

CHAPTER 27

Fighting the Good Fight in World War II, 1941-1945

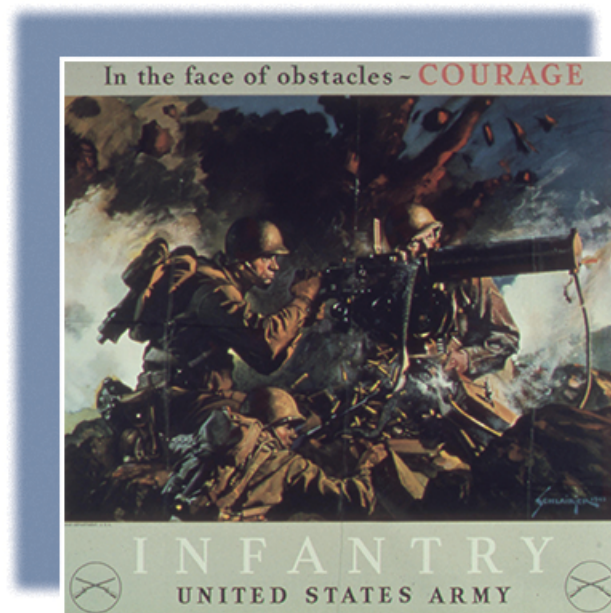


Figure 27.1 During World War II, American propaganda was used to drum up patriotism and support for the war effort. This poster shows the grit and determination of infantrymen in the face of enemy fire.

Chapter Outline

- 27.1 The Origins of War: Europe, Asia, and the United States
- 27.2 The Home Front
- 27.3 Victory in the European Theater
- 27.4 The Pacific Theater and the Atomic Bomb

Introduction

World War II awakened the sleeping giant of the United States from the lingering effects of the Great Depression. Although the country had not entirely disengaged itself from foreign affairs following World War I, it had remained largely divorced from events occurring in Europe until the late 1930s. World War II forced the United States to involve itself once again in European affairs. It also helped to relieve the unemployment of the 1930s and stir industrial growth. The propaganda poster above (**Figure 27.1**) was part of a concerted effort to get Americans to see themselves as citizens of a strong, unified country, dedicated to the protection of freedom and democracy. However, the war that unified many Americans also brought to the fore many of the nation's racial and ethnic divisions, both on the frontlines—where military units, such as the one depicted in this poster, were segregated by race—and on the home front. Yet, the war also created new opportunities for ethnic minorities and women, which, in postwar America, would contribute to their demand for greater rights.

27.1 The Origins of War: Europe, Asia, and the United States

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

- Explain the factors in Europe that gave rise to Fascism and Nazism
- Discuss the events in Europe and Asia that led to the start of the war
- Identify the early steps taken by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to increase American aid to nations fighting totalitarianism while maintaining neutrality

The years between the First and Second World Wars were politically and economically tumultuous for the United States and especially for the world. The Russian Revolution of 1917, Germany's defeat in World War I, and the subsequent Treaty of Versailles had broken up the Austro-Hungarian, German, and Russian empires and significantly redrew the map of Europe. President Woodrow Wilson had wished to make World War I the "war to end all wars" and hoped that his new paradigm of "collective security" in international relations, as actualized through the League of Nations, would limit power struggles among the nations of the world. However, during the next two decades, America's attention turned away from global politics and toward its own needs. At the same time, much of the world was dealing with economic and political crises, and different types of totalitarian regimes began to take hold in Europe. In Asia, an ascendant Japan began to expand its borders. Although the United States remained focused on the economic challenges of the Great Depression as World War II approached, ultimately it became clear that American involvement in the fight against Nazi Germany and Japan was in the nation's interest.

ISOLATION

While during the 1920s and 1930s there were Americans who favored active engagement in Europe, most Americans, including many prominent politicians, were leery of getting too involved in European affairs or accepting commitments to other nations that might restrict America's ability to act independently, keeping with the isolationist tradition. Although the United States continued to intervene in the affairs of countries in the Western Hemisphere during this period, the general mood in America was to avoid

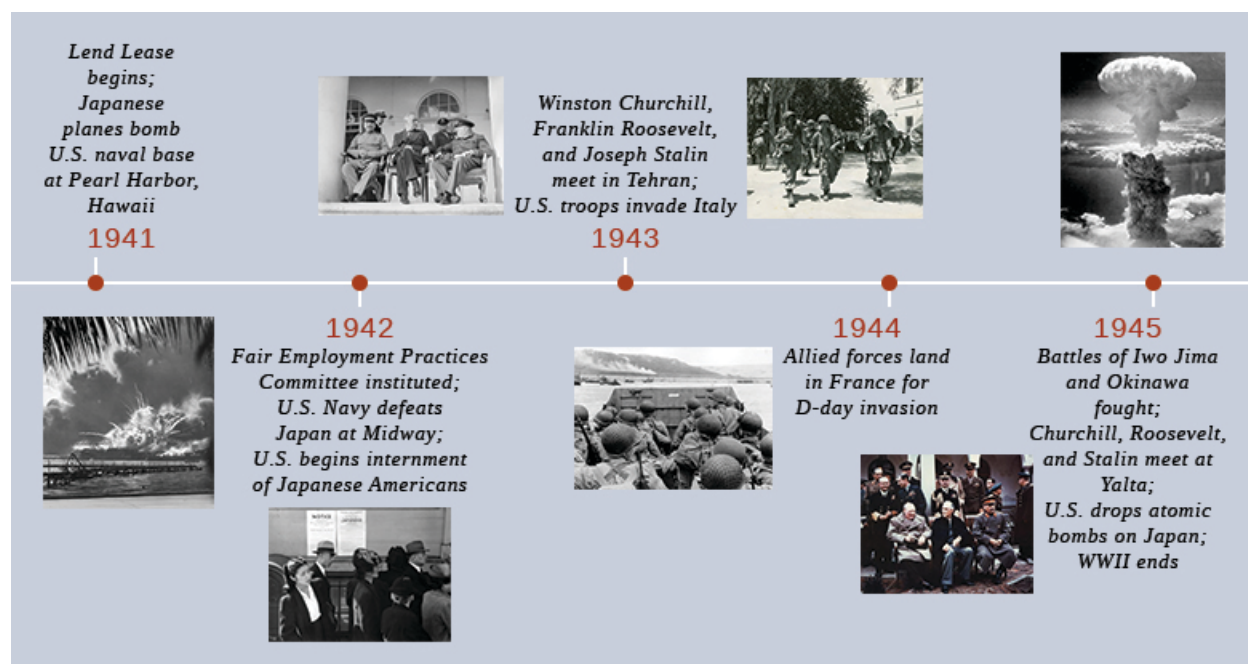


Figure 27.2

becoming involved in any crises that might lead the nation into another global conflict.

Despite its largely noninterventionist foreign policy, the United States did nevertheless take steps to try to lessen the chances of war and cut its defense spending at the same time. President Warren G. Harding's administration participated in the Washington Naval Conference of 1921–1922, which reduced the size of the navies of the nine signatory nations. In addition, the Four Power Treaty, signed by the United States, Great Britain, France, and Japan in 1921, committed the signatories to eschewing any territorial expansion in Asia. In 1928, the United States and fourteen other nations signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact, declaring war an international crime. Despite hopes that such agreements would lead to a more peaceful world—far more nations signed on to the agreement in later years—they failed because none of them committed any of the nations to take action in the event of treaty violations.

THE MARCH TOWARD WAR

While the United States focused on domestic issues, economic depression and political instability were growing in Europe. During the 1920s, the international financial system was propped up largely by American loans to foreign countries. The crash of 1929, when the U.S. stock market plummeted and American capital dried up, set in motion a series of financial chain reactions that contributed significantly to a global downward economic spiral. Around the world, industrialized economies faced significant problems of economic depression and worker unemployment.

Totalitarianism in Europe

Many European countries had been suffering even before the Great Depression began. A postwar recession and the continuation of wartime inflation had hurt many economies, as did a decrease in agricultural prices, which made it harder for farmers to buy manufactured goods or pay off loans to banks. In such an unstable environment, Benito Mussolini capitalized on the frustrations of the Italian people who felt betrayed by the Versailles Treaty. In 1919, Mussolini created the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* (Italian Combat Squadron). The organization's main tenets of **Fascism** called for a totalitarian form of government and a heightened focus on national unity, militarism, social Darwinism, and loyalty to the state. With the support of major Italian industrialists and the king, who saw Fascism as a bulwark against growing Socialist and Communist movements, Mussolini became prime minister in 1922. Between 1925 and 1927, Mussolini transformed the nation into a single party state and removed all restraints on his power.

In Germany, a similar pattern led to the rise of the totalitarian National Socialist Party. Political fragmentation through the 1920s accentuated the severe economic problems facing the country. As a result, the German Communist Party began to grow in strength, frightening many wealthy and middle-class Germans. In addition, the terms of the Treaty of Versailles had given rise to a deep-seated resentment of the victorious Allies. It was in such an environment that Adolf Hitler's anti-Communist National Socialist Party—the Nazis—was born.

The Nazis gained numerous followers during the Great Depression, which hurt Germany tremendously, plunging it further into economic crisis. By 1932, nearly 30 percent of the German labor force was unemployed. Not surprisingly, the political mood was angry and sullen. Hitler, a World War I veteran, promised to return Germany to greatness. By the beginning of 1933, the Nazis had become the largest party in the German legislature. Germany's president, Paul von Hindenburg, at the urging of large industrialists who feared a Communist uprising, appointed Hitler to the position of chancellor in January 1933. In the elections that took place in early March 1933, the Nazis gained the political power to pass the Enabling Act later that same month, which gave Hitler the power to make all laws for the next four years. Hitler thus effectively became the dictator of Germany and remained so long after the four-year term passed. Like Italy, Germany had become a one-party totalitarian state (**Figure 27.3**). Nazi Germany was an anti-Semitic nation, and in 1935, the Nuremberg Laws deprived Jews, whom Hitler blamed for Germany's downfall, of German citizenship and the rights thereof.

