

# World War II

Fighting the Good War, 1939–1945

**“Yesterday, December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.”**

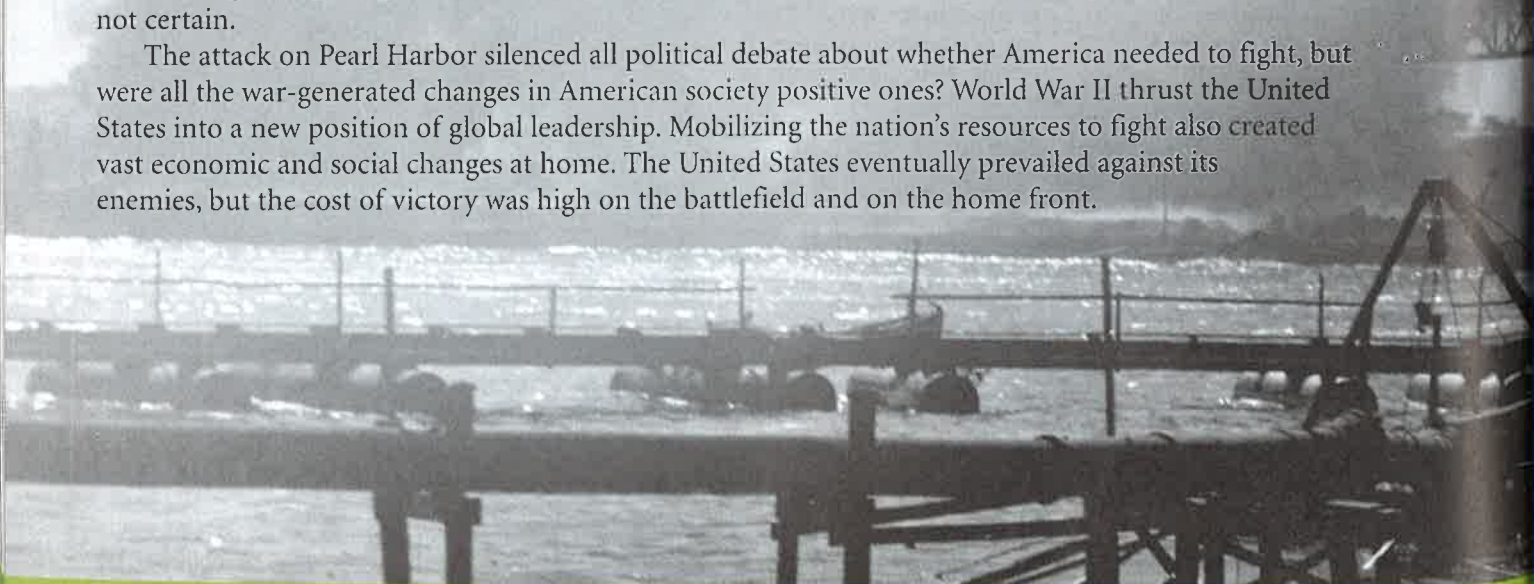
President FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

In early December 1941 a Japanese naval convoy secretly traveled toward Hawaii, stopping within 250 miles of the Hawaiian island of Oahu. At 6:00 a.m. on December 7, Admiral Chuichji Nagumo launched two consecutive attacking waves of bombers, torpedo planes, and dive-bombers. As Japanese pilots approached Pearl Harbor, a naval station on Oahu, they saw a line of American battleships parked in a neat row. Moments later those battleships were on fire.

Before Pearl Harbor debate raged over how to respond to the growing threat of war in the Pacific and Germany’s conquest of Europe. Non-interventionists and interventionists offered competing visions of how to protect America’s vital interests in a world torn apart by war. Now Americans needed no other explanation than this photo of a battleship engulfed in flames to understand why they were at war. Questions instead arose over why the United States had given the Japanese such an inviting target. Hoping to pressure Japan into withdrawing from China, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had sent the U.S. Pacific Fleet to Hawaii. There, he believed, the battleships were far enough away from Japan to escape attack but close enough to convince Japan to end its expansionist drive into East Asia. Roosevelt erred on both counts. Instead, Japan resolved to drive the Western powers out of East Asia.

In their attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese sank or damaged eighteen American ships and killed 2,405 Americans. Congress declared war on Japan the day after the attack. On December 11 Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, and Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary quickly followed suit. The United States now faced the challenge of fighting resolute and capable enemies in Europe and the Pacific against whom victory was not certain.

The attack on Pearl Harbor silenced all political debate about whether America needed to fight, but were all the war-generated changes in American society positive ones? World War II thrust the United States into a new position of global leadership. Mobilizing the nation’s resources to fight also created vast economic and social changes at home. The United States eventually prevailed against its enemies, but the cost of victory was high on the battlefield and on the home front.



How did the attack on Pearl Harbor compare to the sinking of the *Maine* in 1898?



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War p. 686



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# The Approaching War



From 1939 to 1945 war engulfed nearly the entire globe, as shown on the map (23.1). Huge areas fell under German and Japanese control, naval battles occurred on vast stretches of sea, and colonies provided key materials needed by warring nations. Until 1941, however, the United States remained on the sidelines as Germany attacked continuously in Europe, and Japan launched steady invasions throughout East Asia. As long as the fighting remained far from their shores, Americans disagreed over whether these wars were theirs to fight. Still coping with the social and financial problems created by the Great Depression, **non-interventionists** urged the nation to put “America First” and stay out of overseas conflicts. By the late thirties, however, **interventionists** increasingly challenged this view, arguing that only direct engagement could prevent the world conflagration from reaching American shores.

