The End of the European Era
1890 to the Present

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CHAPTER 8

The Second World War

THE SECOND World War began as a war of Poland, Great Britain, and France against Nazi Germany and for the next two years remained primarily a European war. It became a global conflict in December 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and provoked the United States into the war. The fifteen months following the entry of the United States were decisive. Winston Churchill, in the fourth volume of his history of the Second World War, saw this period as "the turning point" of the war.[1] Until the end of the summer of 1942 Germany attacked and advanced. Thereafter the initiative was held by the opponents of Fascism.

Holding the initiative, however, did not bring with it the assurance of final victory. As the British historian Richard Overy has persuasively argued, there was nothing inevitable about the Allied victory, even after the great turning points of 1942. The Allies' economic superiority was certainly important, but it alone could not have guaranteed victory. Of crucial importance was the Allies' ability to learn from their initial mistakes, to make the organizational, logistical, and managerial reforms that allowed them to collaborate more effectively and to bring the full force of their superior numbers and firepower to bear against the enemy. Yet even this achievement might not have been decisive had not the Allied soldiers and peoples shown that they were every bit as determined, resourceful, and courageous as their Axis foes.

THE EUROPEAN WAR

Germany in Command

Until the autumn of 1940 the Germans marched from triumph to triumph. Poland, whose resistance to Hitler's demands had ended the period of appease-

[1] Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. IV, *The Hinge of Fate* (Boston, 1950), p. 830.

ment, was eliminated in a campaign of just one month, which provided the first glimpse of the military weapons and tactics which would dominate the conduct of the war. The Germans used their tremendous air superiority to destroy the Polish Air Force on the ground and then to bomb roads and railroads and interrupt communications so that the Polish troops lost any possibility of movement. There was no such thing as a relatively safe rear. By concentrating an overwhelming force of tanks at certain points, the Germans broke through the Polish lines; they then secured their flanks at the breakthrough points and sent the tanks, followed by motorized infantry, streaming into the open countryside, where they turned to the right or left, dividing the enemy forces into isolated segments, which were encircled and annihilated one after the other. In the confusion created by this lightning attack, or blitzkrieg, only the big cities maintained organized resistance. Warsaw was heroically defended; the German answer was a bombardment from the air which reduced it to ruins—the first example of the destruction of a large city by air attack.

On September 27, hardly four weeks after the outbreak of the war, Polish resistance was at an end, and Poland was partitioned between Germany and Soviet Russia. The Russians quickly occupied the eastern half of Poland, which had been promised to them in the German-Soviet treaty, and they also advanced into the Baltic states—Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia. Thus, they gained control of a long stretch of the southern coast of the Baltic Sea. The Germans annexed a large part of Poland and for the remainder created a Polish protectorate ruled by a German government. The delimination of the German and Russian spheres was settled in Moscow on September 28 in what was called the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty.

The "Phony War"

French and British military leaders were slow to learn the lessons of the Polish campaign. They believed that the blitzkrieg tactics had been effective only because of Poland's military weakness and could not be applied against armies of greater power. Although German strength in the west was limited, the British and French had not supported the Poles by an attack on Germany, being satisfied to gain time for building up their forces.

What followed was the period of the "phony war." In the west the enemies confronted each other without engaging in serious fighting. German inactivity lulled the French and British into false security. They placed unjustifiably high hopes on the effects of economic warfare; from the outset they set up a tight blockade to prevent Germany from getting goods from abroad. Because they doubted that the Germans would dare to attack in the west, their measures for strengthening the defenses in France lacked the necessary energy. The Maginot Line was not extended along the Belgian frontier to the coast. The French and British governments felt so secure in the west that their attention focused on other areas. When the Russians invaded Finland in November 1939, in order to improve their military defense line in the north, the French and British

The beginning of the Second World War. German motorized troops driving into Poland. Note the boundary sign with the Polish eagle, which the Germans removed and took along.

decided to assemble an expeditionary force to aid the Finns. But before this assistance could be sent, the war ended, in March 1940, with the Finns conceding to the Russians the demanded frontier revision.

Concerned by the British and French interest in this northern area, Hitler decided to eliminate the possibility of military action by the Western Allies from the north. On April 9 German troops drove over the Danish frontier and occupied Denmark; at the same time they attacked Norway. The Norwegians resisted but were overwhelmed. The German success was due to a brilliantly executed combination of action by naval and air forces and paratroops. The British and French countermeasures were fumbling; troops were thrown in without antiaircraft protection and artillery and were quickly destroyed by the Germans.

From the British point of view, the Norwegian defeat had one favorable consequence. A dramatic session of the House of Commons showed that Neville Chamberlain had lost the confidence of his countrymen. He resigned on May 10 and was succeeded by Winston Churchill, who formed a government in which all three parties—Conservative, Liberal, and Labor—participated. Churchill writes that he went to bed that night with "a profound sense of relief. At last I had the authority to give directions over the whole scene. I felt as if I were walking with Destiny, and that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial."[2]

[2] Ibid, vol. I, *The Gathering Storm* (Boston, 1948), p. 667.

French troops manning the Maginot Line.

The Opening of the Western Offensive

On the very day this change of government took place, the German offensive in the west began. While the Maginot Line remained quiet, the northern wing of the German armies advanced on a broad front, invading the Netherlands and Belgium. German paratroops seized the Dutch airfields and bridges and made an orderly defense of the country impossible. An air raid on Rotterdam obliterated the center of the city, and on May 14 the Dutch army capitulated after Queen Wilhelmina (ruled 1890–1948) and the government had succeeded in escaping to England. Belgian resistance lasted longer, thanks to British and French support. But the Germans, utilizing the same tactics as in Poland, achieved a breakthrough in the Ardennes, and their tanks raced ahead into France, toward Amiens and Abbeville, splitting the defending forces into two parts. The northern part, including the entire Belgian Army, most of the British troops in France, and a portion of the French Army, was then enclosed in a steadily contracting ring. On May 27 the Belgian king Leopold III (ruled 1934–1951) capitulated with his army. British and French troops were pushed back to the beaches of Dunkirk and evacuated from there. Waiting on the beaches, the Allied forces were subjected to steady bombing from the air. A German tank attack probably would have been disastrous, but Hitler evidently believed that the destruction of the exposed troops could be left to the air force and kept his tanks back. Nevertheless, the saving of these forces required an immense effort; the miracle of Dunkirk was made possible by the strength of the British Navy, under whose protection an endless number of small craft brought the soldiers over the Channel. Between May 27 and June 4, 338,226 men reached England.

The tanks which Hitler did not employ at Dunkirk were used in the attack against the other half of the Allied forces, consisting of the bulk of the French Army, which had formed a front along the Somme. Again, the German tanks succeeded in breaking through the defenders' lines. Roads were clogged with refugees; German airplanes strafed people scurrying along, creating panic and confusion. The collapse of communications prevented French airplanes and

antitank guns from reaching the front, and the enemy was able to advance rapidly.

On June 14 the Germans entered Paris. The French government had fled southward. In hurried visits, Churchill tried to persuade the French to remain in the war. Prime Minister Paul Reynaud (1878–1966) was willing to do so. But with Germans advancing over the Loire and attacking from the rear the Maginot Line, where the last well-organized French military force was stationed, the military leaders declared all further resistance useless and demanded that the government end the war. Reynaud resigned and was succeeded by Marshal Pétain, who on June 17 asked for an armistice. Most of the country was occupied by the Germans; only southeastern France and North Africa remained under French control. In the unoccupied part of France, with Vichy as capital, a French government under Pétain as head of state was established; in the later periods of the war, starting in April 1942, the directing spirit of this government was Pierre Laval, who expected a German victory and regarded close cooperation with the Nazis as the only possible French policy.

North Africa's freedom from German occupation subsequently proved of great value to the Allied forces, but in the spring and summer of 1940 the French surrender appeared an unmitigated disaster. This impression was reinforced by the establishment under Pétain of a new authoritarian government in Vichy, so that even unoccupied France was absorbed into the antidemocratic camp. There is no doubt that in the shock of defeat many Frenchmen shared Pétain's belief that an abandonment of the ideas of the Third Republic and a new hierarchical organization of society were desirable. Few remained convinced, with Charles de Gaulle, that France had lost a battle but not the war. "The outcome of the struggle has not been decided by the Battle of France. This is a world war."[3] This statement was part of de Gaulle's first appeal from London, in June 1940, to form a movement for the liberation of France. De Gaulle had made a name for himself through writings in which he had stressed the importance of tanks and motorized forces in future wars. In the campaign of 1940 he had proved himself as a tank commander against the Germans; he was named undersecretary of war by Reynaud on June 6 because he could be relied on to support the prime minister's efforts to keep France in the war. When those proved abortive, de Gaulle escaped in a British plane to London. There he organized the Free French movement, insisting that he alone spoke for France and that France was still a great power. He kept a proud distance from the various governments-in-exile which, after the German occupation of their countries, were set up in London.