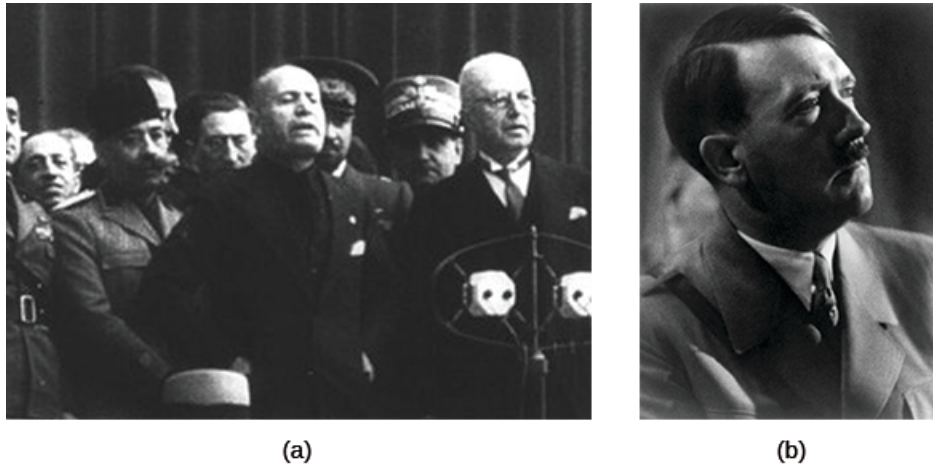


Figure 27.3 Italian Fascists under the dictatorial leadership of Benito Mussolini (a, center) and German National Socialist Party leader and dictator Adolf Hitler (b) systematically dismantled democratic institutions and pushed military buildups, racial supremacy, and an aggressive nationalism in the 1920s and early 1930s.

Once in power, Hitler began to rebuild German military might. He commenced his program by withdrawing Germany from the League of Nations in October 1933. In 1936, in accordance with his promise to restore German greatness, Hitler dispatched military units into the Rhineland, on the border with France, which was an act contrary to the provisions of the Versailles Treaty. In March 1938, claiming that he sought only to reunite ethnic Germans within the borders of one country, Hitler invaded Austria. At a conference in Munich later that year, Great Britain's prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, and France's prime minister, Édouard Daladier, agreed to the partial dismemberment of Czechoslovakia and the occupation of the Sudetenland (a region with a sizable German population) by German troops (**Figure 27.4**). This Munich Pact offered a policy of **appeasement**, in the hope that German expansionist appetites could be satisfied without war. But not long after the agreement, Germany occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia as well.



Figure 27.4 Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain arrives home in England bearing the Munich Pact agreement. The jubilant Chamberlain proclaimed that the agreement meant “peace in our time.”

In the Soviet Union, Premier Joseph Stalin, observing Hitler's actions and listening to his public pronouncements, realized that Poland, part of which had once belonged to Germany and was home to people of German ancestry, was most likely next. Although fiercely opposed to Hitler, Stalin, sobered by the French and British betrayal of Czechoslovakia and unprepared for a major war, decided the best way to protect the Soviet Union, and gain additional territory, was to come to some accommodation with

the German dictator. In August 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union essentially agreed to divide Poland between them and not make war upon one another.

Japan

Militaristic politicians also took control of Japan in the 1930s. The Japanese had worked assiduously for decades to modernize, build their strength, and become a prosperous, respected nation. The sentiment in Japan was decidedly pro-capitalist, and the Japanese militarists were fiercely supportive of a capitalist economy. They viewed with great concern the rise of Communism in the Soviet Union and in particular China, where the issue was fueling a civil war, and feared that the Soviet Union would make inroads in Asia by assisting China's Communists. The Japanese militarists thus found a common ideological enemy with Fascism and National Socialism, which had based their rise to power on anti-Communist sentiments. In 1936, Japan and Germany signed the Anti-Comintern Pact, pledging mutual assistance in defending themselves against the Comintern, the international agency created by the Soviet Union to promote worldwide Communist revolution. In 1937, Italy joined the pact, essentially creating the foundation of what became the military alliance of the Axis powers.

Like its European allies, Japan was intent upon creating an empire for itself. In 1931, it created a new nation, a puppet state called Manchukuo, which had been cobbled together from the three northernmost provinces of China. Although the League of Nations formally protested Japan's seizure of Chinese territory in 1931 and 1932, it did nothing else. In 1937, a clash between Japanese and Chinese troops, known as the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, led to a full-scale invasion of China by the Japanese. By the end of the year, the Chinese had suffered some serious defeats. In Nanjing, then called Nanking by Westerners, Japanese soldiers systematically raped Chinese women and massacred hundreds of thousands of civilians, leading to international outcry. Public sentiment against Japan in the United States reached new heights. Members of Protestant churches that were involved in missionary work in China were particularly outraged, as were Chinese Americans. A troop of Chinese American Boy Scouts in New York City's Chinatown defied Boy Scout policy and marched in protest against Japanese aggression.

FROM NEUTRALITY TO ENGAGEMENT

President Franklin Roosevelt was aware of the challenges facing the targets of Nazi aggression in Europe and Japanese aggression in Asia. Although he hoped to offer U.S. support, Congress's commitment to nonintervention was difficult to overcome. Such a policy in regards to Europe was strongly encouraged by Senator Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota. Nye claimed that the United States had been tricked into participating in World War I by a group of industrialists and bankers who sought to gain from the country's participation in the war. The United States, Nye urged, should not be drawn again into an international dispute over matters that did not concern it. His sentiments were shared by other noninterventionists in Congress (**Figure 27.5**).



Figure 27.5 This protest sign shows the unwillingness of many Americans to become involved in a foreign war. A reluctance to intervene in events outside of the Western Hemisphere had characterized American foreign policy since the administration of George Washington. World War I had been an exception that many American politicians regretted making.

Roosevelt's willingness to accede to the demands of the noninterventionists led him even to refuse assistance to those fleeing Nazi Germany. Although Roosevelt was aware of Nazi persecution of the Jews, he did little to aid them. In a symbolic act of support, he withdrew the American ambassador to Germany in 1938. He did not press for a relaxation of immigration quotas that would have allowed more refugees to enter the country, however. In 1939, he refused to support a bill that would have admitted twenty thousand Jewish refugee children to the United States. Again in 1939, when German refugees aboard the SS *St. Louis*, most of them Jews, were refused permission to land in Cuba and turned to the United States for help, the U.S. State Department informed them that immigration quotas for Germany had already been filled. Once again, Roosevelt did not intervene, because he feared that nativists in Congress might smear him as a friend of Jews.

To ensure that the United States did not get drawn into another war, Congress passed a series of Neutrality Acts in the second half of the 1930s. The Neutrality Act of 1935 banned the sale of armaments to warring nations. The following year, another Neutrality Act prohibited loaning money to belligerent countries. The last piece of legislation, the Neutrality Act of 1937, forbade the transportation of weapons or passengers to belligerent nations on board American ships and also prohibited American citizens from traveling on board the ships of nations at war.

Once all-out war began between Japan and China in 1937, Roosevelt sought ways to help the Chinese that did not violate U.S. law. Since Japan did not formally declare war on China, a state of belligerency did not technically exist. Therefore, under the terms of the Neutrality Acts, America was not prevented from transporting goods to China. In 1940, the president of China, Chiang Kai-shek, was able to prevail upon Roosevelt to ship to China one hundred P-40 fighter planes and to allow American volunteers, who technically became members of the Chinese Air Force, to fly them.

War Begins in Europe

In 1938, the agreement reached at the Munich Conference failed to satisfy Hitler—in fact, the refusal of Britain and France to go to war over the issue infuriated the German dictator. In May of the next year, Germany and Italy formalized their military alliance with the “Pact of Steel.” On September 1, 1939, Hitler unleashed his Blitzkrieg, or “lightning war,” against Poland, using swift, surprise attacks combining infantry, tanks, and aircraft to quickly overwhelm the enemy. Britain and France had already learned from Munich that Hitler could not be trusted and that his territorial demands were insatiable. On September 3, 1939, they declared war on Germany, and the European phase of World War II began. Responding to the German invasion of Poland, Roosevelt worked with Congress to alter the Neutrality Laws to permit a policy of “Cash and Carry” in munitions for Britain and France. The legislation, passed and signed by

Roosevelt in November 1939, permitted belligerents to purchase war **materiel** if they could pay cash for it and arrange for its transportation on board their own ships.

When the Germans commenced their spring offensive in 1940, they defeated France in six weeks with a highly mobile and quick invasion of France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. In the Far East, Japan took advantage of France's surrender to Germany to occupy French Indochina. In response, beginning with the Export Control Act in July 1940, the United States began to embargo the shipment of various materials to Japan, starting first with aviation gasoline and machine tools, and proceeding to scrap iron and steel.

The Atlantic Charter

Following the surrender of France, the Battle of Britain began, as Germany proceeded to try to bomb England into submission. As the battle raged in the skies over Great Britain throughout the summer and autumn of 1940 (**Figure 27.6**), Roosevelt became increasingly concerned over England's ability to hold out against the German juggernaut. In June 1941, Hitler broke the nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union that had given him the backing to ravage Poland and marched his armies deep into Soviet territory, where they would kill Red Army regulars and civilians by the millions until their advances were stalled and ultimately reversed by the devastating battle of Stalingrad, which took place from August 23, 1942 until February 2, 1943 when, surrounded and out of ammunition, the German 6th army surrendered.

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In August 1941, Roosevelt met with the British prime minister, Winston Churchill, off the coast of Newfoundland, Canada. At this meeting, the two leaders drafted the Atlantic Charter, the blueprint of Anglo-American cooperation during World War II. The charter stated that the United States and Britain sought no territory from the conflict. It proclaimed that citizens of all countries should be given the right of self-determination, self-government should be restored in places where it had been eliminated, and trade barriers should be lowered. Further, the charter mandated freedom of the seas, renounced the use of force to settle international disputes, and called for postwar disarmament.