## Fascism and Appeasement

In the midst of the Depression, the United States had to formulate responses to Adolf Hitler’s rise to power in Germany in 1933, Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia in

1935, and the Spanish Civil War in 1936–1939.

Appointed chancellor in 1933, Hitler immediately began turning Germany into a fascist state under Nazi control, a dictatorial form of government that glorified the state over the individual.

Widespread economic suffering, lingering resentments against the harsh terms of the Versailles Treaty (see Chapter 20), and virulent anti-Semitism created fertile ground for Nazism to flourish.

Stripped of their German citizenship, Jews could not practice medicine or law, attend public school after the age of fourteen, or enter public parks and libraries. Promising to restore Germany’s economic and military prowess and protect the presumed “racial superiority” of the German people, Hitler rearmed the country and sought allies.

In formulating their response to the rise of fascism in Europe, non-interventionists in Congress sought to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past that had led to involvement in the bloodbath of

**23.1** The World at War  
German and Japanese wars of conquest set the world aflame.



What does this map convey about the scope of World War II?

World War I. Senator Gerald P. Nye, a Republican from North Dakota, chaired a series of Senate investigations in the midthirties into the role that American arms manufacturers had played in the nation's decision to enter World War I. Although the investigations unearthed little hard evidence of a conspiracy, they did buoy the consensus that the United States had entered that war to continue profitable arms sales and to guarantee that the Allies, the powers who had fought Germany, repaid their war loans to private banks. When these European countries defaulted on their loans during the Depression, public sentiment hardened against helping foreign nations.

To ensure that trading with belligerent nations did not drag the country into another war, Congress passed the **Neutrality Acts**, a series of laws from 1935 to 1939 that restricted arms sales, loans, and transport of goods with nations at war (see U.S. Countdown to War timeline, **23.2**). These popular laws encapsulated the widespread non-interventionist vision of avoiding involvement in an overseas conflicts that did not directly threaten U.S. territory. Depending on the official policy pursued, the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans could serve as buffers protecting the nation or as pathways to war. Trying to ensure the former, the 1935 Neutrality Act prohibited the sales of arms and ammunition to nations at war. In 1936 Congress barred all loans to warring nations. The 1937 Neutrality Act allowed belligerent nations to purchase non-war-related goods if they paid cash for them and transported them on their own ships, a policy known as “cash and carry.”

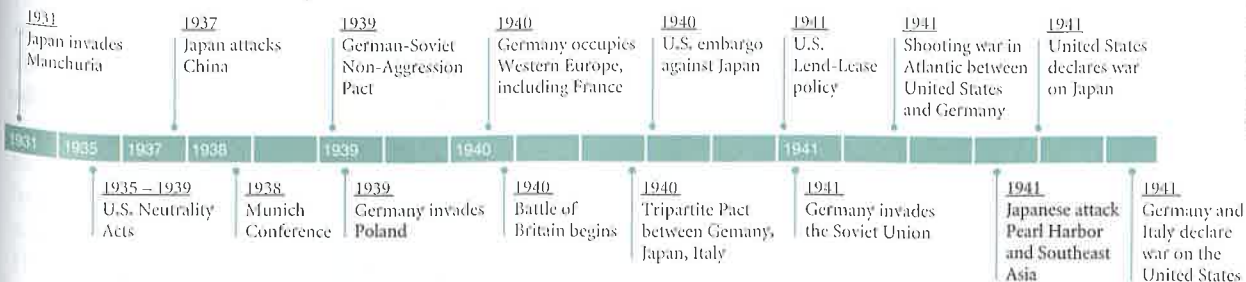
FDR momentarily challenged the non-interventionist vision with his 1937 Quarantine Speech which urged peace-loving countries to isolate aggressor nations and actively seek peace. Outraged non-interventionists accused FDR of trying to turn the United States into the world's policeman. “It's a terrible thing to look over your shoulder when you are trying to lead – and find no one there,” the

president remarked to an aide before he publicly reaffirmed his support for the Neutrality Acts. The zenith of non-interventionist sentiment was reached in 1938 when Congress considered a constitutional amendment that required public approval through a national referendum for any declaration of war, except in the event of an enemy invasion. The amendment was debated, but never approved by Congress.

The United States was not alone in its desire to remain at peace. Eager to avoid war with Germany, Britain and France recalled how a relatively minor incident (the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand) had become the catalyst for war in 1914 (see Chapter 20). Instead of mobilizing their armies when Germany violated the terms of the Versailles Treaty by rearming and threatening its neighbors, France and Britain turned first to negotiation. In 1938 Germany annexed Austria and then demanded the Sudetenland, a German-speaking province made part of Czechoslovakia against its will when the Allies dissolved the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of the World War I. By the thirties many Europeans felt that the Versailles Peace Treaty had punished Germany too severely, creating the widespread impression that Hitler's actions and demands were reasonable. Taking Hitler at his word that he was interested only in reuniting German-speaking peoples into one nation, Britain and France agreed at the **Munich Conference** in 1938 to let Germany occupy the Sudetenland.