The Battle of Britain

On June 10, before the French campaign had ended, Italy entered the war. The Italians had been resentful that Hitler had gone ahead even though they

[3] Quoted in *The Complete War Memoirs of Charles de Gaulle*, vol. I, *The Call to Honour*, trans. by Jonathan Griffins (New York, 1955), p. 84.

After the French defeat in 1940. Motorized German SS troops at the Place de la Bastille in Paris.

had told him that Italy was not ready for war in 1939. As long as the "phony war" lasted, neutrality seemed appropriate, since it might give Italy a chance to act as a mediator. But as Germany progressed unchecked, Mussolini became increasingly restless. His proud claims of having created a new disciplined and powerful state would seem idle boasts if Italy remained outside the war. For the outcome of the campaign in France, Italy's entry into the conflict was irrelevant. But it presented a serious threat to British communication through the Mediterranean and to the British position in the Near East.

Great Britain was dangerously alone. The German high command was sure that "the final German victory over England is only a question of time,"[4] and plans were made for invading England. But German strategy had always centered on land warfare, and the military leaders, including Hitler, felt insecure in planning for a campaign combining naval and land operations. According to the German military leaders, a successful invasion first required air attacks to eliminate all serious British resistance. And Göring, the commander of the German Air Force, gave assurances that his bombers and fighter planes could force Great Britain to its knees.

The German air fleet was superior to the British, although antiaircraft artillery and the concentration of air squadrons in southern England compensated somewhat for the difference in numbers. The Germans began in July with an attack on airfields and military installations, forcing the British into air battles in order

[4] From entry dated June 30, 1940, "War Diary of General Jodl."

to destroy the Royal Air Force. Indeed, the RAF did lose continuously in strength. Then, at the beginning of September—in a change which is generally considered to have been a crucial mistake—the Germans switched to bombing attacks on London. The decisive days of the Battle of Britain were in the middle of September, when the British had to put their reserves into the defense of London. The British inflicted heavy losses on the German air fleet. These blows made the Germans aware that full air protection for a landing operation was unobtainable, and they abandoned their invasion plans. However, they continued night raids on London until November, averaging two hundred bombers on each mission. These had no direct strategic purpose; they were intended to weaken British morale and will to resist. The blitz on London was followed by attacks on other cities, the most devastating being the raid on Coventry on November 14, in which four hundred people were killed and the center of the city, including its historic cathedral, was completely destroyed. At the end of the year London again became the target of an air attack; incendiary bombs were used, and many of the city's most ancient monuments, including Guildhall and numerous churches designed by Sir Christopher Wren, were badly damaged or destroyed. But the morale of the people was not broken, nor was the production of war materials interrupted. Britain actually managed to produce more airplanes than Germany in 1940. In the Battle of Britain, Hitler had received his first check; he was forced to abandon the plan to achieve quick victory through a direct attack on Great Britain. As Churchill said of the British pilots who were instrumental in this triumph, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

Pétain, head of the French government after the surrender, addressing the citizens of Vichy.

THE SHIFT OF THE THEATER OF WAR FROM THE WEST TO THE EAST

England's Chances of Survival

The victory in the Battle of Britain gave an immense lift to the morale of the opponents of the Nazis because after the almost clocklike precision of the campaigns in Poland, Norway, and France, it demonstrated that even Nazi plans could go awry. Still, the British situation seemed hopeless. Churchill himself later confessed that, whereas "normally I wake up buoyant to face the new day," in 1940 "I woke with dread in my heart."

Churchill saw little chance that England could win the war alone but believed that if England could hold out long enough, the United States would enter the war against the Nazis. When Churchill became a member of the government on the outbreak of the war, he began a correspondence with President Roosevelt, informing the president about the developing war scene. Roosevelt's antagonism to Nazi despotism was well known. Moreover, it was his basic axiom, which he had held since the First World War, that it was of vital importance for the security of the United States to have the command over the Atlantic in friendly hands. He fully sympathized with the English, whom he was most eager to help. But

After the air raids in London. Tumbling ruins with St. Paul's Cathedral in the background.

he certainly preferred that the Nazis be held in check without the United States's taking an active part in the war. Roosevelt also felt that the United States could enter the war only with the full backing of Congress and the American people and that they had not yet been awakened to the dangers which democracy and their way of life would face if the Nazis ruled Europe. Organizations like the America First Committee, which included such influential figures as Charles Lindbergh and William Randolph Hearst, argued that world Communism was a greater danger to America than Nazism. Roosevelt knew that before the United States took any action which might lead to war, it had to be better prepared militarily; only in 1940 was the military budget increased and conscription introduced.

Churchill's demands for concrete action of support became urgent in the summer of 1940; Britain's losses in small ships and destroyers during the evacuation at Dunkirk were so great that Britain's shipping lanes had become extremely vulnerable to attack by German submarines. The maintenance of the shipping lanes not only for the provision of food but for import of raw materials needed to manufacture war equipment and airplanes was vital. Thus, Churchill wrote to Roosevelt: "We must ask, therefore, as a matter of life or death, to be reinforced with these [American] destroyers." On the American side the difficulties—constitutional as well as practical—of such a move were very great, but after long and complicated negotiations, on September 2, 1940, an agreement was reached which helped to increase the security of both countries. Britain would receive fifty overage destroyers from the United States; in exchange, it would lease naval and air bases in the West Indies for ninety-nine years to the United States. This deal did not represent a violation of American neutrality, but it certainly gave strong public expression to the community of interests between the United States and Britain. Churchill was not wrong in thinking that after this first step was made, other steps would follow, which would bring American participation in the war nearer and nearer. Indeed, in a broadcast on December 29, 1940, Roosevelt declared formally that it was the task of the United States to serve as "the arsenal of democracy," and Congress responded by passing in March 1941 the Lend-Lease Act, which permitted the president to provide war materials to those states whose survival was vital to the security of the United States; after the Nazi invasion of Russia this act was applied also to Soviet Russia. The identity of American and British interests was publicly announced in the Atlantic Charter, a document issued after a meeting between Roosevelt and Churchill on a warship off the coast of Newfoundland in August 1941. In the Atlantic Charter, the two leaders emphasized that the war must result in freedom, independence, and an improvement in living standards for all people. Thus, although Churchill remained impatient for the United States to become a full participant in the war, his expectation that this would happen—which in the summer of 1940 seemed a wild gamble—appeared more and more a correct calculation.

Hopeful signs for Britain could be found not just in the diplomatic field. In modern military operations information and intelligence, an area which in previous times held only a rather subordinate role in comparison to strategy and tactics, had become vitally important. It was in this field that the English had a great asset. They had been able to get hold of a "complete, new, electrically operated" cipher machine, fabricated in Germany under the manufacturing name of Enigma; it was by means of this machine that Hitler and the German high command exchanged signals with the various chiefs of the army, air, and navy staffs and with the army group commanders. It was possible therefore to receive these signals in England. Of course, they were given in code, and the decoding required mathematical skill of the highest order. But the fact is that by means of Ultra—the code name for this intelligence operation—the British gained a good amount of advance information about military movements planned by the Germans. Ultra proved its value first in the Battle of Britain: Information about the areas which the Luftwaffe was to attack and knowledge of the direction from which the planes came made it possible to intercept them before they reached their goal or to concentrate planes from various regions in the threatened areas. Ultra, together with radar, which, in contrast to the Germans, the British had fully developed, contributed importantly to the outcome of the Battle of Britain. Ultra played its role in all further campaigns in which British and American troops were involved: in the earlier years, when the Germans were superior and on the offensive, frequently by indicating where and when the attack would come, so that retreat from untenable positions could be arranged in time—this happened in North Africa when Rommel opened his general offensive—and later, in revealing the distribution of German tank divisions in France—information which had great importance for the success of the Normandy invasion in June 1944.

The British had also broken the code of the Abwehr, the German secret service. In consequence they knew about the spies the Germans had in England and began to "control" them, offering them the alternative either to disappear in prison or to continue their activities but to tell their employers in Germany what the English wanted them to know. This double cross system had few risks for the English because in possession of the code of the Abwehr, they knew exactly what these agents reported to Germany. The result was the establishment of an elaborate system of deception, which had some success in keeping the German troops dispersed—either by threatening landings in France long before it was feasible or by giving the Germans incorrect information about the locale where the invasions on the Continent would take place.