Figure 27.6 London and other major British cities suffered extensive damaged from the bombing raids of the Battle of Britain. Over one million London houses were destroyed or damaged during “The Blitz” and almost twenty thousand Londoners were killed.

In March 1941, concerns over Britain’s ability to defend itself also influenced Congress to authorize a policy of Lend Lease, a practice by which the United States could sell, lease, or transfer armaments to any nation deemed important to the defense of the United States. Lend Lease effectively ended the policy of nonintervention and dissolved America’s pretense of being a neutral nation. The program ran from 1941 to 1945, and distributed some \$45 billion worth of weaponry and supplies to Britain, the Soviet Union, China, and other allies.

A Date Which Will Live in Infamy

By the second half of 1941, Japan was feeling the pressure of the American embargo. As it could no longer buy strategic material from the United States, the Japanese were determined to obtain a sufficient supply of oil by taking control of the Dutch East Indies. However, they realized that such an action might increase the possibility of American intervention, since the Philippines, a U.S. territory, lay on the direct route that oil tankers would have to take to reach Japan from Indonesia. Japanese leaders thus attempted to secure a diplomatic solution by negotiating with the United States while also authorizing the navy to plan for war. The Japanese government also decided that if no peaceful resolution could be reached by the end of November 1941, then the nation would have to go to war against the United States.

The American final counterproposal to various offers by Japan was for the Japanese to completely withdraw, without any conditions, from China and enter into nonaggression pacts with all the Pacific powers. Japan found that proposal unacceptable but delayed its rejection for as long as possible. Then, at 7:48 a.m. on Sunday, December 7, the Japanese attacked the U.S. Pacific fleet at anchor in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii (**Figure 27.7**). They launched two waves of attacks from six aircraft carriers that had snuck into the central Pacific without being detected. The attacks brought some 353 fighters, bombers, and torpedo bombers down on the unprepared fleet. The Japanese hit all eight battleships in the harbor and sank four of them. They also damaged several cruisers and destroyers. On the ground, nearly two hundred aircraft were destroyed, and twenty-four hundred servicemen were killed. Another eleven hundred were wounded. Japanese losses were minimal. The strike was part of a more concerted campaign by the Japanese to gain territory. They subsequently attacked Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Guam, Wake Island, and the Philippines.



Figure 27.7 This famous shot captured the explosion of the USS *Shaw* after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. While American losses were significant, the Japanese lost only twenty-nine planes and five miniature submarines.

Whatever reluctance to engage in conflict the American people had had before December 7, 1941, quickly evaporated. Americans' incredulity that Japan would take such a radical step quickly turned to a fiery anger, especially as the attack took place while Japanese diplomats in Washington were still negotiating a possible settlement. President Roosevelt, referring to the day of the attack as "a date which will live in infamy," asked Congress for a declaration of war, which it delivered to Japan on December 8. On December 11, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States in accordance with their alliance with Japan. Against its wishes, the United States had become part of the European conflict.

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You can listen to **Franklin Roosevelt's speech to Congress** (<http://openstaxcollege.org//15FDRWar>) seeking a Declaration of War at this archive of presidential recordings.

27.2 The Home Front

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

- Describe the steps taken by the United States to prepare for war
- Describe how the war changed employment patterns in the United States
- Discuss the contributions of civilians on the home front, especially women, to the war effort
- Analyze how the war affected race relations in the United States

The impact of the war on the United States was nowhere near as devastating as it was in Europe and the Pacific, where the battles were waged, but it still profoundly changed everyday life for all Americans.

On the positive side, the war effort finally and definitively ended the economic depression that had been plaguing the country since 1929. It also called upon Americans to unite behind the war effort and give of their money, their time, and their effort, as they sacrificed at home to assure success abroad. The upheaval caused by white men leaving for war meant that for many disenfranchised groups, such as women and African Americans, there were new opportunities in employment and wage earning. Still, fear and racism drove cracks in the nation's unified facade.

MOBILIZING A NATION

Although the United States had sought to avoid armed conflict, the country was not entirely unprepared for war. Production of armaments had increased since 1939, when, as a result of Congress's authorization of the Cash and Carry policy, contracts for weapons had begun to trickle into American factories. War production increased further following the passage of Lend Lease in 1941. However, when the United States entered the war, the majority of American factories were still engaged in civilian production, and many doubted that American businesses would be sufficiently motivated to convert their factories to wartime production.

Just a few years earlier, Roosevelt had been frustrated and impatient with business leaders when they failed to fully support the New Deal, but enlisting industrialists in the nation's crusade was necessary if the United States was to produce enough armaments to win the war. To encourage cooperation, the government agreed to assume all costs of development and production, and also guarantee a profit on the sale of what was produced. This arrangement resulted in 233 to 350 percent increases in profits over what the same businesses had been able to achieve from 1937 to 1940. In terms of dollars earned, corporate profits rose from \$6.4 billion in 1940 to nearly \$11 billion in 1944. As the country switched to wartime production, the top one hundred U.S. corporations received approximately 70 percent of government contracts; big businesses prospered.

In addition to gearing up industry to fight the war, the country also needed to build an army. A peacetime draft, the first in American history, had been established in September 1940, but the initial draftees were to serve for only one year, a length of time that was later extended. Furthermore, Congress had specified that no more than 900,000 men could receive military training at any one time. By December 1941, the United States had only one division completely ready to be deployed. Military planners estimated that it might take nine million men to secure victory. A massive draft program was required to expand the nation's military forces. Over the course of the war, approximately fifty million men registered for the draft; ten million were subsequently inducted into the service.

Approximately 2.5 million African Americans registered for the draft, and 1 million of them subsequently served. Initially, African American soldiers, who served in segregated units, had been used as support troops and not been sent into combat. By the end of the war, however, manpower needs resulted in African American recruits serving in the infantry and flying planes. The Tuskegee Institute in Alabama had instituted a civilian pilot training program for aspiring African American pilots. When the war began, the Department of War absorbed the program and adapted it to train combat pilots. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt demonstrated both her commitment to African Americans and the war effort by visiting Tuskegee in 1941, shortly after the unit had been organized. To encourage the military to give the airmen a chance to serve in actual combat, she insisted on taking a ride in a plane flown by an African American pilot to demonstrate the Tuskegee Airmen's skill (**Figure 27.8**). When the Tuskegee Airmen did get their opportunity to serve in combat, they did so with distinction.



Figure 27.8 First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt insisted on flying with an African American pilot to help fight racism in the military. The First Lady was famous for her support of civil rights.

In addition, forty-four thousand Native Americans served in all theaters of the war. In some of the Pacific campaigns, Native Americans made distinct and unique contributions to Allied victories. Navajo marines served in communications units, exchanging information over radios using codes based on their native language, which the Japanese were unable to comprehend or to crack. They became known as code talkers and participated in the battles of Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, Peleliu, and Tarawa. A smaller number of Comanche code talkers performed a similar function in the European theater.

While millions of Americans heeded the rallying cry for patriotism and service, there were those who, for various reasons, did not accept the call. Before the war began, American Peace Mobilization had campaigned against American involvement in the European conflict as had the noninterventionist America First organization. Both groups ended their opposition, however, at the time of the German invasion of the Soviet Union and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, respectively. Nevertheless, during the war, some seventy-two thousand men registered as **conscientious objectors** (COs), and fifty-two thousand were granted that status. Of that fifty-two thousand, some accepted noncombat roles in the military, whereas others accepted unpaid work in civilian work camps. Many belonged to pacifist religious sects such as the Quakers or Mennonites. They were willing to serve their country, but they refused to kill. COs suffered public condemnation for disloyalty, and family members often turned against them. Strangers assaulted them. A portion of the town of Plymouth, NH, was destroyed by fire because the residents did not want to call upon the services of the COs trained as firemen at a nearby camp. Only a very small number of men evaded the draft completely.

Most Americans, however, were willing to serve, and they required a competent officer corps. The very same day that Germany invaded Poland in 1939, President Roosevelt promoted George C. Marshall, a veteran of World War I and an expert at training officers, from a one-star general to a four-star general, and gave him the responsibility of serving as Army Chief of Staff. The desire to create a command staff that could win the army's confidence no doubt contributed to the rather meteoric rise of Dwight D. Eisenhower (**Figure 27.9**). During World War I, Eisenhower had been assigned to organize America's new tank corps, and, although he never saw combat during the war, he demonstrated excellent organizational skills. When the United States entered World War II, Eisenhower was appointed commander of the General European Theater of Operations in June 1942.



Figure 27.9 Dwight D. Eisenhower rose quickly through the ranks to become commander of the European Theater of Operations by June 1942.

MY STORY

General Eisenhower on Winning a War

Promoted to the level of one-star general just before the attack on Pearl Harbor, Dwight D. Eisenhower had never held an active command position above the level of a battalion and was not considered a potential commander of major military operations. However, after he was assigned to the General Staff in Washington, DC, he quickly rose through the ranks and, by late 1942, was appointed commander of the North African campaign.

Excerpts from General Eisenhower's diary reveal his dedication to the war effort. He continued to work despite suffering a great personal loss.

March 9, 1942

General McNaughton (commanding Canadians in Britain) came to see me. He believes in attacking in Europe (thank God). He's over here in an effort to speed up landing craft production and cargo ships. Has some d___ good ideas. Sent him to see Somervell and Admiral Land. How I hope he can do something on landing craft.

March 10, 1942

Father dies this morning. Nothing I can do but send a wire.

One thing that might help win this war is to get someone to shoot [Admiral] King. He's the antithesis of cooperation, a deliberately rude person, which means he's a mental bully. He became Commander in Chief of the fleet some time ago. Today he takes over, also Stark's job as chief of naval operations. It's a good thing to get rid of the double head in the navy, and of course Stark was just a nice old lady, but this fellow is going to cause a blow-up sooner or later, I'll bet a cookie.

Gradually some of the people with whom I have to deal are coming to agree with me that there are just three "musts" for the Allies this year: hold open the line to England and support her as necessary, keep Russia in the war as an active participant; hold the India-Middle East buttress between Japs and Germans. All this assumes the safety from major attack of North America, Hawaii, and Caribbean area.