Instead of dampening Hitler's ambitions, the Munich Conference convinced the dictator that the Western democracies were too weak to oppose him militarily. Arguing that Germany needed “living space” in the East for its people, Hitler initiated his master plan to displace what he demeaningly called the “inferior” Slavic “races,” the peoples living in Eastern Europe, and to exterminate the European Jews. Intent on avoiding the mistakes of World War I, when Germany had fought a two-front war, Hitler resolved to fight one war at a time. To accomplish

### U.S. Countdown to War, 1931 – 1941



**23.2 Origins of World War II**  
The United States remained neutral until the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

this, in the late summer of 1939 Hitler signed a non-aggression pact with Josef Stalin, the dictator of the Soviet Union (USSR). In this agreement Germany and the Soviet Union agreed to jointly partition a defeated Poland and other parts of Eastern Europe, and the USSR offered Hitler supplies for his pending attack on France and Britain. The non-aggression pact ensured that Germany's eastern border remained peaceful when it attacked western and southeastern Europe. Only days after signing the pact, Hitler invaded Poland, bringing a declaration of war from Britain and France and the official beginning of World War II.

In the spring of 1940, Hitler began his massive assault on Western Europe by invading Norway and Denmark. He then marched through Luxembourg, Holland, and Belgium to invade France. Unlike in 1914, when Germany's broad attack against French lines ended in a trench stalemate, in May 1940 Germany's Blitzkrieg (lightning war) punched holes in the French defense system and then sent tanks, infantry, artillery, and aircraft through these openings to disrupt communications and threaten the French army from the rear. When German troops entered Paris, Hitler underscored his triumph by visiting Paris's Eiffel Tower. In this photograph (23.3) Hitler is posing before the landmark monument, transforming a banal tourist excursion into an act that, by symbolizing his control of Western Europe, carried sinister and tragic overtones. With France under Nazi domination, Italy formally entered the war on the side of Germany. Through a combination of alliances and force, the Axis, those nations fighting on the German side, quickly took control of the rest of Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

As German troops were rolling toward Paris, the British army had escaped capture at the French port town of Dunkirk. For a full year Britain fought Germany alone, surviving a massive bombing campaign known as the Battle of Britain. That changed in June 1941, however, when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union. Frustrated in his efforts to subdue Britain, and without the means to launch an invasion across the English Channel, Hitler decided that with British forces off the continent it was time to

conquer Russia. Up until this point Hitler had successfully fought a series of isolated wars, but he made his first major strategic error when he invaded the Soviet Union. Instead of advancing quickly to Moscow, German troops found themselves bogged down in a massive battle along a far-flung Eastern Front.

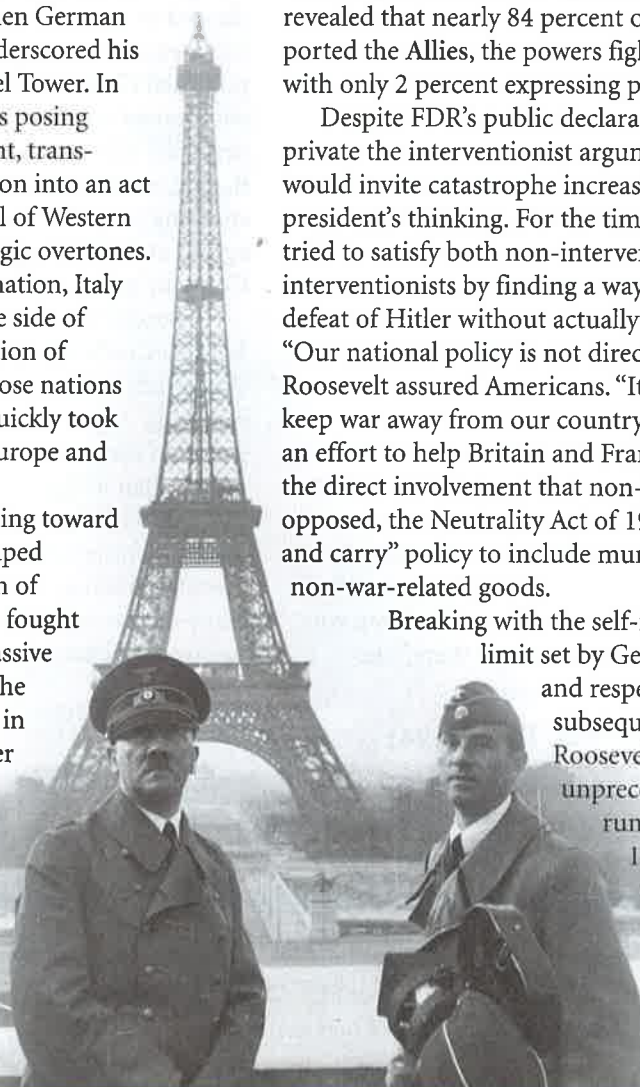
## The Arsenal of Democracy

As these events developed in Europe, both President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the majority of the American people opposed going to war. Publicly embracing non-interventionists measures during his first two terms, Roosevelt adopted an officially neutral stance as the war spread. Unlike Wilson in World War I, however, Roosevelt did not ask Americans to remain impartial in thought. Immigration restrictions had limited the number of first-generation immigrants from Europe, and Roosevelt had few concerns that well-assimilated Americans of German ancestry might retain strong loyalties to Germany. Indeed public opinion polls in 1939 revealed that nearly 84 percent of Americans supported the Allies, the powers fighting Germany, with only 2 percent expressing pro-German views.