During the winter of 1940–1941 British scientists also established that the rapid development of an atomic bomb was possible, although continuation of work on this project was then transferred to Canada and the United States.

However, even if Britain could hold out, would there be any chance to regain a foothold on the Continent from which a counteroffensive could be started?

The struggle which took place in the Mediterranean area in the winter of 1940–1941 and the spring of 1941 was England's attempt to keep the door open for a later invasion of Europe; for Hitler it was a campaign to ensure complete control of the European continent.

The Mediterranean Campaign

After the triumphant French campaign the Germans had forced Hungary and Romania into the German orbit; they had even sent troops into Romania to guard the oil fields against possible attacks by enemies. Mussolini had always considered the Balkans his own domain and was not pleased to see the Germans extending into this area. Moreover, he was dissatisfied with the minor role his country was playing in the European conflict, and decided to gain military laurels by attacking Greece. But the Italian troops which moved from Albania toward Greece were not prepared for the valiant resistance they encountered. Instead of the Italians' occupying Greece, the Greeks conquered a fourth of Italian-controlled Albania.

The Italian plight in the winter of 1940–1941 was made even worse by defeats inflicted by the British in North Africa, where Hitler finally felt that he had to come to the assistance of his fellow dictator by sending German tanks, under one of the best German tank commanders, Erwin Rommel. But Hitler's main attention was directed toward the Balkans. The Italian difficulties gave him the opportunity to establish firmly the German hegemony over this area. While Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria accepted close ties with the Axis, assuming the role of satellites, Yugoslavia refused a similar arrangement; Hitler overwhelmed the country in a quick campaign, which he continued into Greece. The Greeks were unable to hold off the Germans, and their country was occupied in a few weeks. Finally, through the daring use of paratroops, even Crete was conquered and in German hands by May 31, 1941. In vain had the British sent support to Greece from Africa.

It had been a rather desperate move on the part of the British since the chances of resisting the German onslaught were small. But Churchill and Anthony Eden, who had again become secretary of foreign affairs, were convinced that the possibilities of mobilizing the European peoples, at a later, more favorable time, against the Nazis would end if they could not point out that they had tried to help the one country which had been willing to take up arms against the Fascist powers.

The resultant weakening of their forces in Africa left the British unable to resist Rommel, who drove them back to the Egyptian frontier. The entire area seemed helpless and open to a German onslaught, and it is difficult to imagine what would have happened if Hitler had moved into Egypt, Turkey, and other states of the Near East. But Hitler's target was the Soviet Union. Although the Balkan campaign had caused delays in his plans for an attack against Russia, Hitler now ordered them carried out; on June 22, 1941, German troops marched

over the borders of Russia. At the same time the Finns resumed military operations against Russia.

The Eastern Offensive

After the failure to achieve a quick decision against Great Britain, Hitler seems to have been somewhat uncertain what his next move ought to be. It was then that the plan of a campaign against Russia began to take definite form. German expansion toward the east had always been Hitler's aim, but he had intended to postpone this enterprise until the western nations had been defeated. However, after the victory in France, Great Britain's aggressive potential seemed negligible, and Hitler concluded that the subjection of Russia could be achieved while the war against Great Britain continued. His hostility toward Russia had been reinforced by the energy with which the Bolshevik leaders had acted after the defeat of Poland, taking immediate possession of those areas which had been defined in the German-Soviet treaty as belonging to the Russian sphere of interest. In a visit to Berlin in November 1940 the Soviet foreign minister, Vyacheslav Molotov (1890–1986), showed that the Russians were by no means willing to give the Germans a free hand in the Balkans. Even earlier Hitler had ordered the German general staff to work out plans for an attack against Russia; after Molotov's visit he decided to carry out these plans in 1941.

The Soviet rulers had received warnings of what was coming, but up to the last moment they made desperate attempts to avoid a break with Germany. They had no illusions about how precarious their situation would be in case of war with Germany.

At first, the campaign against Russia seemed to lead to a quick and complete triumph, even discounting Nazi exaggeration of the number of Russian prisoners of war taken in the early weeks of the campaign. The Russians conceded after the war that "Soviet strategic theory as propounded by the Draft Field Regulations of 1939 and other documents did not prove to be entirely realistic. For one thing, they denied the effectiveness of the blitzkrieg which tended to be dismissed as a lopsided bourgeois theory."[5] The Russians were surprised by the German use of tank formations for breakthroughs and encirclement. The Germans' air superiority enabled their air force to attack Russian airfields and destroy Russian planes on the ground. The Russian debacle was magnified by orders ascribed to Stalin to hold out in advance positions, causing the troops to miss opportunities to retreat before the ring of encirclement was closed. At Kiev, in one such encirclement of Russian forces, the Germans took 175,000 prisoners of war.

By October the Germans were before Moscow and Leningrad, and in a speech

[5] This citation is from the Russian official *History of the War* (1960). Quoted by Alexander Werth, *Russia at War, 1941–1945* (New York, 1964), p. 133.

AXIS EXPANSION IN THE WEST
1942

Greatest extent of Axis occupation or control

Areas controlled by Vichy France

on October 2 Hitler announced a "final drive" against Moscow. People began to flee the city. Trains were packed, officials set out in their cars, and although some factories worked day and night to produce antitank defenses, or hedgehogs, which were immediately placed in the roads around Moscow, other factories were evacuated. Doubts grew that the capital could be held.

The official will to defend the city was underlined by an announcement that Stalin was in Moscow. In the first weeks of the war he seems to have been near a nervous collapse and to have almost lost control. But his firmness in the desperate situation when the Germans were beleaguering Leningrad and approaching Moscow muted all criticism and established him in undisputed authority as the supreme military leader. He began to be presented as a second Peter the

Great. In newspapers and literature there was a deliberate stimulation of interest in the Russian past, even in tsarist history, and the war came to be called the Great Patriotic War. The Bolshevik leaders wanted the struggle to be seen as an event which concerned not only Communists but all the Russian people. At the beginning of November, in two great speeches, Stalin invoked Russian nationalism as the inspiration for resistance to the hordes of invading barbarians. By then, the German offensive had lost its impetus, probably less because of the strength of the Russian stand than because of logistical difficulties: the necessary supplies for the tanks, artillery, and men had not kept up with the rapid advance. When the Germans started a second push in November, the Russians were prepared; their embittered resistance, together with an early onset of winter, which severely hurt the insufficiently clad German troops, caused this second offensive against Moscow to fail.

Nevertheless, the Russian situation remained serious. By the end of the campaign of 1941 the Germans had conquered most of the Ukraine, were close to Moscow, and had surrounded Leningrad, which remained under siege for eighteen months. These advances had been bought with very heavy losses—between seven and eight hundred thousand men. The Russians were quick to learn from their defeats. Generals who had been promoted because of their political merits were replaced by brilliant professionals, such as Georgy Zhukov, Semion Timoshenko, and Boris Shaposhnikov. The Russians showed great ingenuity in transporting factories from threatened areas into the safe hinterland of the Urals and Siberia. They were able to accelerate the production of tanks, airplanes, and artillery, and the Russian heavy artillery proved to be superior to that of the Germans. Moreover, supplies from Great Britain and the United States began to arrive on convoys that traveled on hazardous sea lanes to Murmansk. These supplies filled the gaps in production that occurred while factories were being moved to safe areas. In contrast to what had happened in Poland, France, and the Balkans, victory in one quick campaign escaped the Germans in Russia.

THE WAR AT ITS HEIGHT

The Global War

At the beginning of 1942 the entire war changed in character. It ceased to be a purely European conflict and became global. To Japanese advocates of expansionism the European struggle seemed to offer a unique opportunity for establishing a Japanese Empire in the Far East. Great Britain was unable to intervene, and the German occupation of the Netherlands and France made the Far Eastern possessions of these countries an easy prey. From French Indochina, which they occupied in 1940, the Japanese prepared to move against Burma, the East Indies, and Singapore. The United States, which wanted to help Britain and in addition had a vital interest in preventing the domination of this area by a single power, opposed these Japanese moves by diplomatic representations and eco-

nomic pressures. Negotiations conducted in Washington between the two states were unsuccessful, however, and were near collapse when, on December 7, 1941, the Japanese made a surprise attack on the U.S. fleet in Pearl Harbor, sinking three battleships and severely damaging five others. The next day the United States formally declared war on Japan.