We lost eight cargo ships yesterday. That we must stop, because any effort we make depends upon sea communication.

March 11, 1942

I have felt terribly. I should like so much to be with my Mother these few days. But we're at war. And war is not soft, it has no time to indulge even the deepest and most sacred emotions. I loved my Dad. I think my Mother the finest person I've ever known. She has been the inspiration for Dad's life and a true helpmeet in every sense of the word.

I'm quitting work now, 7:30 p.m. I haven't the heart to go on tonight.

—Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The Eisenhower Diaries*

What does Eisenhower identify as the most important steps to take to win the war?

EMPLOYMENT AND MIGRATION PATTERNS IN THE UNITED STATES

Even before the official beginning of the war, the country started to prepare. In August 1940, Congress created the Defense Plant Corporation, which had built 344 plants in the West by 1945, and had funneled over \$1.8 billion into the economies of western states. After Pearl Harbor, as American military strategists began to plan counterattacks and campaigns against the Axis powers, California became a training ground. Troops trained there for tank warfare and amphibious assaults as well as desert campaigns—since the first assault against the Axis powers was planned for North Africa.

As thousands of Americans swarmed to the West Coast to take jobs in defense plants and shipyards, cities like Richmond, California, and nearby Oakland, expanded quickly. Richmond grew from a city of 20,000 people to 100,000 in only three years. Almost overnight, the population of California skyrocketed. African Americans moved out of the rural South into northern or West Coast cities to provide the muscle and skill to build the machines of war. Building on earlier waves of African American migration after the Civil

War and during World War I, the demographics of the nation changed with the growing urbanization of the African American population. Women also relocated to either follow their husbands to military bases or take jobs in the defense industry, as the total mobilization of the national economy began to tap into previously underemployed populations.

Roosevelt and his administration already had experience in establishing government controls and taking the initiative in economic matters during the Depression. In April 1941, Roosevelt created the Office of Price Administration (OPA), and, once the United States entered the war, the OPA regulated prices and attempted to combat inflation. The OPA ultimately had the power to set ceiling prices for all goods, except agricultural commodities, and to ration a long list of items. During the war, major labor unions pledged not to strike in order to prevent disruptions in production; in return, the government encouraged businesses to recognize unions and promised to help workers bargain for better wages.

As in World War I, the government turned to bond drives to finance the war. Millions of Americans purchased more than \$185 billion worth of war bonds. Children purchased Victory Stamps and exchanged full stamp booklets for bonds. The federal government also instituted the current tax-withholding system to ensure collection of taxes. Finally, the government once again urged Americans to plant victory gardens, using marketing campaigns and celebrities to promote the idea (**Figure 27.10**). Americans responded eagerly, planting gardens in their backyards and vacant lots.



Figure 27.10 Wartime rationing meant that Americans had to do without many everyday items and learn to grow their own produce in order to allow the country's food supply to go to the troops.

The federal government also instituted rationing to ensure that America's fighting men were well fed. Civilians were issued ration booklets, books of coupons that enabled them to buy limited amounts of meat, coffee, butter, sugar, and other foods. Wartime cookbooks were produced, such as the Betty Crocker cookbook *Your Share*, telling housewives how to prepare tasty meals without scarce food items. Other items were rationed as well, including shoes, liquor, cigarettes, and gasoline. With a few exceptions, such as doctors, Americans were allowed to drive their automobiles only on certain days of the week. Most Americans complied with these regulations, but some illegally bought and sold rationed goods on the black market.

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View an excerpt from a **PBS documentary on rationing** (<http://openstaxcollege.org/l/15Rationing>) during World War II.

Civilians on the home front also recycled, conserved, and participated in scrap drives to collect items needed for the production of war materiel. Housewives saved cooking fats, needed to produce explosives. Children collected scrap metal, paper, rubber, silk, nylon, and old rags. Some children sacrificed beloved metal toys in order to “win the war.” Civilian volunteers, trained to recognize enemy aircraft, watched the skies along the coasts and on the borders.

WOMEN IN THE WAR: ROSIE THE RIVETER AND BEYOND

As in the previous war, the gap in the labor force created by departing soldiers meant opportunities for women. In particular, World War II led many to take jobs in defense plants and factories around the country. For many women, these jobs provided unprecedented opportunities to move into occupations previously thought of as exclusive to men, especially the aircraft industry, where a majority of workers were composed of women by 1943. Most women in the labor force did not work in the defense industry, however. The majority took over other factory jobs that had been held by men. Many took positions in offices as well. As white women, many of whom had been in the workforce before the war, moved into these more highly paid positions, African American women, most of whom had previously been limited to domestic service, took over white women’s lower-paying positions in factories; some were also hired by defense plants, however. Although women often earned more money than ever before, it was still far less than men received for doing the same jobs. Nevertheless, many achieved a degree of financial self-reliance that was enticing. By 1944, as many as 33 percent of the women working in the defense industries were mothers and worked “double-day” shifts—one at the plant and one at home.

Still, there was some resistance to women going to work in such a male-dominated environment. In order to recruit women for factory jobs, the government created a propaganda campaign centered on a now-iconic figure known as **Rosie the Riveter** (**Figure 27.11**). Rosie, who was a composite based on several real women, was most famously depicted by American illustrator Norman Rockwell. Rosie was tough yet feminine. To reassure men that the demands of war would not make women too masculine, some factories gave female employees lessons in how to apply makeup, and cosmetics were never rationed during the war. Elizabeth Arden even created a special red lipstick for use by women reservists in the Marine Corps.

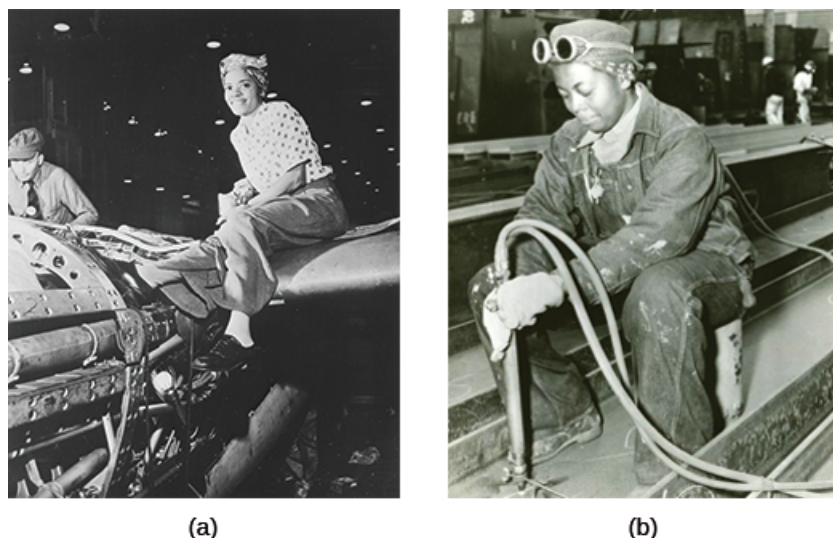


Figure 27.11 “Rosie the Riveter” became a generic term for all women working in the defense industry. Although the Rosie depicted on posters was white, many of the real Rosies were African American, such as this woman who poses atop an airplane at the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation in Burbank, California (a), and Anna Bland, a worker at the Richmond Shipyards (b).

Although many saw the entry of women into the workforce as a positive thing, they also acknowledged that working women, especially mothers, faced great challenges. To try to address the dual role of women as workers and mothers, Eleanor Roosevelt urged her husband to approve the first U.S. government childcare facilities under the Community Facilities Act of 1942. Eventually, seven centers, servicing 105,000 children, were built. The First Lady also urged industry leaders like Henry Kaiser to build model childcare facilities for their workers. Still, these efforts did not meet the full need for childcare for working mothers.

The lack of childcare facilities meant that many children had to fend for themselves after school, and some had to assume responsibility for housework and the care of younger siblings. Some mothers took younger children to work with them and left them locked in their cars during the workday. Police and social workers also reported an increase in juvenile delinquency during the war. New York City saw its average number of juvenile cases balloon from 9,500 in the prewar years to 11,200 during the war. In San Diego, delinquency rates for girls, including sexual misbehavior, shot up by 355 percent. It is unclear whether more juveniles were actually engaging in delinquent behavior; the police may simply have become more vigilant during wartime and arrested youngsters for activities that would have gone overlooked before the war. In any event, law enforcement and juvenile courts attributed the perceived increase to a lack of supervision by working mothers.

Tens of thousands of women served in the war effort more directly. Approximately 350,000 joined the military. They worked as nurses, drove trucks, repaired airplanes, and performed clerical work to free up men for combat. Those who joined the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) flew planes from the factories to military bases. Some of these women were killed in combat and captured as prisoners of war. Over sixteen hundred of the women nurses received various decorations for courage under fire. Many women also flocked to work in a variety of civil service jobs. Others worked as chemists and engineers, developing weapons for the war. This included thousands of women who were recruited to work on the Manhattan Project, developing the atomic bomb.

THE CULTURE OF WAR: ENTERTAINERS AND THE WAR EFFORT

During the Great Depression, movies had served as a welcome diversion from the difficulties of everyday life, and during the war, this held still truer. By 1941, there were more movie theaters than banks in the United States. In the 1930s, newsreels, which were shown in movie theaters before feature films,

had informed the American public of what was happening elsewhere in the world. This interest grew once American armies began to engage the enemy. Many informational documentaries about the war were also shown in movie theaters. The most famous were those in the *Why We Fight* series, filmed by Hollywood director Frank Capra. During the war, Americans flocked to the movies not only to learn what was happening to the troops overseas but also to be distracted from the fears and hardships of wartime by cartoons, dramas, and comedies. By 1945, movie attendance had reached an all-time high.

Click and Explore



This link shows **newsreel footage of a raid** (<http://openstaxcollege.org/l/15Tarawa>) on Tarawa Island. This footage was shown in movie theaters around the country.