Despite FDR's public declaration of neutrality, in private the interventionist argument that inaction would invite catastrophe increasingly influenced the president's thinking. For the time being Roosevelt tried to satisfy both non-interventionists and interventionists by finding a way to ensure the defeat of Hitler without actually declaring war. "Our national policy is not directed toward war," Roosevelt assured Americans. "Its sole purpose is to keep war away from our country and our people." In an effort to help Britain and France without risking the direct involvement that non-interventionists opposed, the Neutrality Act of 1939 revised the "cash and carry" policy to include munitions as well as non-war-related goods.

Breaking with the self-imposed two-term limit set by George Washington and respected by every other subsequent president, Roosevelt made the unprecedented decision to run for a third term in 1940. Roosevelt, who typically kept even his closest advisers guessing before he reached an important

**23.3 Hitler in Paris**  
Adolf Hitler's quick subjugation of Western Europe brought him to Paris by June 1940. Hitler posed in front of the city's most recognizable monument, the Eiffel Tower, to underscore France's defeat and his power over Western Europe.



How did Hitler accomplish his rapid conquest of Eastern and Western Europe?

decision, surprised everyone, even his wife, with his announcement. FDR never explained his decision to anyone, but the shock of France falling to Nazi control undoubtedly influenced his decision to run again. Roosevelt's candidacy and his selection of a liberal New Dealer, Henry Wallace, as his vice president caused some grumbling among conservative Democrats, who nonetheless rallied around Roosevelt in the general election. The Republican challenger Wendell Willkie and Roosevelt each argued that the nation should offer all the help it could to the Allies short of entering the war. Willkie tried to paint Roosevelt as bent on direct intervention, but this charge and Willkie's anti-New Deal rhetoric resonated poorly with voters. Roosevelt easily won a third term as president.

FDR saw his task as satisfying "the wish of 70% of Americans to keep out of the war" and "the wish of 70% of Americans to do everything to break Hitler, even if it means war." To accommodate the public's conflicting emotions, Roosevelt proposed turning the nation into a "great arsenal of democracy." By telephone and telegraph British Prime Minister Winston Churchill pressed FDR continually for aid. Stressing America's vulnerability, Churchill warned that "overwhelming sea power would be in Hitler's hands" if Germany defeated Britain. FDR responded as Churchill hoped. Besides selling Britain arms, FDR agreed to trade fifty old American destroyers for ninety-nine-year leases on seven British air and naval bases in the Western Hemisphere. Britain needed these ships to transport weapons overseas. He also supported the introduction of a peacetime draft and invited a leading interventionist, Republican Henry Stimson, to join his cabinet as secretary of war.

Interventionists countered the non-interventionists' slogan of "America First" with Churchill's argument that a Nazi-controlled Europe directly threatened America's well-being. As part of the heated exchange between non-interventionists and interventionists, Dr. Seuss (the alias used by Theodore Geisel, who was to gain fame in the 1950s as the author-illustrator of *The Cat in the Hat* and many other children's books) drew editorial cartoons for *PM*, a short-lived left-wing New York magazine, that denounced non-intervention as folly. Dr. Seuss depicted non-interventionists as ostriches with their heads in the ground, anti-Semites, and appeasers. This Seuss cartoon (23.4) shows a non-interventionist wearing an "America First" hat in a bathtub that is jumping with predatory sea creatures adorned with swastikas, the symbol of the Nazi Party. His eyes closed tight, the man ignores the lurking

danger, saying with a satisfied smile, "The old Family bath tub is plenty safe for me." This cartoon challenged the non-interventionists' belief that the Atlantic Ocean would protect the United States from a Nazi attack. As he moved closer to the interventionist position, FDR voiced similar concerns about the vulnerability of the American coastline.

By 1941 Britain had run out of cash, and neutrality laws still prohibited the United States from loaning the British the money they needed to buy munitions. FDR circumvented these restrictions with a policy called Lend-Lease that loaned rather than sold arms to Britain. The United States would "say to England, we will give the guns and ships that you need, provided that when the war is over you will return to us in kind the guns and ships that we have loaned you," Roosevelt told Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau. Lend-Lease, FDR explained to the nation, was simply one neighbor helping another to put out a fire. No one would say, FDR noted, "Neighbor, my garden hose cost me \$15; you have to pay me \$15 for it . . . I don't want \$15—I want my garden hose back after the fire is over." As the

**23.4 Dr. Seuss Lampoons Non-Interventionists**  
Dr. Seuss lampooned non-interventionists for closing their eyes to the threat that Hitler's navy (depicted here as swastika-marked monsters) posed to American shores.



The old Family bath tub is plenty safe for me!

“Some of our people like to believe that wars in Europe and in Asia are of no concern to us. But it is a matter of most vital concern to us that European and Asiatic war-makers should not gain control of the oceans which lead to this hemisphere.”

President FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, radio “fireside chat,” December 29, 1940

Lend-Lease bill worked its way through Congress, however, non-interventionists successfully attached an amendment that prohibited the U.S. Navy from escorting British convoys carrying American goods across the Atlantic. Fittingly, given the analogy that FDR used to explain Lend-Lease, one of the first shipments to Britain contained boxes of fire hoses.

When Hitler attacked the USSR in 1941, the United States extended Lend-Lease aid to the Soviets as well. FDR had formally recognized the Soviet Union in 1933, hoping to find another overseas market for American goods. Trade with the Soviets remained minimal during the Depression, but exploded during the war. By 1945 the United States had provided \$50 billion of materiel to the Allies under this program. No one, however, expected Britain and the Soviet Union to return “loaned” ammunition or arms to the United States. Instead, the law left it up to the president to decide what form repayment would take. After the war President Harry Truman accepted favorable postwar trade relations as repayment from Britain and demanded \$2.6 billion from the Soviet Union for nonmilitary lend-lease goods. Russia did not pay its debt until after the fall of communism in 1991.