The outbreak of hostilities between Japan and the United States was followed on December 11, by declarations of war on the United States by Germany and Italy. The Axis powers were bound by a treaty concluded in 1940 to assist Japan in case of attack by a state not involved in the European war; it remains strange, however, that Hitler, who had few inclinations to honor treaty obligations, believed that he had to fulfill this one. To declare war on the United States was his personal decision, and his hatred of President Roosevelt, the protagonist of the democratic world, was probably a prime motive. Most of all, Hitler's decision showed that despite the setbacks in Russia, he felt supremely confident. His lack of knowledge of American politics also played its role. He seems never to have considered that without this declaration of war, American military action might have focused on the Far East rather than Europe.

There can be no doubt also that the German declaration of war on the United States solved the dilemma which Roosevelt had faced in the preceding months. The United States and Great Britain had moved closer and closer together, and American protection of a neutrality zone far into the Atlantic Ocean had considerably diminished the effects of the German submarine war. Yet Roosevelt and his advisers had become increasingly convinced that direct participation of the United States in the war was needed for defeating Nazi Germany. Roosevelt also believed that although the American people approved a policy of giving strong support to Great Britain, they would still have to be shown that they were directly threatened in order to accept the necessity of participation in the war unhesitatingly, but so far the Germans had avoided all direct provocation. After the German declaration of war it was now possible to coordinate British and American war efforts in a much more systematic and effective fashion.

On December 22, Churchill and a number of his military advisers arrived in Washington, and except for a trip to Canada he stayed in the United States until January 14, 1942. In the meetings in Washington two important decisions were made, one strategical, the other organizational. It was agreed that a defeat of Hitler was the first goal; the European theater of war was given precedence over the Far East. In addition, a unified command was created; within each of the various theaters of war the British and American troops were placed under a single commander, either British or American. The direction of the strategy of the war was entrusted to a committee, the Combined Chiefs of Staff, in which the outstanding figures were General George C. Marshall (1880–1959), the chief of staff of the army on the American side, and Sir John Dill (1881–1944), on the British side.

There was never close cooperation in military planning between the Com-

bined Chiefs of Staff and the Russian general staff. On the contrary, the Russians were most reluctant to give information to the British and American military representatives in Moscow. The organizational unification of British and American military effort helped prevent the delays, frictions, and disorders which usually occur in the conduct of a coalition war; even so, some decisions were reached only after long debates. It was the bond of friendship and respect which existed between Roosevelt and Churchill—together with their interest in and understanding of military affairs—that served to smooth out the difficulties which arose from differences among the generals.

The main issue under dispute throughout the war years was the timing of the invasion of France. The Americans were eager to embark on this enterprise in 1942; the British were probably right in considering such an undertaking premature at a time when the Germans were at the height of their power and the American troops were inexperienced. The British idea of abandoning the plan of a continental invasion in 1942 and substituting a landing in North Africa was appropriate, just as at a later stage the Americans were probably justified in opposing British plans to extend operations in the Mediterranean area by an attack through the Balkan Peninsula—the "soft underbelly of the Axis"—and in insisting instead on invasion of France across the English Channel.

Total War

In becoming global, the war also had become total, at least in the sense that in all countries the needs of war were accepted to be controlling all spheres and activities of life, although, according to geography, wealth, and closeness to war, the degree of control and regulation varied.

Britain's insular position and its dependence on other countries for food had quickly led to controls of imports and exports, allocation of raw material, and, in order to prevent a lowering of morale, limitations on profits. Rationing of food and clothes was efficiently organized. The main problem for Britain as well as for all the European belligerents was manpower; the British National Service Act of December 1941 established that men and women—men from eighteen to fifty, women from twenty to thirty—were subject to either military or essential civilian war service. The manpower needs became so great that in the final year of the war a "grandmother category" had to be added: The conscription of women was extended to age fifty.

The most severe manpower regulations, however, were those in Russia. There all men from sixteen to fifty-five and all women from sixteen to forty-five were mobilized. The reason for the almost unbelievable extent of this mobilization was the catastrophic effect of the German victories in the early months of the war: the occupation of Russia's industrially most advanced regions; the loss of about 2.5 million men and immense amounts of equipment, most important fourteen thousand tanks, more than 90 percent of what the Russians had originally possessed. Industries now had to be constructed in the security of the

remote Ural region to which workers had to be transported, more than 50 percent of the labor force employed in these factories were women. By 1943 the Russians were producing two thousand tanks and three thousand airplanes per month.

The greatest change brought about by the transformation of the European war into a global war took place in Germany. This may seem astounding because the expansionist and aggressive policy which the Nazis had conducted could be expected to have prepared from the outset for total war. But Nazi leaders were thinking in terms of blitzkrieg. Their aim was to have a limited military production which provided a supply of weapons and equipment adequate for a blitzkrieg. A material reservoir of this size would be maintained; after a blitzkrieg campaign was over, the loss of material would soon be replaced, especially since the material taken from the enemy would compensate for part of the losses. This approach to military production had the advantage of flexibility so that changes could be easily made, suited to the particularities of a planned campaign. Moreover, this method left the working of a great part of the German industrial machine undisturbed. The continuation of a peace economy in wartime was also secured by partial demobilization after each campaign.

The failure of the blitzkrieg in the east changed this situation. Supplies of equipment and weapons lasting for a limited number of months would no longer suffice. An increase in armaments and an expansion of the army were necessary, meaning that Germany had to convert to total mobilization, with allocation of war materials, standardization of weapons, and reduction of plane production to a few types. A Ministry of Armaments and Production provided centralized direction; indeed, under its minister, Albert Speer, it tripled German armaments production within two years. In handling its manpower mobilization, Germany did not rely on its female population as much as did the Allied countries. As we pointed out earlier, although the Nazis did exploit female labor during the war, their traditionalist view of gender roles induced them to keep German women at home as much as possible, while filling vacancies in the work force with imported foreign labor and Jews.

Europe under the Nazis

The adjustment of economic and civil life to the needs of total war had its bearing not only on Germany but had repercussions in all the countries occupied by the Nazis—i.e., throughout Europe. Soon after the conquest the occupied areas were organized according to Nazi aims. In the occupied territories of the east the Germans acted as if they were permanent rulers. Many of the inhabitants were removed and resettled, and large landed estates were given to German generals and Nazi leaders. Yugoslavia was divided, with one part forming the kingdom of Croatia, ruled by an Italian prince, and the rest remaining under direct German administration. Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary, being Nazi allies, retained their old rulers but were dominated by German-supported parties patterned after the Nazis. Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, and part of France

were under German occupation. The Germans used puppet governments as instruments for their rule, which came to be known as Quisling governments, after the Norwegian Nazi leader Vidkun Quisling.

Of all of these collaborationist regimes, the one with perhaps the most shameful record was Vichy France, in principle an independent state, though in reality a puppet of Berlin. In an effort to retain as much of its sham sovereignty as possible, the Vichy regime of Pétain and Laval diligently did the Germans' bidding, including helping it solve the "Jewish problem." Indeed, as historians Robert Paxton and Michael Marrus have shown, in this domain Vichy sometimes tried to out-Nazi the Nazis—for example, by beginning to deport Jewish children when this was not yet the policy of the Germans. In the end, Vichy deported some seventy-six thousand Jews from France, most of whom died in the camps.

One of the chief aims of German occupation policy was economic exploitation. All the occupied countries had to pay for the costs of German occupation, and these costs were set extremely high. A good part of business profits were swallowed up in taxes, which went to Germany, mostly in form of deliveries of raw material and food. Moreover, rationing was introduced in the occupied countries but on levels very different from those in Germany. An industrial worker in Germany received twice as much bread, three times as much meat, seven times as many fats as an industrial worker in France. And although the difference in rations which the general consumer received was not quite as striking, it was considerable. Almost until the last year of the war it was possible to maintain a fairly high standard of living in Germany; meanwhile people in many occupied areas were starving. Regular economic activities and personal lives were further interrupted by the conscription and transportation of men of captive countries to Germany to work there in factories and labor battalions. The propaganda intended to justify these measures emphasized that German arms were defending Europe against Communism and that German domination would usher in a new period in which Europe would be unified. In all the subject countries parties organized in the pattern of the German Nazi party were established, and military units were formed to join in the fight against Communism. Thus, in the campaign against Russia, Romanian, Hungarian, and Italian armies, as well as legions of volunteers from all over Europe—even from Spain—fought under the German command.

