billion to \$259 billion from 1941-1945. Most of the war costs were borrowed.

The Rising Sun in the Pacific

Simultaneously with the assault on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese launched attacks on various Far Eastern strongholds, including the American outposts of **Guam**, **Wake**, and the Philippines.

In the **Philippines**, American forces, led by General MacArthur, held out against the invading Japanese force for 5 months. The American troops eventually surrendered on **April 9, 1942**. They were treated with vicious cruelty in the 80-mile Bataan Death March to prisoner-of-war camps.

The island fortress of **Corregidor** held out until it surrendered on **May 6, 1942**, giving the Japanese complete control of the Philippines.

Japan's High Tide at Midway

In **May 1942**, a crucial naval battle was fought in the **Coral Sea** between an American carrier task force, with Australian support, and a Japanese carrier task force. Although it suffered losses, the U.S. stopped the Japanese advancement. This was the first battle in which all the fighting was done by carrier-based aircraft.

On **June 3-6, 1942**, a naval battle was fought near **Midway**. If the Japanese took Midway, they would be able to directly launch attacks against Pearl Harbor. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz directed a smaller carrier force, under Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, against the powerful invading Japanese fleet. The Japanese retreated after losing 4 carriers. Midway was a **turning point** in the Pacific war. Combined with the Battle of Coral Sea, the U.S. success at Midway halted the Japanese.

American Leapfrogging Toward Tokyo

From August 1942 to February 1943, Americans fought for control of **Guadalcanal Island** in an attempt to protect the shipping lanes from America to Australia through the Southwest Pacific. The Japanese troops evacuated Guadalcanal in **February 1943**. The casualty ratio was more than 10:1 (Japanese:American).

The U.S. Navy "**leapfrogged**" several Japanese-held islands in the Pacific. Japanese soldiers were known to fight until every last man was dead. So, rather than fighting for every island, the strategy was to take nearby islands and then lay siege to the surrounded islands. Admiral Chester Nimitz successfully coordinated naval, air, and ground assaults in the Pacific.

Saipan Island, Tinian Island, and the major islands of the **Marianas** fell to U.S. attackers in July and August 1944. From the Marianas, the United States' new B-29 superbombers were able to carry out round-trip bombing raids on Japan's home islands.

The Allied Halting of Hitler

The **Battle of the Atlantic** was fought between the German's modern fleet of submarine **U-Boats** and **Allied shipping**, which was protected by Allied navies. The introduction of **air patrols** and **radar** eventually helped the Allies win the Battle of the Atlantic.

The turning point in the land-air war against Hitler came in late 1942. At the Battle of **El Alamein** in October 1942, British general Bernard Montgomery defeated the Germans, who were led by Marshal Erwin Rommel.

In September 1942, the Soviets repelled Hitler's attack on **Stalingrad**, capturing thousands of German soldiers. (This was the **turning point** in the war in the Soviet Union.)

A Second Front from North Africa to Rome

Many Americans, including President Roosevelt, wanted to begin a diversionary invasion of France in 1942 or 1943. They feared that the Soviets, who were unable to hold out forever against Germany, might make a separate peace deal as they had in 1918 and leave the Western Allies to face Germany alone. British military planners preferred to attack Hitler through the "soft underbelly" of the Mediterranean. The Americans eventually agreed.

American general, Dwight D. Eisenhower led an assault on French-held North Africa in November 1942. The invasion was the mightiest waterborne effort up to that time in history. The German-Italy army surrendered in **Tunisia** in May 1943.

At **Casablanca**, President Roosevelt met with Winston Churchill in **January 1943**. The two agreed to step up the war in the Pacific, invade Sicily, increase pressure on Italy, and insist upon "**unconditional surrender**" of the enemy.

Allied forces captured **Sicily** in August 1943, and in **September 1943, Italy surrendered** unconditionally and Mussolini was overthrown. Although Italy surrendered, the Germans continued to fight for control of Italy. **Rome** was taken on June 4, 1944. On **May 2, 1945** (five days before Germany surrendered), thousands of Axis troops in Italy surrendered and became prisoners of war.

The Allies' battles in Italy diverted some German troops away from the Soviet and French fronts, but it delayed the Allied invasion of Normandy by several months. This gave the Soviets more time to take territory in Eastern Europe.