Securing American guns and ammunition solved only half the problem for Britain. Because of the number of German submarines patrolling the Atlantic, Secretary of War Henry Stimson warned, sending arms to Britain was like pouring water into a leaky bathtub. When the American destroyer *Greer* gave chase and exchanged fire with a German submarine, FDR used the incident to invoke his authority as commander in chief by ordering U.S. naval ships to escort all ships headed to Britain and “shoot on sight” any German submarine or ship. Although it remained unclear whether the Germans knew that the *Greer* was an American ship, FDR denounced the skirmish as a deliberate attack in American waters. “We have sought no shooting war with Hitler. We do not seek it now,” FDR declared in September 1941. “But when you see a rattlesnake poised to strike, you do not wait until he has struck

before you crush him. These Nazi submarines and raiders are the rattlesnakes of the Atlantic.” Three months before Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States was fighting an undeclared naval war with Germany.

## War with Japan

The catalyst for America’s formal entry into the war did not come in the Atlantic, however, but on the other side of the globe when Japanese pilots attacked Pearl Harbor, a naval base in Hawaii, on December 7, 1941. The attackers discovered a neat line of battleships, reproduced in this miniature version of Pearl Harbor (23.5) that Japanese filmmakers constructed for a wartime propaganda film that reminded Japanese audiences of their nation’s great victory against the United States.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was the **culmination of two** decades of tension and growing **mistrust between** the two nations. Japan’s desire to establish itself as the major power in the Pacific alarmed the United States, which maintained an array of island possessions and a strong naval presence in the Pacific to support its trading relationship with China. Access to Chinese markets had been a **cornerstone of American foreign policy** since the Spanish-American War. **From the Japanese perspective**, claiming East Asia as Japan’s proper sphere of influence was no different from the United States declaring the Western Hemisphere off-limits to foreign powers through the 1823 Monroe Doctrine and 1904 Roosevelt Corollary. Japan aimed to build the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, creating satellite states throughout Asia that would free Japan from dependence on Western-controlled resources like oil. In the twenties the United States and Japan successfully mediated their differences, with Japan agreeing to reduce the size of its navy and renouncing war as an **instrument of foreign policy** (see Chapter 21). The **Japanese army’s 1931 invasion of Chinese-held Manchuria** (land long disputed by China, Russia, and Japan), however, signaled the

beginning of a direct confrontation between Japan and the United States. Claiming that Manchuria rightfully belonged to Japan, the Japanese army assumed control of all raw materials and industry to support Japan's military endeavors.

In July 1937 Japan attacked China. The Japanese unleashed a brutal war of conquest; during the infamous Rape of Nanking, a Chinese city, over 350,000 Chinese perished, including 20,000 women, who were raped, tortured, and then executed. "Soldiers impaled babies on bayonets and tossed them still alive into pots of boiling water," a Japanese soldier later admitted. More than 6 million Chinese died at the hands of Japanese soldiers over the next eight years.

Growing American sympathy for Chinese victims and concern over protecting American economic interests in Asia coincided with rising tensions in Europe. By 1940 aiding Britain had become President Roosevelt's foreign policy priority. Containing Japan with a series of escalating economic sanctions and warnings, FDR reasoned, was the best way to defuse the situation in the Pacific so the nation could focus on problems in the Atlantic and Europe. Hoping that a show of force would convince Japan to abandon its imperialist ambitions, the United States embarked on

a naval building program and stationed the Pacific Fleet in Pearl Harbor, on the Hawaiian island of Oahu, 2,500 miles from California (see 23.1). Roosevelt also sent aid to China and in July 1940 imposed a limited embargo on scrap iron and high-octane aviation fuel to Japan.

Japan was not deterred. Instead of withdrawing from China, Japan seized parts of French Indochina, a French colony in Southeast Asia, the site of present-day Vietnam. In response, on September 26, 1940, the United States announced a total embargo on scrap metal shipments to Japan. The following day Tokyo signed the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy, an agreement dedicated to "the establishment of a new order" in East Asia and Europe. Aimed at offering mutual aid in the event that the United States attacked, the pact did not envision any strategic coordination between the European and Asian theaters of war. Japan and Germany shared mutual enemies during the war, but little else.

When Japan increased its incursions into French Indochina in the summer of 1941, the American government froze Japanese assets in the United States and stopped oil shipments (which accounted for four-fifths of Japan's oil supply). Diplomatic

### 23.5 Japanese Model of Pearl Harbor

This mock-up of Pearl Harbor, constructed for a Japanese wartime film of the attack, showed American battleships lined up in a row, making them easy targets for aerial bombs.



How did the United States respond to increasing Japanese aggression?



“The United States was in the war, up to the neck and in to the death. ... Being saturated and satiated with emotion and sensation, I went to bed and slept the sleep of the saved and thankful.”

British Prime Minister WINSTON CHURCHILL,  
upon learning of the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor

exchanges continued until the eve of the attack on Pearl Harbor, even though Japan decided in September to launch an expansionist war into resource-rich Southeast Asia to push the United States and Britain out of the region.

The Japanese calculation that the United States would withdraw from East Asia after a devastating attack on Pearl Harbor proved as faulty as the American belief that sanctions were the best way to prevent a war with Japan. The Japanese assault on Pearl Harbor ended all debate over entering the war. Having agonized over how far to pull the country toward war, Roosevelt reportedly told an aide that the attack took the matter “entirely out of his hands, because the Japanese had made the decision for him.”