With the tightening of German controls over Europe, resistance movements arose in almost all of the occupied countries. Originally these movements consisted of isolated groups, such as the remnants of the former political parties, among which the socialists and Communists had particularly kept some cohesion, or of groups of nationalists, Catholics, and Protestants, who felt that they dishonored themselves if they allowed the brutal and un-Christian behavior of the Nazis to go on without taking some action. In time these various units began to cooperate with one another and combine into coordinated resistance organ-

izations. All these movements worked underground. For several years their activities consisted mainly of giving help and protection to those who, for political or racial reasons, were persecuted by the Nazis; *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* (1947) gives a moving portrayal of the existence of a Jewish family hidden by Dutch friends, but in the end found by the Nazis.

Another function of the resistance was the transmission of intelligence, particularly about German military movements; the French were able to maintain secret contacts with Great Britain, and the headquarters of de Gaulle's Free French movement in London were extremely well informed about developments in France. The various resistance groups kept in contact through secretly printed newspapers, many of a very high intellectual level. They contained not

only uncensored news but also lively debates on what the political structure of the occupied countries should be after liberation. The generally accepted aim was a thorough reorganization of political and social life. This demand for radical changes was only partly the result of the importance of socialists and Communists in the resistance; repudiation of the prewar ruling groups, whose policies had led to defeat and occupation, was general, and contempt for the men of the former ruling circles was intensified by the willingness of many financial and industrial leaders to collaborate with the Germans.

Throughout the occupation, the men of the resistance undertook single acts of sabotage, but the introduction of more elaborate guerrilla operations depended on circumstances. The Germans never succeeded in completely controlling the wild and inaccessible mountain regions of Yugoslavia; Yugoslav military organizations—the Communists under Marshal Tito (1892–1980), the royalists under Draža Mihajlović—remained active, usually fighting the Germans but sometimes fighting each other. In the wide forests and swamps of Russia, units composed of peasants and of soldiers who had escaped Germans encirclements operated behind the front, substantially damaging the German lines of communications. Resistance armies in Italy and France went into action when the invasion by American and British forces was imminent, contributing considerably to the collapse of German rule in the occupied areas.

Those participating in the resistance constituted a relatively small part of the populations, and they were exposed to great danger up to the end. The German secret police ruthlessly tortured people believed to possess information about underground activities, and the German troops, particularly the fanatic members of the SS, tried to stamp out sabotage and resistance by brute force. They made arrests in the middle of the night, took hostages and killed them on the smallest provocation, and shot people for the slightest suspicious moves.

The names of Lidice and Oradour are testimonies of Nazi terrorism. In revenge for the assassination of the Gestapo leader Reinhard Heydrich in 1942, the Czech village of Lidice was destroyed; its entire adult male population was killed, the women were placed in camps, and the children, separated from their families and nameless, were dispersed. In the French town of Oradour, in punishment for presumed support of partisans, the men were shot, and the women and the children were herded into the church and burned. (The fact that the Waffen-SS company that carried out this atrocity included fourteen native Frenchmen from Alsace came back to haunt the French when, after the war, they set out to use the Oradour massacre as a symbol to unify the nation in the contemplation of Nazi barbarism.) Because the conqueror's controls were so thorough and brutal, the resistance movement could exert effective pressure on the Nazis only when their reserves became strained and their grip started to loosen.

It is frequently said of the Germans that they are a systematic people. In confirmation of what admittedly is a somewhat doubtful generalization it can

German soldiers arresting Jews in Budapest for deportation to concentration camps.

be pointed out that when the Germans systematized the war effort by total mobilization, the Nazis thought the time had also come for what they called "the final solution" to the Jewish question. On January 20, 1942, in Wannsee, near Berlin, a conference was held under the chairmanship of Reinhard Heydrich, then the chief of the dreaded Security Service of the SS. Along with delegates of the chief organizations of the Nazi party, representatives of the ministries of the Interior and of Justice and of the Foreign Office took part; other participants were high officials of the civil administrations of all the occupied territories. The presence of this last category was particularly important because as Heydrich stated in presenting the agenda of the conference, the main purpose was to arrange for the particular measures needed so that Europe could "be combed through from west to east" for Jews, who would be evacuated "group by group, into so-called transit ghettos, to be transported from there farther to the east." An exception was made for Jews over sixty-five or those wounded or decorated in the First World War; they would be herded into a ghetto in Theresienstadt in Bohemia. All others would be transported to the east; indeed, now began the tragic spectacle of long trains coming from all parts of Europe, even as far as Rome, carrying Jews packed in cattle cars to the east. The east of course meant the extermination camps of Chelmno, Belsek, Majdanek, Treblinka, and Auschwitz, where gradually, often after having been forced to labor for the Nazis, nearly six million Jews were annihilated in the gas chambers.

What did the average German citizen back in the Reich know about this industrialized mass murder in the east? We shall never be able to say with any precision how many Germans were aware of the details of the "final solution,"

but the sheer ambitiousness and thoroughness of the enterprise, the rounding up and transport of masses of people out of Germany to the east, certainly presupposed the knowledge and indeed complicity of thousands of "ordinary Germans." Recent research has shown that much of the organizational work and even some of the killing were handled by civilians and military personnel who were not members of the Nazi party. The Nazi terror in general depended for its implementation and effectiveness on the cooperation of the broad mass of the German people; it was not simply the work of a small "elite." On the other hand, it overstates the case to argue, as has the political scientist Daniel Goldhagen in his controversial book *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (1997), that the Holocaust derived from a deep-seated and long-standing ambition on the part of the German people as a whole to eliminate the Jews from the face of the earth. German Gentiles' complicated attitude toward the Jews and things Jewish cannot be reduced to such a tendentious generalization, nor can the evil of the Holocaust be comprehended—if it can be comprehended at all—by locating it in the supposed national psyche and culture of a particular population. Accusations of collective guilt err not only by obscuring variations of opinion and practice within an allegedly uniform group but also by letting other complicit parties all too easily off the hook.

THE HINGE OF FATE

After the check which the Germans had received before Moscow in the winter of 1941, it was evident that the war would last long and that superiority in resources and materials would become increasingly decisive for victory. The entry of the United States into the war provided the Allies with a productive capacity which assured them material superiority. But it required time until American industrial potential was fully realized and American troops could effectively intervene in the war. The situation in the year 1942, therefore, was still precarious for the opponents of the Axis powers, which still possessed the initiative. It seemed by no means impossible that the Japanese might gain full control in the Far East and that the Axis in Europe might drive the British from the Mediterranean and knock Russia out of the war, thereby attaining an almost invincible position before the United States could make its weight felt.

In the first months of 1942 the advance of the Japanese in the Far East was awesome. They took the Philippines from the Americans; they conquered British forces on the Malay Peninsula and by February 15 were in Singapore, where they took sixty thousand prisoners. In combined land and sea operations they overran the Netherlands East Indies, reaching Batavia in March. They occupied Burma and took Mandalay on May 2. The road to India seemed open to them, and the barriers against their advance into Australia appeared to have fallen.

In Europe the campaigns of 1942 were of crucial importance. A German offensive in the east was undertaken at a time when, despite the failure before

German concentration camp at Sachsenhausen, near Berlin. In 10° F. weather the thinly clad inmates of the camp were forced to stand at attention for over six hours as guards searched outside the camp for an escaped prisoner. This was usual procedure in case of an escape and often lasted much longer; many died from the cruel exposure, and others dropped from exhaustion.

Moscow, German power was still at its peak. Hitler counted on accomplishing in a second Russian campaign what he had not succeeded in doing in 1941. The offensive began in June. It was mainly directed toward the southern half of the Russian front, its purpose being to deprive the Russians of the agricultural areas of the Ukraine, the industrial areas of the Donets Basin, and the oil fields of the Caucasus. The Nazis expected that Moscow and Leningrad, cut off from supplies, would be taken from the rear by encircling movements. The German armies succeeded in penetrating into the Caucasus, but their advance to the Volga was stopped at Stalingrad, and the battle for Stalingrad developed into one of the decisive battles of the war. Stalingrad was strategically important because its conquest would have cut communications between Moscow and the south. Moreover, the name had great symbolic value to both Germans and Russians.

At the beginning of the winter, except for a few buildings on the right bank of the Volga, all Stalingrad had been taken, and Hitler announced on November 9 that the city was "firmly in German hands." But the Russians resisted obstinately, using heavy artillery from the other side of the river. Then they succeeded

in breaking through the front north and south of Stalingrad, and by the end of November the Germans, led by General Friedrich Paulus, were no longer attacking the Russians but defending themselves; the army before Stalingrad, 300,000 men strong, was encircled. Hitler forbade any attempt at withdrawal by a breakthrough toward the west, assuring Paulus of provisions by air. But this proved impossible, and slowly but steadily the ring around Paulus's army was drawn closer, until the German forces were reduced to a few isolated groups. On January 31, 1943, Paulus surrendered, with the 123,000 men left of his army. Hitler's reaction was an emotional outburst of reproach that Paulus had not committed suicide.