Many feature films were patriotic stories that showed the day's biggest stars as soldiers fighting the nefarious German and Japanese enemy. During the war years, there was a consistent supply of patriotic movies, with actors glorifying and inspiring America's fighting men. John Wayne, who had become a star in the 1930s, appeared in many war-themed movies, including *The Fighting Seabees* and *Back to Bataan*.

Besides appearing in patriotic movies, many male entertainers temporarily gave up their careers to serve in the armed forces (**Figure 27.12**). Jimmy Stewart served in the Army Air Force and appeared in a short film entitled *Winning Your Wings* that encouraged young men to enlist. Tyrone Power joined the U.S. Marines. Female entertainers did their part as well. Rita Hayworth and Marlene Dietrich entertained the troops. African American singer and dancer Josephine Baker entertained Allied troops in North Africa and also carried secret messages for the French Resistance. Actress Carole Lombard was killed in a plane crash while returning home from a rally where she had sold war bonds.



(a)



(b)

Figure 27.12 General George Marshall awards Frank Capra the Distinguished Service Cross in 1945 (a), in recognition of the important contribution that Capra's films made to the war effort. Jimmy Stewart was awarded numerous commendations for his military service, including the French Croix de Guerre (b).

DEFINING "AMERICAN"

The Meaning of Democracy

E. B. White was one of the most famous writers of the twentieth century. During the 1940s, he was known for the articles that he contributed to *The New Yorker* and the column that he wrote for *Harper's Magazine*. Today, he is remembered for his children's books *Stuart Little* and *Charlotte's Web*, and for his collaboration with William Strunk, Jr., *The Elements of Style*, a guide to writing. In 1943, he wrote a definition of democracy as an example of what Americans hoped that they were fighting for.

We received a letter from the Writer's War Board the other day asking for a statement on 'The Meaning of Democracy.' It presumably is our duty to comply with such a request, and it is certainly our pleasure. Surely the Board knows what democracy is. It is the line that forms on the right. It is the 'don't' in don't shove. It is the hole in the stuffed shirt through which the sawdust slowly trickles; it is the dent in the high hat. Democracy is the recurrent suspicion that more than half of the people are right more than half of the time. It is the feeling of privacy in the voting booths, the feeling of communion in the libraries, the feeling of vitality everywhere. Democracy is a letter to the editor. Democracy is the score at the beginning of the ninth. It is an idea that hasn't been disproved yet, a song the words of which have not gone bad. It is the mustard on the hot dog and the cream in the rationed coffee. Democracy is a request from a War Board, in the middle of the morning in the middle of a war, wanting to know what democracy is.

Do you agree with this definition of democracy? Would you change anything to make it more contemporary?

SOCIAL TENSIONS ON THE HOME FRONT

The need for Americans to come together, whether in Hollywood, the defense industries, or the military, to support the war effort encouraged feelings of unity among the American population. However, the desire for unity did not always mean that Americans of color were treated as equals or even tolerated, despite their proclamations of patriotism and their willingness to join in the effort to defeat America's enemies in Europe and Asia. For African Americans, Mexican Americans, and especially for Japanese Americans, feelings of patriotism and willingness to serve one's country both at home and abroad was not enough to guarantee equal treatment by white Americans or to prevent the U.S. government from regarding them as the enemy.

African Americans and Double V

The African American community had, at the outset of the war, forged some promising relationships with the Roosevelt administration through civil rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune and Roosevelt's "Black Cabinet" of African American advisors. Through the intervention of Eleanor Roosevelt, Bethune was appointed to the advisory council set up by the War Department Women's Interest Section. In this position, Bethune was able to organize the first officer candidate school for women and enable African American women to become officers in the Women's Auxiliary Corps.

As the U.S. economy revived as a result of government defense contracts, African Americans wanted to ensure that their service to the country earned them better opportunities and more equal treatment. Accordingly, in 1942, after African American labor leader A. Philip Randolph pressured Roosevelt with a threatened "March on Washington," the president created, by Executive Order 8802, the Fair Employment Practices Committee. The purpose of this committee was to see that there was no discrimination in the defense industries. While they were effective in forcing defense contractors, such as the DuPont Corporation, to hire African Americans, they were not able to force corporations to place African Americans in well-paid positions. For example, at DuPont's plutonium production plant in Hanford, Washington, African Americans were hired as low-paid construction workers but not as laboratory

technicians.

During the war, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), founded by James Farmer in 1942, used peaceful civil disobedience in the form of sit-ins to desegregate certain public spaces in Washington, DC, and elsewhere, as its contribution to the war effort. Members of CORE sought support for their movement by stating that one of their goals was to deprive the enemy of the ability to generate anti-American propaganda by accusing the United States of racism. After all, they argued, if the United States were going to denounce Germany and Japan for abusing human rights, the country should itself be as exemplary as possible. Indeed, CORE's actions were in keeping with the goals of the **Double V campaign** that was begun in 1942 by the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the largest African American newspaper at the time (**Figure 27.13**). The campaign called upon African Americans to accomplish the two “Vs”: victory over America's foreign enemies and victory over racism in the United States.



Figure 27.13 During World War II, African Americans volunteered for government work just as white Americans did. These Washington, DC, residents have become civil defense workers as part of the Double V campaign that called for victory at home and abroad.

Despite the willingness of African Americans to fight for the United States, racial tensions often erupted in violence, as the geographic relocation necessitated by the war brought African Americans into closer contact with whites. There were race riots in Detroit, Harlem, and Beaumont, Texas, in which white residents responded with sometimes deadly violence to their new black coworkers or neighbors. There were also racial incidents at or near several military bases in the South. Incidents of African American soldiers being harassed or assaulted occurred at Fort Benning, Georgia; Fort Jackson, South Carolina; Alexandria, Louisiana; Fayetteville, Arkansas; and Tampa, Florida. African American leaders such as James Farmer and Walter White, the executive secretary of the NAACP since 1931, were asked by General Eisenhower to investigate complaints of the mistreatment of African American servicemen while on active duty. They prepared a fourteen-point memorandum on how to improve conditions for African Americans in the service, sowing some of the seeds of the postwar civil rights movement during the war years.

The Zoot Suit Riots

Mexican Americans also encountered racial prejudice. The Mexican American population in Southern California grew during World War II due to the increased use of Mexican agricultural workers in the fields to replace the white workers who had left for better paying jobs in the defense industries. The United States and Mexican governments instituted the “*bracero*” program on August 4, 1942, which sought to address the needs of California growers for manual labor to increase food production during wartime. The result was the immigration of thousands of impoverished Mexicans into the United States to work as *braceros*, or manual laborers.

Forced by racial discrimination to live in the barrios of East Los Angeles, many Mexican American youths

sought to create their own identity and began to adopt a distinctive style of dress known as **zoot suits**, which were also popular among many young African American men. The zoot suits, which required large amounts of cloth to produce, violated wartime regulations that restricted the amount of cloth that could be used in civilian garments. Among the charges leveled at young Mexican Americans was that they were un-American and unpatriotic; wearing zoot suits was seen as evidence of this. Many native-born Americans also denounced Mexican American men for being unwilling to serve in the military, even though some 350,000 Mexican Americans either volunteered to serve or were drafted into the armed services. In the summer of 1943, “zoot-suit riots” occurred in Los Angeles when carloads of white sailors, encouraged by other white civilians, stripped and beat a group of young men wearing the distinctive form of dress. In retaliation, young Mexican American men attacked and beat up sailors. The response was swift and severe, as sailors and civilians went on a spree attacking young Mexican Americans on the streets, in bars, and in movie theaters. More than one hundred people were injured.

Internment

Japanese Americans also suffered from discrimination. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor unleashed a cascade of racist assumptions about Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans in the United States that culminated in the relocation and **internment** of 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry, 66 percent of whom had been born in the United States. **Executive Order 9066**, signed by Roosevelt on February 19, 1942, gave the army power to remove people from “military areas” to prevent sabotage or espionage. The army then used this authority to relocate people of Japanese ancestry living along the Pacific coast of Washington, Oregon, and California, as well as in parts of Arizona, to internment camps in the American interior. Although a study commissioned earlier by Roosevelt indicated that there was little danger of disloyalty on the part of West Coast Japanese, fears of sabotage, perhaps spurred by the attempted rescue of a Japanese airman shot down at Pearl Harbor by Japanese living in Hawaii, and racist sentiments led Roosevelt to act. Ironically, Japanese in Hawaii were not interned. Although characterized afterwards as America’s worst wartime mistake by Eugene V. Rostow in the September 1945 edition of *Harper’s Magazine*, the government’s actions were in keeping with decades of anti-Asian sentiment on the West Coast.

After the order went into effect, Lt. General John L. DeWitt, in charge of the Western Defense command, ordered approximately 127,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans—roughly 90 percent of those of Japanese ethnicity living in the United States—to assembly centers where they were transferred to hastily prepared camps in the interior of California, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, and Arkansas (**Figure 27.14**). Those who were sent to the camps reported that the experience was deeply traumatic. Families were sometimes separated. People could only bring a few of their belongings and had to abandon the rest of their possessions. The camps themselves were dismal and overcrowded. Despite the hardships, the Japanese attempted to build communities in the camps and resume “normal” life. Adults participated in camp government and worked at a variety of jobs. Children attended school, played basketball against local teams, and organized Boy Scout units. Nevertheless, they were imprisoned, and minor infractions, such as wandering too near the camp gate or barbed wire fences while on an evening stroll, could meet with severe consequences. Some sixteen thousand Germans, including some from Latin America, and German Americans were also placed in internment camps, as were 2,373 persons of Italian ancestry. However, unlike the case with Japanese Americans, they represented only a tiny percentage of the members of these ethnic groups living in the country. Most of these people were innocent of any wrongdoing, but some Germans were members of the Nazi party. No interned Japanese Americans were found guilty of sabotage or espionage.



Figure 27.14 Japanese Americans standing in line in front of a poster detailing internment orders in California.