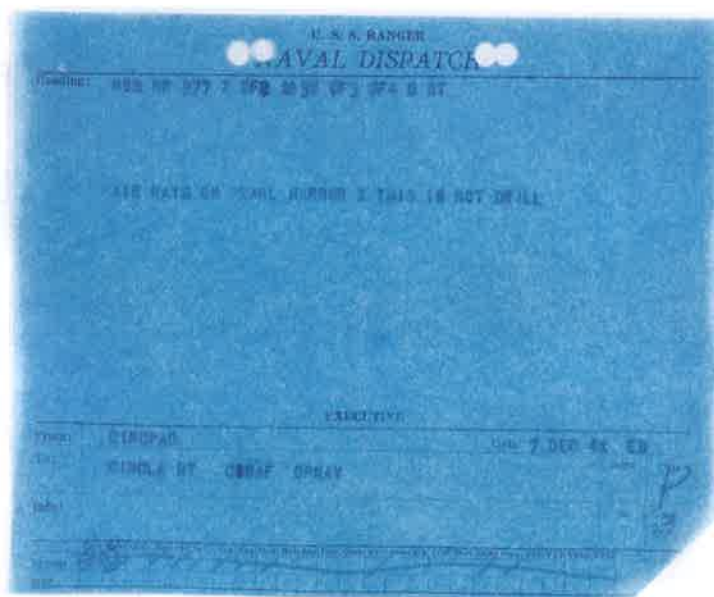
Despite catching the Americans by surprise, the Japanese victory at Pearl Harbor was far from complete. Although the attack prevented the United States from interfering with Japan’s subsequent

invasion of Southeast Asia, Japan failed to destroy America’s Pacific Fleet. Fearing a counterattack Nagumo, on the day of the attack, called off a third air strike on storage tanks containing millions of gallons of fuel oil and repair facilities. Most American sailors in Hawaii survived the attack, and the navy eventually repaired six of the eight damaged battleships. In another stroke of luck, the Pacific Fleet’s two aircraft carriers were at sea and escaped the attack. The navy also had eleven battleships and two aircraft carriers stationed elsewhere to defend the nation from further attack. Nonetheless the short-term damage was severe. Over the next twenty-four hours, Japan attacked American territory and countries throughout Southeast Asia. While the attack on Pearl Harbor horrified Americans, it brought hope to the British. Churchill knew immediately that the United States would soon be in the war against Germany.

After Pearl Harbor some die-hard non-interventionists immediately questioned whether the Japanese attack could have been prevented. Charges of dereliction of duty against the commanders of Pearl Harbor and suspicions that Roosevelt had allowed the attack to take place in order to enter the war against Hitler (through the back door) surfaced. By early December, American commanders expected a Japanese attack against American Pacific possessions. Most intelligence data, however, indicated that the Japanese would invade the Philippines and mainland Southeast Asia, as they subsequently did. American officials simply overlooked the few bits of information indicating that Hawaii was both a possible and a probable first target. The extent to which the Japanese took the Americans by surprise is reflected in this telegram (23.6), which alerted all ships in Pearl Harbor to take the air sirens seriously. American radar had picked up the waves of aircraft approaching the naval base, but officials assumed these were American planes arriving from the mainland. The telegram, therefore, was not sent until the bombs had already started falling.

### 23.6 Pearl Harbor Under Attack

Caught off guard, the navy rallied their defenses against the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor with this telegram.



How significant was the attack on Pearl Harbor in the short and long run?

# On the Home Front



The U.S. government made the formal declaration of war, but winning it required the active participation of the American people. Americans remember World War II as the “good war” not only because it ended the Depression but also because it united the nation against its enemies. While unified in the desire to prevail on the battlefield, Americans embraced conflicting visions that kept ethnic, gender, race, and class divisions intact. Motivating the country to fight the Japanese was easy after the attack on Pearl Harbor, but cultivating hatred of the enemy had direct consequences for Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans. The wartime economic boom ended years of financial struggle and hardship, but prosperity brought its own share of strains. Cities with major defense industries found themselves inundated with migrants from rural areas and struggled to contain rising racial and ethnic tensions between white inhabitants and black and Hispanic communities.

## Images of the Enemy

Americans had long exhibited disdain for Asian immigrants and Americans of Asian descent. Before the war localities and the federal government had passed a series of discriminatory laws that targeted Asian immigrants generally and their American-born children. These laws segregated swimming pools and dance halls, denied Asians the right to own land, prohibited intermarriage with whites, and prevented Asian immigrants from becoming citizens. The attack on Pearl Harbor provoked more virulent expressions of hatred for the Japanese, leading to even greater discrimination.

In the opening days of the war, *Life* and *Time* magazines offered the nation a crash course in “how to tell a Chinese from a Jap.” Understanding the difference was crucial, *Life* magazine asserted, to protect the Chinese Americans, “whose homeland is our staunch ally,” from unwarranted attacks. As the Chinese embassy prepared to hand out identification buttons for Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans to wear, *Life* and *Time* instructed the nation in distinguishing pseudoscientific, stereotypical “racial” characteristics. *Life* magazine used photos (23.7) to compare the facial features and expressions of a Chinese civil servant with those of General Hideki Tojo, the minister of war who ruled Japan during the war. The magazine called on readers to note Tojo’s heavy beard and cheekbones and humorless expression, all supposedly key traits of Japanese physiognomy. *Time* and *Life* were not alone in feeling a sudden need to distinguish members of the “yellow race.” Congress lifted the ban on Chinese naturalization and granted China an annual quota of 105 immigrants a year. This act symbolically

differentiated the Chinese from the Japanese (banned as immigrants in 1924 and prohibited from becoming naturalized citizens, see Chapters 19 and 21), but protected the nation from any substantial increase in Chinese immigration.