The hole torn in the German front through the encirclement of the army before Stalingrad made the Germans' situation in southern Russia untenable and forced them to draw back. By the spring of 1943 the lines on the eastern front were roughly the same as they had been one year earlier.

In the fall of 1942, while the German military situation was deteriorating in Russia, there was a reversal of fortune in the Mediterranean area as well. In the winter of 1941–1942 the British had succeeded in forcing their opponents back from the Egyptian frontier, but in 1942 Rommel, commander of the German-Italian forces, had pushed the British back into Egypt, where overextended supply lines forced him to a halt. A lull permitted the British to strengthen their position through reinforcements sent by sea around Africa; at the end of October the British Eighth Army under a new commander, Bernard Montgomery, was able to take the offensive. The Battle of El Alamein became the first victory of

The battle for Stalingrad. One of the last German airplanes to take off from Paulus's encircled army.

British troops over a German army in the Second World War. The fighting began on October 23, 1942, with a heavy artillery barrage which opened some holes in the German lines; British tanks penetrated these gaps and forced the Germans to withdraw. The front was small, consisting of hardly forty miles between sea and desert; because of British air superiority and control of the sea, the German supply lines, which ran along this narrow stretch between sea and desert, became unusable, and Rommel's troops were forced back from one position to another, finally from Libya into Tunisia.

While the British were exploiting their victory at El Alamein, a combined force of British and American troops under General Dwight D. Eisenhower landed in French North Africa on November 8. The Americans had yielded to the British insistence that an invasion of the European continent was not feasible in 1942, but some action which would divert German forces from the Russian front seemed necessary, and North Africa was chosen as the site for a surprise invasion. The operation was entirely successful. The French in Morocco offered only token resistance and then transferred their support to the British and Americans. The Germans in Tunisia had to fight not only Montgomery's Eighth Army coming from the south but also the British-American forces coming from the west. Encircled, the German beachhead in Tunisia was eliminated by the middle of May 1943.

During this same period, the summer of 1942, the Allies were also beginning to make gains in the Pacific theater. In three great sea and air battles—of the Coral Sea in May, of Midway in June, and of the Solomon Islands in August—the Japanese fleet was crippled, and further advances toward the south were checked. The British succeeded in bolstering the defenses of India, and Chinese resistance on the Asian mainland remained alive. Despite amazing conquests, Japan was still enclosed in a ring of hostile forces. By the end of the summer the offensives of Japan and the Axis forces had been halted and the initiative was held by the anti-Fascist coalition.

Germany before Surrender

Having come close to conquering all of Europe, Germany was now in danger of being conquered itself. The American industrial machine was in full gear and was producing planes, ships, and tanks at a rate which would have seemed impossible at the beginning of the war. The Russian factories which had been transported into the Urals and Siberia were working to capacity. British war production increased steadily because air superiority gained with American help meant protection from sustained German air attacks. Now it was Germany that suffered from steady bombings; by the end of the war most of the larger German cities were in ruins. Clearly the decisive factor in warfare had become superiority in weapons and equipment, based on industrial mass production. Even Hitler recognized this fact and in the final stages of the war expected a favorable outcome only from new miracle weapons. But the guided missiles, the V-1 and the

Wernher von Braun among German officers at Peenemünde, center of construction of German V weapons.

V-2 rockets which Germany was able to put into use in 1944, were of limited effectiveness, and work on jet engines had not been completed when the war ended. Nor had the Nazis made significant progress toward the development of an atomic bomb. Hitler distrusted nuclear science as "Jewish physics," and his top theoretical physicist, Werner Heisenberg, may have secretly undercut the limited atomic program that did exist in order to prevent nuclear weapons from falling into Hitler's hands. In any event, the Nazis' botched atomic bomb project pointed up the ingrained distrust among party officials, military officers, and civilian experts that increasingly undermined the German war effort.

For the Germans, the sole rational hope for victory lay in the possibility of breaking up the coalition closing in on them from all sides. The relations of the United States and Great Britain with their Russian ally had been troubled from the start. When the Germans invaded Russia in 1941, Britain and the United States promised to give the Soviet Union all possible support, and indeed, the supplies sent there were of crucial importance in maintaining Russian resistance in the critical first years of the German-Russian struggle. But the Russian leaders did little to publicize this outside help among their people; in their public statements about their allies they blew hot and cold. Their main interest was to promote a "second front," an Allied invasion of western Europe. Sometimes the Russians accused Britain and the United States of timidity and lack of energy in their pursuit of the anti-Fascist war; sometimes they praised them—depending

on what approach seemed more likely at the moment to accelerate the opening of this second front.

Relations were further troubled because the Russians were unwilling to recognize the governments-in-exile, particularly the Polish government. They wanted to avoid any commitments which might affect the settlement of frontiers after the war. In Eastern Europe they supported only the resistance movements led by Communists. When in January 1943, after the successful landing in North Africa, Churchill and Roosevelt met in Casablanca, one of their purposes in demanding from Germany "unconditional surrender" was to dispel Russian fears that the Western powers might make a "deal" with Nazi Germany at the expense of the Soviet Union. At the meetings of Roosevelt and Churchill with Stalin in December 1943 in Teheran and in February 1945 in Yalta, in the Crimea, military questions stood in the foreground. But at Yalta the approaching end of the war made the consideration of the postwar settlement a necessity, although the decisions remained vague and general. The liberated and the defeated countries were to become democracies. Germany and Austria were to be occupied, with each of the victorious powers receiving a zone of occupation, although in the capitals—Berlin and Vienna—a central administration assuring uniformity of occupation policies was to be established. With regard to postwar boundaries and compensation for war damages general principles were laid down rather than settled in detail. There was no real reason for the Nazis to hope that the anti-Fascist coalition could be broken up before Germany was completely defeated. Neither the Russians nor the Western powers were willing to negotiate as long as Hitler was in power. Germans with political insight believed that better peace terms or a separate settlement with either the West or the East might be obtained if Hitler was removed. The result was a conspiracy by socialists and liberals, high civil servants and generals, which culminated on July 20, 1944, in an attempt on Hitler's life. But the attempt failed; just a moment too soon, Hitler moved away from the place where a bomb exploded. The war was thus destined to last for almost another year.

Although the decline of the German fortunes after 1942 weakened the hold of Hitler and of Nazism over the minds of the German people, a corps of loyal Nazis survived until the end. Members of the SS particularly stayed firmly tied to the Nazi regime, and their military units remained a valuable fighting force, which was thrown into combat at critical points until the final weeks of the war. Moreover, many of the teenage members of the Nazi youth organization, who were conscripted in the last winter of the war, continued to regard Hitler as a man of destiny. The fanaticism of the SS guaranteed to the Nazi rulers an instrument for control by terror, and toward the end it was primarily fear and terror that kept the German people in the war. Himmler and his police imprisoned and tortured everyone suspected of holding anti-Nazi opinions or defeatist views. Such crimes—judged in Nazi-staffed People's Courts, from which there was no appeal—were punished by death. The ruthlessness of the SS police

increased after the attempt on Hitler's life. Entire families of persons suspected of political crimes were placed in custody. There was a grisly report in the last days of the war about corpses of soldiers by the hundreds dangling from the trees of one of Berlin's streets because they had absented themselves from their military units.

Organization of resistance to the Nazi rule was impeded not only by the thoroughness and the terror methods of the police but ironically also by Allied bombing attacks. The saturation bombing of German cities disrupted communications and thereby strengthened the control of the Nazi rulers, who had priority use of roads, railroads, telegraph, and telephone. In coping with civil disasters, the Nazis made certain that water and food were given only to those who had appropriate identification papers. The Nazis were in charge of evacuating people from bombed quarters, and for weeks the whereabouts of the evacuees might be unknown even to close relatives and friends. The Nazi leaders and the Nazi apparatus alone maintained awareness of the situation as a whole; for the rest of the population life became atomized.

Even though the end seemed in sight in the spring of 1943, after the victories at Stalingrad and in North Africa, the military operations of the last two years of the Second World War were bitterly fought. Severely mauled, the German war machine was still formidable, and the Japanese still controlled a vast area of great natural resources and great defensive strength. A serious Allied defeat might have raised a cry for negotiations with the enemy, which would inevitably have been accompanied by all the difficulties involved in gaining cooperation among members of a coalition.