Despite being singled out for special treatment, many Japanese Americans sought to enlist, but draft boards commonly classified them as 4-C: undesirable aliens. However, as the war ground on, some were reclassified as eligible for service. In total, nearly thirty-three thousand Japanese Americans served in the military during the war. Of particular note was the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, nicknamed the “Go For Broke,” which finished the war as the most decorated unit in U.S. military history given its size and length of service. While their successes, and the successes of the African American pilots, were lauded, the country and the military still struggled to contend with its own racial tensions, even as the soldiers in Europe faced the brutality of Nazi Germany.

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This U.S. government **propaganda film** (<http://openstaxcollege.org/l/15Tarawa>) attempts to explain why the Japanese were interned.

27.3 Victory in the European Theater

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

- Identify the major battles of the European theater
- Analyze the goals and results of the major wartime summit meetings

Despite the fact that a Japanese attack in the Pacific was the tripwire for America’s entrance into the war, Roosevelt had been concerned about Great Britain since the beginning of the Battle of Britain. Roosevelt viewed Germany as the greater threat to freedom. Hence, he leaned towards a “Europe First” strategy, even before the United States became an active belligerent. That meant that the United States would concentrate the majority of its resources and energies in achieving a victory over Germany first and then focus on defeating Japan. Within Europe, Churchill and Roosevelt were committed to saving Britain and

acted with this goal in mind, often ignoring the needs of the Soviet Union. As Roosevelt imagined an “empire-free” postwar world, in keeping with the goals of the Atlantic Charter, he could also envision the United States becoming the preeminent world power economically, politically, and militarily.

WARTIME DIPLOMACY

Franklin Roosevelt entered World War II with an eye toward a new postwar world, one where the United States would succeed Britain as the leader of Western capitalist democracies, replacing the old British imperial system with one based on free trade and decolonization. The goals of the Atlantic Charter had explicitly included self-determination, self-government, and free trade. In 1941, although Roosevelt had yet to meet Soviet premier Joseph Stalin, he had confidence that he could forge a positive relationship with him, a confidence that Churchill believed was born of naiveté. These allied leaders, known as the **Big Three**, thrown together by the necessity to defeat common enemies, took steps towards working in concert despite their differences.

Through a series of wartime conferences, Roosevelt and the other global leaders sought to come up with a strategy to both defeat the Germans and bolster relationships among allies. In January 1943, at Casablanca, Morocco, Churchill convinced Roosevelt to delay an invasion of France in favor of an invasion of Sicily (**Figure 27.15**). It was also at this conference that Roosevelt enunciated the doctrine of “unconditional surrender.” Roosevelt agreed to demand an unconditional surrender from Germany and Japan to assure the Soviet Union that the United States would not negotiate a separate peace and prepare the former belligerents for a thorough and permanent transformation after the war. Roosevelt thought that announcing this as a specific war aim would discourage any nation or leader from seeking any negotiated armistice that would hinder efforts to reform and transform the defeated nations. Stalin, who was not at the conference, affirmed the concept of unconditional surrender when asked to do so. However, he was dismayed over the delay in establishing a “second front” along which the Americans and British would directly engage German forces in western Europe. A western front, brought about through an invasion across the English Channel, which Stalin had been demanding since 1941, offered the best means of drawing Germany away from the east. At a meeting in Tehran, Iran, also in November 1943, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin met to finalize plans for a cross-channel invasion.



Figure 27.15 Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt met together multiple times during the war. One such conference was located in Casablanca, Morocco, in January 1943.

THE INVASION OF EUROPE

Preparing to engage the Nazis in Europe, the United States landed in North Africa in 1942. The Axis campaigns in North Africa had begun when Italy declared war on England in June 1940, and British

forces had invaded the Italian colony of Libya. The Italians had responded with a counteroffensive that penetrated into Egypt, only to be defeated by the British again. In response, Hitler dispatched the Afrika Korps under General Erwin Rommel, and the outcome of the situation was in doubt until shortly before American forces joined the British.

Although the Allied campaign secured control of the southern Mediterranean and preserved Egypt and the Suez Canal for the British, Stalin and the Soviets were still engaging hundreds of German divisions in bitter struggles at Stalingrad and Leningrad. The invasion of North Africa did nothing to draw German troops away from the Soviet Union. An invasion of Europe by way of Italy, which is what the British and American campaign in North Africa laid the ground for, pulled a few German divisions away from their Russian targets. But while Stalin urged his allies to invade France, British and American troops pursued the defeat of Mussolini's Italy. This choice greatly frustrated Stalin, who felt that British interests were taking precedence over the agony that the Soviet Union was enduring at the hands of the invading German army. However, Churchill saw Italy as the vulnerable underbelly of Europe and believed that Italian support for Mussolini was waning, suggesting that victory there might be relatively easy. Moreover, Churchill pointed out that if Italy were taken out of the war, then the Allies would control the Mediterranean, offering the Allies easier shipping access to both the Soviet Union and the British Far Eastern colonies.

D-Day

A direct assault on Nazi Germany's "Fortress Europe" was still necessary for final victory. On June 6, 1944, the second front became a reality when Allied forces stormed the beaches of northern France on **D-day**. Beginning at 6:30 a.m., some twenty-four thousand British, Canadian, and American troops waded ashore along a fifty-mile piece of the Normandy coast (**Figure 27.16**). Well over a million troops would follow their lead. German forces on the hills and cliffs above shot at them, and once they reached the beach, they encountered barbed wire and land mines. More than ten thousand Allied soldiers were wounded or killed during the assault. Following the establishment of beachheads at Normandy, it took months of difficult fighting before Paris was liberated on August 20, 1944. The invasion did succeed in diverting German forces from the eastern front to the western front, relieving some of the pressure on Stalin's troops. By that time, however, Russian forces had already defeated the German army at Stalingrad, an event that many consider the turning point of the war in Europe, and begun to push the Germans out of the Soviet Union.



Figure 27.16 U.S. troops in a military landing craft approach the beach code-named "Omaha" on June 6, 1944. More than ten thousand soldiers were killed or wounded during the D-day assault along the coast of Normandy, France.

Nazi Germany was not ready to surrender, however. On December 16, in a surprise move, the Germans threw nearly a quarter-million men at the Western Allies in an attempt to divide their armies and encircle major elements of the American forces. The struggle, known as the Battle of the Bulge, raged until the end

of January. Some ninety thousand Americans were killed, wounded, or lost in action. Nevertheless, the Germans were turned back, and Hitler's forces were so spent that they could never again mount offensive operations.

Confronting the Holocaust

The Holocaust, Hitler's plan to kill the Jews of Europe, had begun as early as 1933, with the construction of Dachau, the first of more than forty thousand camps for incarcerating Jews, submitting them to forced labor, or exterminating them. Eventually, six extermination camps were established between 1941 and 1945 in Polish territory. Jewish men, women, and children from throughout Europe were transported to these camps in Germany and other areas under Nazi control. Although the majority of the people in the camps were Jews, the Nazis sent Roma (gypsies), gays and lesbians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and political opponents to the camps as well. Some prisoners were put to work at hard labor; many of them subsequently died of disease or starvation. Most of those sent to the extermination camps were killed upon arrival with poisoned gas. Ultimately, some eleven million people died in the camps. As Soviet troops began to advance from the east and U.S. forces from the west, camp guards attempted to hide the evidence of their crimes by destroying records and camp buildings, and marching surviving prisoners away from the sites (**Figure 27.17**).



Figure 27.17 A U.S. senator, and member of a congressional committee investigating Nazi atrocities, views the evidence first hand at Buchenwald concentration camp near Weimar, Germany, in the summer of 1945.

MY STORY

Felix L. Sparks on the Liberation of Dachau

The horrors of the concentration camps remained with the soldiers who liberated them long after the war had ended. Below is an excerpt of the recollection of one soldier.

Our first experience with the camp came as a traumatic shock. The first evidence of the horrors to come was a string of forty railway cars on a railway spur leading into the camp. Each car was filled with emaciated human corpses, both men and women. A hasty search by the stunned infantry soldiers revealed no signs of life among the hundreds of still bodies, over two thousand in all.

It was in this atmosphere of human depravity, degradation and death that the soldiers of my battalion then entered the camp itself. Almost all of the SS command guarding the camp had fled before our arrival, leaving behind about two hundred lower ranking members of the command. There was some sporadic firing of weapons. As we approached the confinement area, the scene numbed my senses. Dante's *Inferno* seemed pale compared to the real hell of Dachau. A row of small cement structures near the prison entrance contained a coal-fired crematorium, a gas chamber, and rooms piled high with naked and emaciated corpses. As I turned to look over the prison yard with un-believing eyes, I saw a large number of dead inmates lying where they had fallen in the last few hours or days before our arrival. Since all of the bodies were in various stages of decomposition, the stench of death was overpowering. The men of the 45th Infantry Division were hardened combat veterans. We had been in combat almost two years at that point. While we were accustomed to death, we were not able to comprehend the type of death that we encountered at Dachau.

—Felix L. Sparks, remarks at the U.S. Holocaust Museum, May 8, 1995

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Listen to the **accounts of Holocaust survivors** (<http://openstaxcollege.org//15Holocaust>) by clicking on "Listen Now" below the name of the person whose story you wish to hear.

YALTA AND PREPARING FOR VICTORY

The last time the Big Three met was in early February 1945 at Yalta in the Soviet Union. Roosevelt was sick, and Stalin's armies were pushing the German army back towards Berlin from the east. Churchill and Roosevelt thus had to accept a number of compromises that strengthened Stalin's position in eastern Europe. In particular, they agreed to allow the Communist government installed by the Soviet Union in Poland to remain in power until free elections took place. For his part, Stalin reaffirmed his commitment, first voiced at Tehran, to enter the war against Japan following the surrender of Germany (**Figure 27.18**). He also agreed that the Soviet Union would participate in the United Nations, a new peacekeeping body intended to replace the League of Nations. The Big Three left Yalta with many details remaining unclear, planning to finalize plans for the treatment of Germany and the shape of postwar Europe at a later conference. However, Roosevelt did not live to attend the next meeting. He died on April 12, 1945, and Harry S. Truman became president.