D-Day: June 6, 1944

President Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Stalin met in **Tehran**, Iran from **November 28th to December 1st** to coordinate a second front. One of the most important achievements of the meeting was the agreement on broad plans, especially those for launching Soviet attacks on Germany from the east simultaneously with the Allied assault from the west.

Because the United States provided the most Allied troops for the invasion of Europe, American General Eisenhower was given command.

French Normandy was chosen for the point for invasion because it was less heavily defended than other parts of the European coast. On **D-Day, June 6, 1944**, the invasion operation took place. The Allies broke through German beach defenses and General George S. Patton led armored divisions across France. **Paris** was **liberated** in **August 1944**.

The first important German city to fall to the Allies was **Aachen** in October 1944.

FDR: The Fourth-Termite of 1944

For the **election of 1944**, the Republicans nominated Thomas E. Dewey for the presidency and isolationist Senator, John W. Bricker for the vice presidency. The Democrats nominated Roosevelt for the presidency and Senator Harry S Truman for the vice presidency.

Roosevelt Defeats Dewey

Roosevelt won a sweeping majority of the votes in the Electoral College and was **reelected**. He won primarily because the war was going well. Foreign policy was a decisive factor with many voters, who concluded that Roosevelt's experience was needed for making a future organization for world peace.

The Last Days of Hitler

On **December 16, 1944**, Hitler threw all of his forces against the thinly held American lines in the **Ardenes Forest**. His objective was take the Belgian port of Antwerp, which was key to the Allied supply operation. In the **Battle of the Bulge**, the Allies were driven back, creating a deep "bulge" in the Allied front. The 10-day German push was stopped by the 101st Airborne Division, which was led by Brigadier General A. C. McAuliffe.

In **April 1945**, General Eisenhower's troops continued into Germany and discovered the **concentration camps** where the Nazis had murdered over 6 million Jews. All of the atrocities of the Holocaust were not discovered until the war ended.

The Soviets captured **Berlin** in **April 1945**.

Hitler committed suicide on **April 30, 1945**.

On **April 12, 1945**, President Roosevelt died suddenly from a brain hemorrhage. Harry S Truman took over the presidency.

On **May 7, 1945**, the German government surrendered unconditionally. **May 8** was proclaimed **V-E (Victory in Europe) Day**.

Japan Dies Hard

Submarines and bombers inflicted severe damage on Japan.

Allied firebombings of Tokyo killed over 83,000 people, comparable to number of people killed by each atomic bomb.

General MacArthur returned to the **Philippines** with 600 ships and 250,000 troops. In **Leyte Gulf**, Japan lost a series of 3 battles took place from **October 23-26, 1944**; this marked the end of Japan's sea power. MacArthur then landed on the main Philippine island of Luzon in January 1945, capturing **Manila** in March 1945.

Iwo Jima, needed as an airport for damaged American bombers returning from Japan, was captured in March 1945. The Americans captured the island of **Okinawa** after fighting from April to June of 1945. The American navy sustained heavy losses from the "**kamikaze**" (suicide) Japanese pilots.

The Atomic Bombs

By the middle of 1945, Japan was still unwilling to surrender *unconditionally*.

At the **Potsdam conference** in **July 1945**, President Truman met with Stalin and the British leader. They issued an ultimatum to Japan: surrender or be destroyed.

America's **Manhattan Project** developed the atomic bomb. Germany was the initial intended target for the atomic bomb while it was being developed.

On July 16, 1945, the first atomic bomb was detonated as a test. With the Japanese still refusing to surrender, an **atomic bomb** was dropped on **Hiroshima** on **August 6, 1945**, killing 180,000 people. On August 8, Stalin invaded the Japanese defenses of Manchuria and Korea. After the Japanese still

refused to surrender, a second **atomic bomb** was dropped on **Nagasaki** on **August 9**, killing 80,000 people.

The U.S. would have had a third atomic bomb ready by August 19 and a fourth bomb ready by September 1945.

On August 10, 1945, Tokyo surrendered under the condition that emperor Hirohito be allowed to keep his title as emperor. The Allies accepted this condition on **August 14, 1945**. The formal end to the war came on **September 2, 1945**, which was proclaimed as **V-J (Victory in Japan) Day**.

The Allies Triumphant

American forces suffered 1 million casualties in WWII, while the **Soviet Union** suffered nearly **25 million**. After the war, much of the world was destroyed while America was left virtually untouched.

The nation was better prepared for the war than any other nation because it had begun to prepare about a year and a half before the war officially began (for America).