The Overthrow of Mussolini

The first of the Axis powers to collapse was Italy. After the defeat of the Germans in Tunisia the American-British forces, now in control of air and sea in the Mediterranean, landed in Sicily, and soon conquered the island. During the Sicilian invasion, on July 25, 1943, Mussolini was overthrown by a group that included leaders of the anti-Fascist underground, some prominent Fascists, and the military high command. Although the new government under Pietro Badoglio (1871–1956), a military man, officially declared it would continue the war, secret negotiations for an armistice were started immediately. The Nazi leaders were prepared for such an event. When the armistice was announced on September 8, German tank divisions closed in on Rome, and plans for an Allied landing on the beaches near Rome had to be abandoned as too risky. During the winter the fronts stabilized between Rome and Naples; even the landing of Allied troops in Anzio did not lead beyond the formation of a beachhead. Central and northern Italy remained under Axis control.

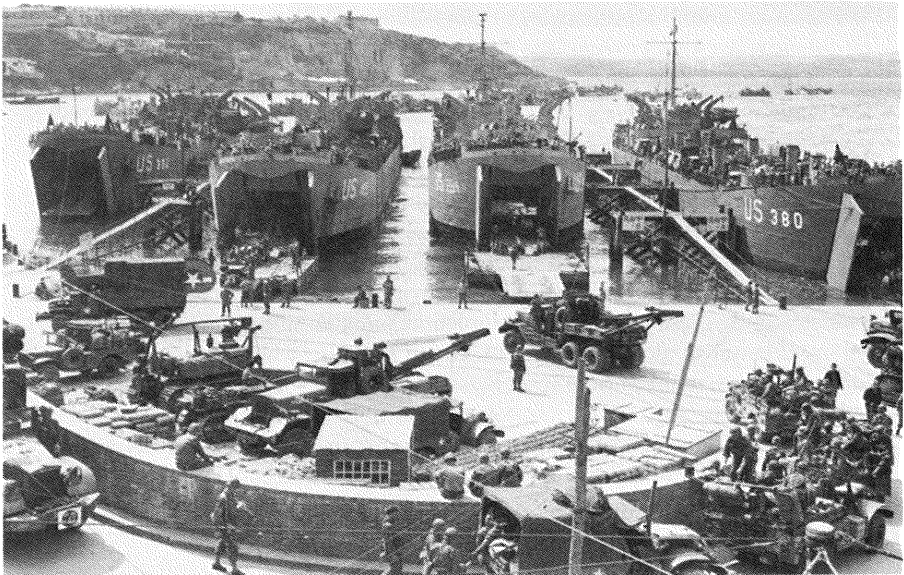
After being overthrown, Mussolini had been imprisoned, but German paratroopers succeeded in liberating him. He was induced by the Germans to establish a Fascist government in northern Italy, where he proclaimed that free from

conservative and monarchist restraints, he could now pursue the original Fascist ideas of social reform. But actually his government, called the Republic of Salò after the small town where some of its offices were installed, was controlled by the Germans. It was the Germans who insisted on holding trials at Verona for six Fascist leaders who had participated in the overthrow of Mussolini, among them his son-in-law Count Ciano. They were condemned to death and executed.

The End of the War in Europe

The collapse of Fascism did not end the fighting in Italy, but it had a great moral effect, spurring anti-German activities all over Europe and, in addition, was of military significance for all the theaters of war. The Allies could give more effective support to the partisans fighting in Yugoslavia; German manpower resources became severely strained because the Italian occupation troops in the Balkans now had to be replaced by German forces. Moreover, the necessity of sending German tank divisions from the Russian front to Italy in July, at the time of the overthrow of the Fascist regime, had its impact on the eastern theater. The Germans were then undertaking another offensive, their last in the east, in the center of the Russian front. But the Russians, in a counteroffensive, forced them back on a broad front, reaching the Dnieper and reconquering Kiev in November 1943.

From this time on, the Allies held the initiative entirely, and in 1944 they



D-Day. In preparation for the invasion, artillery is loaded aboard American transport ships on the southern coast of England.

advanced everywhere. The Russians continued to attack throughout the winter and by the beginning of the summer of 1944 were driving on to the borders of Poland and Romania. By the end of the summer they had reached East Prussia, forced Finland out of the war, and shifted the chief weight of their attack to the southern part of the front, where they brought about the surrender of Romania and Bulgaria. The Russian armies thus were approaching the frontiers of Nazi Germany from the southeast as well as from the east, their advances facilitated by the increasing pressure which Great Britain and the United States were able to exert.

The stalemate on the Italian front was broken; Rome and Florence were taken, so only northern Italy remained in German hands. Greece was liberated.

The decisive accomplishment, however, of the United States and Great Britain in 1944 was the invasion of western Europe. On June 6, 1944, American and British forces crossed the English Channel and established beachheads on the Normandy coast. The success of this daring operation was primarily due to the complete Allied domination of the air, which frustrated German efforts to reinforce and supply their front lines. Moreover, the landings were protected by the heavy guns of the British and American ships, their fire directed in accordance with the excellent information about the German positions provided by the French underground. Artificial harbors brought over from England solved the problem of establishing a continuous stream of supplies for the invading troops, a problem which had appeared to stand in the way of any landing on a great scale. Nevertheless, it was a difficult operation, which had been meticulously planned and brilliantly executed under the supreme command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, with the British general Bernard Montgomery and the American general Omar Bradley as field commanders.

The hours after the initial waves of American and British troops had landed on the beaches were critical. But the German military leadership proved to be uncertain and faulty. The German generals could not agree on whether to defend the entire coastline or to permit the Allies to move into the interior and draw them into a battle while they were still relatively weak. Moreover, at the crucial moment Hitler refused to allow the employment of the German tank reserves because he was convinced that the landing on Normandy was a feint and that a stronger force would attack elsewhere on the coast. Once landed in strength, the Allies were able to effect a breakthrough with their tanks and to fan out in the rear, driving the Germans to retreat. By September the liberation of France and Belgium was nearing completion, and the Allied armies were establishing themselves along the former German frontiers, where they were forced to stop because supplies were running short. A question which has been raised but can never be answered is whether the war might have been ended in 1944 if the Allies, instead of advancing on a broad front, had kept their northern wing back and given all their supplies to the advancing tank forces of General George

ALLIED VICTORY IN EUROPE 1942–1945

Allied advances
Maximum extent of Axis control
Areas controlled by Vichy France

0 250 500 Miles
0 250 500 Kilometers

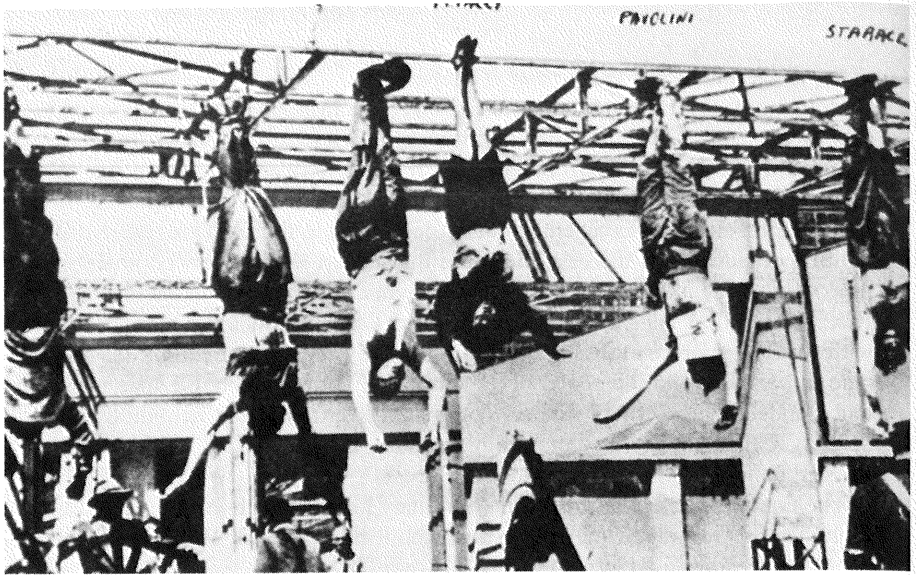
Patton on their southern wing, which then might have crossed the Rhine and penetrated into southern Germany.