Figure 27.18 Prime Minister Winston Churchill, President Franklin Roosevelt, and Premier Joseph Stalin made final plans for the defeat of Nazi Germany at Yalta in February 1945.

By April 1945, Soviet forces had reached Berlin, and both the U.S. and British Allies were pushing up against Germany's last defenses in the western part of the nation. Hitler committed suicide on April 30, 1945. On May 8, 1945, Germany surrendered. The war in Europe was over, and the Allies and liberated regions celebrated the end of the long ordeal. Germany was thoroughly defeated; its industries and cities were badly damaged.

The victorious Allies set about determining what to do to rebuild Europe at the Potsdam Summit Conference in July 1945. Attending the conference were Stalin, Truman, and Churchill, now the outgoing prime minister, as well as the new British prime minister, Clement Attlee. Plans to divide Germany and Austria, and their capital cities, into four zones—to be occupied by the British, French, Americans, and Soviets—a subject discussed at Yalta, were finalized. In addition, the Allies agreed to dismantle Germany's heavy industry in order to make it impossible for the country to produce more armaments.

27.4 The Pacific Theater and the Atomic Bomb

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

- Discuss the strategy employed against the Japanese and some of the significant battles of the Pacific campaign
- Describe the effects of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- Analyze the decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan

Japanese forces won a series of early victories against Allied forces from December 1941 to May 1942. They seized Guam and Wake Island from the United States, and streamed through Malaysia and Thailand into the Philippines and through the Dutch East Indies. By February 1942, they were threatening Australia. The Allies turned the tide in May and June 1942, at the Battle of Coral Sea and the Battle of Midway. The Battle of Midway witnessed the first Japanese naval defeat since the nineteenth century. Shortly after the American victory, U.S. forces invaded Guadalcanal and New Guinea. Slowly, throughout 1943, the United States engaged in a campaign of "island hopping," gradually moving across the Pacific to Japan. In 1944, the United States seized Saipan and won the Battle of the Philippine Sea. Progressively, American forces drew closer to the strategically important targets of Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

THE PACIFIC CAMPAIGN

During the 1930s, Americans had caught glimpses of Japanese armies in action and grew increasingly sympathetic towards war-torn China. Stories of Japanese atrocities bordering on genocide and the shock of the attack on Pearl Harbor intensified racial animosity toward the Japanese. Wartime propaganda portrayed Japanese soldiers as uncivilized and barbaric, sometimes even inhuman (**Figure 27.19**), unlike America's German foes. Admiral William Halsey spoke for many Americans when he urged them to "Kill Japs! Kill Japs! Kill more Japs!" Stories of the dispiriting defeats at Bataan and the Japanese capture of the Philippines at Corregidor in 1942 revealed the Japanese cruelty and mistreatment of Americans. The "Bataan Death March," during which as many as 650 American and 10,000 Filipino prisoners of war died, intensified anti-Japanese feelings. Kamikaze attacks that took place towards the end of the war were regarded as proof of the irrationality of Japanese martial values and mindless loyalty to Emperor Hirohito.

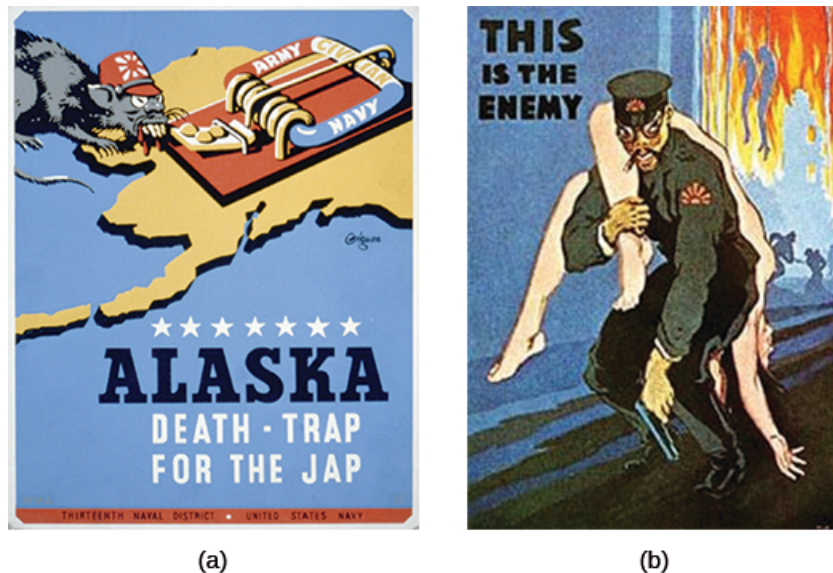


Figure 27.19 Anti-Japanese propaganda often portrayed the Japanese as inhuman (a). In addition to emphasizing the supposed apish features of the Japanese (b), this poster depicts the victim as a white woman, undoubtedly to increase American horror even more.

Despite the Allies' Europe First strategy, American forces took the resources that they could assemble and swung into action as quickly as they could to blunt the Japanese advance. Infuriated by stories of defeat at the hands of the allegedly racially inferior Japanese, many high-ranking American military leaders demanded that greater attention be paid to the Pacific campaign. Rather than simply wait for the invasion of France to begin, naval and army officers such as General Douglas MacArthur argued that American resources should be deployed in the Pacific to reclaim territory seized by Japan.

In the Pacific, MacArthur and the Allied forces pursued an island hopping strategy that bypassed certain island strongholds held by the Japanese that were of little or no strategic value. By seizing locations from which Japanese communications and transportation routes could be disrupted or destroyed, the Allies advanced towards Japan without engaging the thousands of Japanese stationed on garrisoned islands. The goal was to advance American air strength close enough to Japan proper to achieve air superiority over the home islands; the nation could then be bombed into submission or at least weakened in preparation for an amphibious assault. By February 1945, American forces had reached the island of Iwo Jima (**Figure 27.20**). Iwo Jima was originally meant to serve as a forward air base for fighter planes, providing cover for long-distance bombing raids on Japan. Two months later, an even larger engagement, the hardest fought and bloodiest battle of the Pacific theater, took place as American forces invaded Okinawa. The battle raged from April 1945 well into July 1945; the island was finally secured at the cost of seventeen thousand American soldiers killed and thirty-six thousand wounded. Japanese forces lost over 100,000

troops. Perhaps as many as 150,000 civilians perished as well.



Figure 27.20 American forces come ashore on Iwo Jima. Their vehicles had difficulty moving on the beach's volcanic sands. Troops endured shelling by Japanese troops on Mount Suribachi, the mountain in the background.

DROPPING THE ATOMIC BOMB

All belligerents in World War II sought to develop powerful and devastating weaponry. As early as 1939, German scientists had discovered how to split uranium atoms, the technology that would ultimately allow for the creation of the atomic bomb. Albert Einstein, who had emigrated to the United States in 1933 to escape the Nazis, urged President Roosevelt to launch an American atomic research project, and Roosevelt agreed to do so, with reservations. In late 1941, the program received its code name: the **Manhattan Project**. Located at Los Alamos, New Mexico, the Manhattan Project ultimately employed 150,000 people and cost some \$2 billion. In July 1945, the project's scientists successfully tested the first atomic bomb.

In the spring of 1945, the military began to prepare for the possible use of an atomic bomb by choosing appropriate targets. Suspecting that the immediate bomb blast would extend over one mile and secondary effects would include fire damage, a compact city of significant military value with densely built frame buildings seemed to be the best target. Eventually, the city of Hiroshima, the headquarters of the Japanese Second Army, and the communications and supply hub for all of southern Japan, was chosen. The city of Kokura was chosen as the primary target of the second bomb, and Nagasaki, an industrial center producing war materiel and the largest seaport in southern Japan, was selected as a secondary target.

The *Enola Gay*, a B-29 bomber named after its pilot's mother, dropped an atomic bomb known as "Little Boy" on Hiroshima at 8:15 a.m. Monday morning, August 6, 1945. A huge mushroom cloud rose above the city. Survivors sitting down for breakfast or preparing to go to school recalled seeing a bright light and then being blown across the room. The immense heat of the blast melted stone and metal, and ignited fires throughout the city. One man later recalled watching his mother and brother burn to death as fire consumed their home. A female survivor, a child at the time of the attack, remembered finding the body of her mother, which had been reduced to ashes and fell apart as she touched it. Two-thirds of the buildings in Hiroshima were destroyed. Within an hour after the bombing, radioactive "black rain" began to fall. Approximately seventy thousand people died in the original blast. The same number would later die of radiation poisoning. When Japan refused to surrender, a second atomic bomb, named Fat Man, was dropped on Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. At least sixty thousand people were killed at Nagasaki. Kokura, the primary target, had been shrouded in clouds on that morning and thus had escaped destruction. It is impossible to say with certainty how many died in the two attacks; the heat of the bomb blasts incinerated or vaporized many of the victims (**Figure 27.21**).

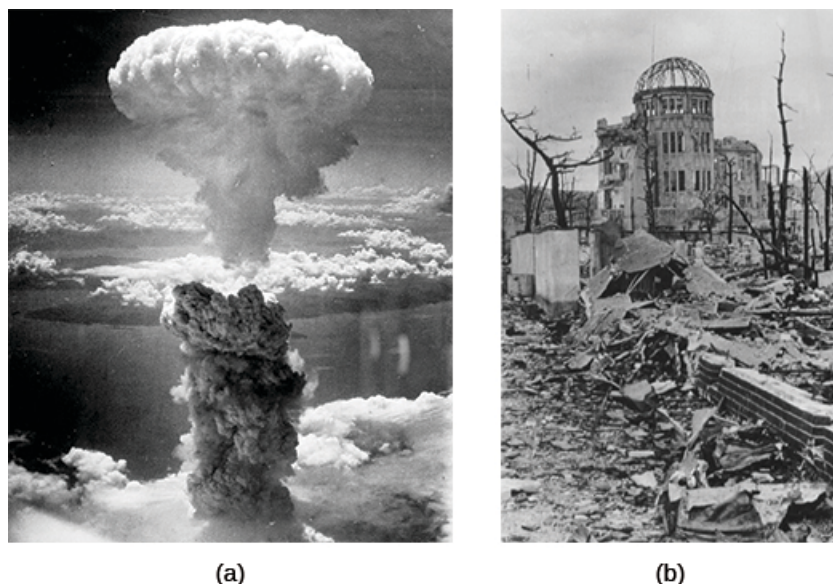


Figure 27.21 According to estimates, the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (a) together killed anywhere from 125,000 to over 250,000 people. The so-called Genbaku (A-Bomb) Dome, now the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, was the only building left standing near the Hiroshima bomb's hypocenter (b).