Renewed outrage against Japan greeted news of ongoing atrocities in the Pacific war, such as the April 1942 Bataan Death March. When American and Filipino soldiers finally surrendered their position on the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines, their Japanese captors forced the sick, starving troops to walk almost 90 miles through the intense heat and jungle to a prisoner of war camp. Out of 76,000 men who began the trek, 22,000 succumbed to illness, starvation, and severe beatings from Japanese soldiers.

Still these horrors were not enough to explain Americans’ deep-seated hatred for the Japanese. “In Europe we felt that our enemies, horrible and deadly as they were, were still people,” Ernie Pyle wrote in one of his newspaper columns toward the end of the war. “But out here I soon gathered that the Japanese were looked upon as something subhuman and



**FIGURE 23.7** *Life* magazine used pseudoscientific, stereotypical “racial” characteristics to distinguish Chinese and Japanese men.



### 23.7 “How to Tell Japs from the Chinese”

Lamenting the American tendency to lump all Asians together, *Life* magazine analyzed the facial features of Chinese and Japanese men to instruct readers in the difference between the two groups—one an ally, the other the enemy.

repulsive; the way some people feel about cockroaches or mice.” As Pyle noted, general views toward the Germans were decidedly different. Remembering the vigilante attacks against German Americans in World War I (see Chapter 20), government propaganda took great care to focus on Hitler and Nazism as the enemy, not the German people.

### 23.8 Plant Camouflage, Before and After

This aircraft factory in Burbank, California, camouflaged its facility with a painted tarp and cardboard houses to create the facade of a suburban housing development, in the hopes of deceiving Japanese pilots on the lookout for military targets.

## Internment Camps

In the immediate wake of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Americans were eager for explanations. Rumors circulated that Japanese American farmers on Hawaii had plowed arrows in their fields to show Japanese pilots the way to military installations. Yet no evidence of internal spying ever surfaced, and suggestions that the government round up and quarantine these Hawaiian residents went nowhere. Composing one-third of Hawaii’s population, people of Japanese descent were too important to the local economy to



deport, and there were no ships available to transport replacement workers to the islands.

The 110,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans who lived in California, Oregon, and Washington, where they were not so vital to the economy, met a different fate. The day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, air raid sirens wailed in San Francisco. The ship off the California coast, Americans feared that when a Japanese submarine torpedoed an American ship off the California coast, Americans feared that the West Coast would soon be under attack. Frenzied officials instituted blackouts; Coast Guard units patrolled the seas. Throughout the war West Coast defense factories camouflaged their plants, as illustrated in these “Plant Camouflage, Before and After” photos (23.8). This aircraft factory in Burbank, California, stretched a tarp over its facilities to make it look like a suburban housing development from the air. The camouflagers hoped that an attacking Japanese pilot would pass over the site in search of a more recognizable military target.

Within this atmosphere of heightened anxiety, Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans on the West Coast found themselves targeted as potential enemy agents. Increasingly the larger public and the government embraced a vision that viewed their presence near vital ports and military bases as a threat to national security. On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, giving the military the ability to declare certain areas off-limits to any or all persons. Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt, head of the Western Defense Command, immediately declared the entire West Coast a military zone closed to “all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien.” The order called for the evacuation of anyone of Japanese descent; even orphanages had to comply by relocating Japanese American babies.

In mid-March 1942 Roosevelt created the War Relocation Authority to oversee the forced removal of 38,000 Japanese immigrants and 72,000 Japanese American citizens to **internment camps** where they were held under armed guard in isolated areas. Posted “Instructions to All Persons of Japanese Ancestry” (23.9) informed Japanese inhabitants that they had only a few days to sell their belongings and settle their affairs. “It is difficult to describe the feeling of despair and humiliation experienced by all of us,” one internee later said, “as we watched the Caucasians coming to look over our possessions and offering such nominal amounts knowing we had no recourse but to accept whatever they were offering.” Evacuees were allowed to take only what they could carry. With numbers pinned on their coats, they

What do these photos reveal about American fears of a Japanese attack?

rode trains to recently abandoned stables or stockyards to await transport to one of ten internment camps scattered in remote areas throughout the interior West.

Offering a conflicting vision that emphasized their loyalty to the United States, the overwhelming majority of Japanese and Japanese Americans complied quietly with the evacuation order. A few, however, found ways to register their protest against this wholesale violation of their civil rights. For propaganda purposes the Office of War Information hired photographer Dorothea Lange to document that the government was treating evacuees humanely as it contained this suspect population. Sympathetic to the plight of Japanese Americans, Lange managed to capture this scene (23.10) of a Japanese American veteran reporting to a Santa Anita assembly center in his old military uniform, a silent demonstration of his long-standing loyalty to the country.

In January 1943 the army decided to recruit Nisei men, the American-born children of Japanese immigrants. While their parents remained in the camps, these men joined with Japanese Americans from Hawaii to form the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a unit that became the most decorated American unit in the nation's history. These men opted to prove their loyalty by fighting for their country. Other Japanese Americans sought redress in the courts, but the Supreme Court upheld the government's evacuation policy in 1944. *Competing Visions: Civil Liberties and National Security Clash* (page 696) examines this controversy in more detail.