As it was, a further campaign in 1945 was needed. Before the Allies could resume their advance in the west, Hitler ordered a last German offensive, with troops and tanks brought together from all parts of the front. In December 1944 the Germans attempted to break through the center of the American-British line in the Ardennes. This last German offensive was so secretly prepared that even Ultra had given no indication to the Allies of what was coming. On the first two days of their attack the Germans advanced quickly and inflicted heavy losses upon the Americans. Moreover, the initial German success shook Anglo-American morale because it seemed to demonstrate the illusory nature of the assumption that the war was almost over; the alliance with Russia rose in value. But after moving forward two days, the Germans were halted; the Western Allies were able to regain the initiative, and in two weeks of fighting the German armies were pushed back to the line from which they had started. German losses in men and particularly in tanks were so severe that probably the effect of the Battle

A Russian soldier raises the Soviet flag on the Reichstag after the conquest of Berlin, May 1945.

of the Bulge was to shorten the war. To relieve the pressure on the Allies on the western front, the Russians resumed the offensive in Poland early in January, and by the end of February they had driven the Germans out of Poland and were within fifty miles of Berlin. The British and American forces were able to mount an offensive in February, and on March 8 the American First Army crossed the Rhine at Remagen, south of Bonn. While the Germans were still fighting desperately in the east, the Allies in the west were mainly conducting mopping-up operations. On April 26 Russians and Allied forces met at the Elbe River. Three days later the German troops in Italy surrendered. On April 30, with Russian troops converging on Berlin from all sides, Hitler committed suicide in his bunker in the center of the city. With Hitler's death, German resistance ended. The German military commanders surrendered unconditionally on May 7 in Rheims to Eisenhower and one day later in Berlin to Zhukov, the Russian conqueror of Berlin.

The complete defeat of the German military forces after their series of stunning victories has raised many questions about the nature of Hitler's military talents and leadership. German generals, anxious to maintain the prestige of the German general staff, have claimed for themselves the credit for all the successes, while putting the blame for the defeats on Hitler. Their explanation is too simple. Hitler rightly emphasized, contrary to traditional military thought, the importance of tanks and airplanes in modern warfare. He made certain that due attention was given to the construction of these weapons and to training in their use. Unlike many of his generals, Hitler was aware of the daring ways in which these new weapons could be employed, and he took an active part in the planning of the successful Norwegian and French campaigns of 1940, which showed the possibilities of the modern blitzkrieg. And Hitler's strategic judgment was not much worse than that of his generals. He was undoubtedly right when, against their advice, he insisted on defending an advanced front line in Russia during the winter of 1941–1942; retreat would have brought certain disaster. But Hitler lacked technical training and the patience for logistic details; he was inclined to plan and order operations without taking such factors as supplies and communications fully into account. He relied on his intuition, particularly after the early successes of the German Army had confirmed his own and his followers' faith in his supreme military talents. His intuition, however, played him false at two critical moments: in 1940, when he refused to use his tanks against the encircled British Army at Dunkirk, and in 1944, when he believed that the invasion in Normandy was a feint and reserves had to be kept back to repulse a landing elsewhere. There were other signs of deterioration in Hitler's military leadership during the last three years of the war. Confident of his intuition and unable to grasp fully the technical difficulties involved in fighting in Russia or in the desert, he regarded each reverse as the fault of cowardly or treasonous subordinates; he denied his generals any freedom of action and reserved all decisions, even at the local level, for himself. By prohibiting withdrawals, he



The bodies of Mussolini (*third from left*) and his mistress Clara Petacci (*third from right*), placed on show in the Piazza Loreto in Milan, where in August 1944 Italian hostages had been shot by German military orders.

sacrificed troops that could have been saved. He lived shut off in his headquarters, avoiding all encounters which might deter him from indulging in his strategic daydreams. Because he seldom visited the front and bombed German cities, he lost contact with the crude reality of totalitarian war. In the final months he gave orders to armies which did not exist or existed only on paper. It seems that not until April 22, when he was informed of the failure of SS troops to attack the Russians, did he realize the hopelessness of the situation and decide to stay in Berlin to the end.

One of the last scraps of news Hitler received was of the end of his fellow dictator Mussolini on April 28. When the German Army in Italy surrendered, Mussolini and his mistress had tried to escape to Switzerland, but at Lake Como, near the Swiss border, Italian resistance fighters caught and shot them. Then their bodies were brought to Milan and hung head downward in the Piazza Loreto. The news of Mussolini's death confirmed Hitler in his decision to commit suicide. At this last moment he married his mistress, Eva Braun, and then dictated a long verbose testament which repeated the usual accusations against "international Jewry"; having poisoned his favorite dog so that it would not have to live with another master, he shot himself and, together with Eva Braun, who had taken poison, was burned. The facts of Hitler's melodramatic end are well proved.

The Fall of Japan

The German surrender made it possible for the British and Americans to concentrate their final effort on the Far East. In May 1945, when the war in Europe ended, Japan found itself in roughly the same position in which Germany had been five months before; the initiative was in the hands of the Allies. By the beginning of May, just before the monsoon season would have forced a halt in military operations, British, Indian, and Chinese troops under the command of Lord Louis Mountbatten, reconquered Burma in a difficult and risky operation; most of the supplies had to be brought in by air, and more than two hundred thousand engineers and laborers were employed in building the airfields and roads needed to maintain the impetus of the advance.

A similar success was registered by the Americans in the Philippines. Their operations to recover these islands had started in October 1944. In a brilliant strategic stroke the Americans passed up the most southern Philippine island, Mindanao, and began their offensive with an operation against the central Philippine island of Leyte. The landing there on October 20 was made possible by a naval victory in Leyte Gulf, which severely crippled the Japanese Air Force and eliminated the Japanese fleet as a factor of military importance. The battle was of great significance for naval history, demonstrating that the time had passed when victory at sea could be decided by encounters among heavy battleships. At Leyte Gulf aircraft carriers, airplanes, destroyers, and torpedo boats were the chief instruments of destruction. The defeat of their navy prevented the Japanese from getting supplies to their troops in the Philippines, and the American forces under General Douglas MacArthur (1880–1964) proceeded without setback to victory in the islands.

Having gained control of the Philippines, the Americans could advance to Iwo Jima and Okinawa, islands closer to Japan, which might serve as bases for a direct attack on the Japanese mainland. Well aware of the strategic importance of these two islands, which formed their homeland's outer line of defense, the Japanese resisted tenaciously, and the fighting was sharp and bloody. However, in the middle of March, Iwo Jima was conquered, and on May 21, two weeks after the surrender of Germany, Sugar Loaf Hill, the key to the Japanese position on Okinawa, was taken.

Japan was now subjected to continuous intensive bombing by American planes. The loss of shipping resulting from these air attacks was fatal to the Japanese war effort, for Japan was dependent on imported coal, oil, and food. Recognizing that their situation was hopeless, the Japanese were ready to surrender; their decision was accelerated on August 6 and 8 by the dropping of two atomic bombs, one on Hiroshima and one on Nagasaki, which burned out more than half of these cities, killed 130,000 people, and injured an equal number. Japan accepted the Allied terms of surrender on August 14. On September 2, 1945, the Second World War officially came to an end on the deck of the

battleship *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay, as the Japanese signed the articles of surrender in the presence of General MacArthur.

The decision to drop the atomic bomb aroused a dispute which is still going on. Scientists had counseled against its use because of its terrifying destructive power. An initial explosion of the bomb on a deserted island, which would have demonstrated its efficacy to the Japanese, would have been more in line with American ideas about morality and law in international relations. Yet when the decision was made, American leaders were not aware of how near Japan was to surrender and believed that heavy fighting was still ahead. It is perhaps instructive that the last military action in the Second World War demonstrated that as devastating as the war had been, the limits of destruction which modern technology could achieve had not yet been reached.

Japan itself of course offered ample evidence of the horrific power of modern atomic weaponry, but it also became in the postwar era a kind of laboratory for the implantation of Western democratic ideals in heretofore alien soil. Under General MacArthur the American occupation government set out to graft American political principles onto ancient Japanese traditions. Crucially, MacArthur decided against deposing Emperor Hirohito and charging him with war crimes. Instead, General Hideki Tojo and the other wartime leaders were made to take full responsibility for Japan's aggressive actions and abuses of human rights. This decision undoubtedly helped maintain social order in the immediate postwar period, but it had highly problematical consequences in terms of the Japanese people's understanding of their nation's role in the war. Because the emperor in whose name the war was fought was not held responsible, Japan as a whole began to think that it should not be held responsible. The emperor himself continued to be seen as a passive tool of the militarists when as recent research reveals, he played a fairly active role in strategic planning and decision making. With its "guiltless" emperor sitting safely on the throne, Japan embarked on its remarkable march toward economic revival partly at the cost of a rigorous denial or repression of its actual contribution to the horrors of the twentieth century.