Click and Explore



Visit the **Atomic Bomb Museum site** (<http://openstaxcollege.org//15ABomb>) to read the accounts of survivors Hiroshi Morishita and Shizuko Nishimoto.

The decision to use nuclear weapons is widely debated. Why exactly did the United States deploy an atomic bomb? The fierce resistance that the Japanese forces mounted during their early campaigns led American planners to believe that any invasion of the Japanese home islands would be exceedingly bloody. According to some estimates, as many as 250,000 Americans might die in securing a final victory. Such considerations undoubtedly influenced President Truman's decision. Truman, who had not known about the Manhattan Project until Roosevelt's death, also may not have realized how truly destructive it was. Indeed, some of the scientists who had built the bomb were surprised by its power. One question that has not been fully answered is why the United States dropped the second bomb on Nagasaki. As some scholars have noted, if Truman's intention was to eliminate the need for a home island invasion, he could have given Japan more time to respond after bombing Hiroshima. He did not, however. The second bombing may have been intended to send a message to Stalin, who was becoming intransigent regarding postwar Europe. If it is indeed true that Truman had political motivations for using the bombs, then the destruction of Nagasaki might have been the first salvo of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. And yet, other historians have pointed out that the war had unleashed such massive atrocities against civilians by all belligerents—the United States included—that by the summer of 1945, the president no longer needed any particular reason to use his entire nuclear arsenal.

THE WAR ENDS

Whatever the true reasons for their use, the bombs had the desired effect of getting Japan to surrender. Even before the atomic attacks, the conventional bombings of Japan, the defeat of its forces in the field, and the entry of the Soviet Union into the war had convinced the Imperial Council that they had to end the war. They had hoped to negotiate the terms of the peace, but Emperor Hirohito intervened after the destruction of Nagasaki and accepted unconditional surrender. Although many Japanese shuddered at the humiliation of defeat, most were relieved that the war was over. Japan's industries and cities had been thoroughly destroyed, and the immediate future looked bleak as they awaited their fate at the hands of the American occupation forces.

The victors had yet another nation to rebuild and reform, but the war was finally over. Following the surrender, the Japanese colony of Korea was divided along the thirty-eighth parallel; the Soviet Union was given control of the northern half and the United States was given control of the southern portion. In Europe, as had been agreed upon at a meeting of the Allies in Potsdam in the summer of 1945, Germany was divided into four occupation zones that would be controlled by Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States, respectively. The city of Berlin was similarly split into four. Plans were made to prosecute war criminals in both Japan and Germany. In October 1945, the United Nations was created. People around the world celebrated the end of the conflict, but America's use of atomic bombs and disagreements between the United States and the Soviet Union at Yalta and Potsdam would contribute to ongoing instability in the postwar world.

Key Terms

Big Three the nickname given to the leaders of the three major Allied nations: Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin

conscientious objectors those who, for religious or philosophical reasons, refuse to serve in the armed forces

D-day June 6, 1944, the date of the invasion of Normandy, France, by British, Canadian, and American forces, which opened a second front in Europe

Double V campaign a campaign by African Americans to win victory over the enemy overseas and victory over racism at home

Enola Gay the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima

Executive Order 9066 the order given by President Roosevelt to relocate and detain people of Japanese ancestry, including those who were American citizens

Fascism a political ideology that places a heightened focus on national unity, through dictatorial rule, and militarism

internment the forced incarceration of the West Coast Japanese and Japanese American population into ten relocation centers for the greater part of World War II

Manhattan Project the code name given to the research project that developed the atomic bomb

materiel equipment and supplies used by the military

Rosie the Riveter a symbol of female workers in the defense industries

zoot suit a flamboyant outfit favored by young African American and Mexican American men

Summary

27.1 The Origins of War: Europe, Asia, and the United States

America sought, at the end of the First World War, to create new international relationships that would make such wars impossible in the future. But as the Great Depression hit Europe, several new leaders rose to power under the new political ideologies of Fascism and Nazism. Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany were both proponents of Fascism, using dictatorial rule to achieve national unity. Still, the United States remained focused on the economic challenges of its own Great Depression. Hence, there was little interest in getting involved in Europe's problems or even the China-Japan conflict.

It soon became clear, however, that Germany and Italy's alliance was putting democratic countries at risk. Roosevelt first sought to support Great Britain and China by providing economic support without intervening directly. However, when Japan, an ally of Germany and Italy, attacked Pearl Harbor, catching the military base unaware and claiming thousands of lives, America's feelings toward war shifted, and the country was quickly pulled into the global conflict.

27.2 The Home Front

The brunt of the war's damage occurred far from United States soil, but Americans at home were still greatly affected by the war. Women struggled to care for children with scarce resources at their disposal and sometimes while working full time. Economically, the country surged forward, but strict rationing

for the war effort meant that Americans still went without. New employment opportunities opened up for women and ethnic minorities, as white men enlisted or were drafted. These new opportunities were positive for those who benefited from them, but they also created new anxieties among white men about racial and gender equality. Race riots took place across the country, and Americans of Japanese ancestry were relocated to internment camps. Still, there was an overwhelming sense of patriotism in the country, which was reflected in the culture of the day.

27.3 Victory in the European Theater

Upon entering the war, President Roosevelt believed that the greatest threat to the long-term survival of democracy and freedom would be a German victory. Hence, he entered into an alliance with British prime minister Winston Churchill and Soviet premier Joseph Stalin to defeat the common enemy while also seeking to lay the foundation for a peaceful postwar world in which the United States would play a major and permanent role. Appeasement and nonintervention had been proven to be shortsighted and tragic policies that failed to provide security and peace either for the United States or for the world.

With the aid of the British, the United States invaded North Africa and from there invaded Europe by way of Italy. However, the cross-channel invasion of Europe through France that Stalin had long called for did not come until 1944, by which time the Soviets had turned the tide of battle in eastern Europe. The liberation of Hitler's concentration camps forced Allied nations to confront the grisly horrors that had been taking place as the war unfolded. The Big Three met for one last time in February 1945, at Yalta, where Churchill and Roosevelt agreed to several conditions that strengthened Stalin's position. They planned to finalize their plans at a later conference, but Roosevelt died two months later.

27.4 The Pacific Theater and the Atomic Bomb

The way in which the United States fought the war in the Pacific was fueled by fear of Japanese imperialistic aggression, as well as anger over Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and its mistreatment of its enemies. It was also influenced by a long history of American racism towards Asians that dated back to the nineteenth century. From hostile anti-Japanese propaganda to the use of two atomic bombs on Japanese cities, America's actions during the Pacific campaign were far more aggressive than they were in the European theater. Using the strategy of island hopping, the United States was able to get within striking distance of Japan. Only once they adopted this strategy were the Allied troops able to turn the tide against what had been a series of challenging Japanese victories. The war ended with Japan's surrender.

The combined Allied forces had successfully waged a crusade against Nazi Germany, Italy, and Japan. The United States, forced to abandon a policy of nonintervention outside the Western Hemisphere, had been able to mobilize itself and produce the weapons and the warriors necessary to defeat its enemies. Following World War II, America would never again retreat from the global stage, and its early mastery of nuclear weapons would make it the dominant force in the postwar world.

Review Questions

1. The United States Senator who led the noninterventionists in Congress and called for neutrality legislation in the 1930s was _____.
 - A. Gerald P. Nye
 - B. Robert Wagner
 - C. George C. Marshall
 - D. Neville Chamberlain
2. Describe Franklin Roosevelt's efforts on behalf of German Jews in the 1930s. How was he able to help, and in what ways did his actions come up short?

3. During World War II, unionized workers agreed _____.
 - A. to work without pay
 - B. to go without vacations or days off
 - C. to live near the factories to save time commuting
 - D. to keep production going by not striking
4. The program to recruit Mexican agricultural workers during World War II was the _____.
 - A. bracero program
 - B. maquiladora program
 - C. brazzos program
 - D. campesino program
5. What were American women's contributions to the war effort?
6. Which of the following demands did the Soviet Union make of Britain and the United States?
 - A. the right to try all Nazi war criminals in the Soviet Union
 - B. the invasion of North Africa to help the Soviet Union's ally Iraq
 - C. the invasion of western Europe to draw German forces away from the Soviet Union
 - D. the right to place Communist Party leaders in charge of the German government
7. What did Roosevelt mean to achieve with his demand for Germany and Japan's unconditional surrender?
8. What were the phases of the Holocaust?
9. Which of the following islands had to be captured in order to provide a staging area for U.S. bombing raids against Japan?
 - A. Sakhalin
 - B. Iwo Jima
 - C. Molokai
 - D. Reunion
10. What purpose did the Allied strategy of island hopping serve?
11. Why might President Truman have made the decision to drop the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki?

Critical Thinking Questions

12. Given that the Japanese war against China began in 1937 and German aggression began in Europe in 1936, why was it not until 1941 that the United States joined the war against the Axis powers? Was the decision to stay out of the war until 1941 a wise one on the part of the United States?
13. Should the United States have done more to help European Jews during the 1930s? What could it have done?
14. In what ways did World War II improve the status of women and African Americans in the United States?
15. Should the U.S. government have ordered the internment of Japanese Americans? Does the fear of espionage or sabotage justify depriving American citizens of their rights?
16. Did the United States make the right decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan?