As the tide of the war began to turn in America's favor, the military justification for interning people of Japanese descent weakened. In 1945 the government let inmates return to their West Coast homes. Three years later the federal government offered some restitution to those who had lost homes or businesses. It took until 1988, however, for Congress to offer an apology and reparation payment of \$20,000 to each of the 60,000 surviving internees.

## Prosperity, Scarcity and Opportunities for Women

Japanese Americans were among the few to suffer financially from the war. For most Americans jobs were plentiful and wages high. Over the course of the war the nation's gross national product rose 60 percent, and 17 million new jobs were created. To mobilize the economy the government quickly established a slew of agencies to allocate scarce

resources, help business convert their factories to a wartime footing, and enlist the public's full support for the war. After the difficult years of the Depression, the war-fueled economic boom came as a welcome relief. "People are crazy with money," one store owner exclaimed. "They don't care what they buy. They purchase things . . . just for the fun of spending." Madison Avenue advertising firms assured the public that consumerism was essential to the American way of life.

"Will you ever own another car?" asked one ad. "Another radio? Another gleaming new refrigerator? Those who live under dictators merely dream of such possessions."

Concerns over unemployment gave way to worries about inflation as the additional money flowing into the economy sent prices soaring. The government tried to curb inflation by instituting price and wage controls. Because the nation's

**23.10 A Japanese American Protests Internment**  
Government officials censored this photograph of a Japanese American veteran who reported to the evacuation center in his old uniform. He gave his name to a Japanese-American staff member who decided instead to cooperate openly with authorities.



### WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND AND FOURTH ARMY WARTIME CIVIL CONTROL ADMINISTRATION

Presidio of San Francisco, California  
April 1, 1942

## INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY

Living in the Following Area:

All that persons of the United States of California, West Coast, and Southern California, living generally in the West Coast of this country have established by California Statute, to the International Mark of West Coast, and those in the West Coast of California.

All Japanese persons, both alien and naturalized, will be evacuated from the above designated area by 12:00 P.M. on Friday, April 2, 1942.

No Japanese person will be permitted to enter or leave the above designated area after 10:00 P.M. on Thursday, April 2, 1942, without obtaining special permission from the Provost Marshal at the Civil Control Station for that date.

1201 Van Ness Avenue,  
San Francisco, California

The Civil Control Station is equipped to assist the Japanese population affected by this evacuation in the following manner:

1. Give advice and information on the evacuation.
2. Provide services with respect to the management, packing, sale, storage or other disposition of most kinds of property including real estate, business and professional equipment, buildings, boats, hold goods, boats, animals, etc.
3. Provide temporary quarters, wherever for all Japanese or family groups.
4. Transport to cars and limited amount of clothing and equipment to their new destination points.

#### The Following Instructions Must Be Observed:

1. A responsible member of each family, preferably the head of the family, or the person who has been named as the person to look after the family, will report to the Civil Control Station for evacuation instructions. This report should be made before 10:00 P.M. on Thursday, April 2, 1942, at a location that is shown on the map.

**23.9 "Instructions to All Persons of Japanese Ancestry"**  
This poster illustrates the hasty pace of the evacuation of Japanese Americans. They had just seven days to leave their homes.

What competing responses did Japanese Americans have to internment?

# Competing Visions

## CIVIL LIBERTIES AND NATIONAL SECURITY CLASH

In *Korematsu v. United States* (1944), the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of relocating and interning Japanese Americans as a justifiable military measure. Three Supreme Court justices dissented from the majority opinion, concluding that internment violated the constitutional rights of Japanese American citizens. Which side made the stronger argument? How has America resolved a similar dilemma over national security versus civil rights in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks (see Chapter 29)?

**Justice Hugo Black wrote the majority opinion that upheld the constitutionality of interning Japanese Americans.**

Exclusion of those of Japanese origin was deemed necessary because of the presence of an unascertained number of disloyal members of the group, most of whom we have no doubt were loyal to this country. ... We are not unmindful of the hardships imposed by it upon a large group of American citizens. ... But hardships are part of war, and war is an aggregation of hardships. All citizens alike, both in and out of uniform, feel the impact of war in greater or lesser measure. Citizenship has its responsibilities as well as its privileges, and in time of war the burden is always heavier. Compulsory exclusion of large groups of citizens from their homes, except under circumstances of direct emergency and peril, is inconsistent with our basic governmental institutions. But when under conditions of modern warfare our shores are threatened by hostile forces, the power to protect must be commensurate with the threatened danger. ...

Regardless of the true nature of the assembly and relocation centers—and we deem it unjustifiable to call them concentration camps with all the ugly connotations that term implies.... *Korematsu* was not excluded from the Military Area because of hostility to him or his race. He was excluded because we are at war with the Japanese Empire, because the properly constituted military authorities feared an invasion of our West Coast and felt constrained to take proper security measures, because they decided that the military urgency of the situation demanded that all citizens of Japanese ancestry be segregated from the West Coast temporarily, and finally, because Congress, reposing its confidence in this time of war in our military leaders—as inevitably it must—determined that they should have the power to do just this. There was evidence of disloyalty on the part of some, the military authorities considered that the need for action was great, and time was short. We cannot—by availing ourselves of the calm perspective of hindsight—now say that at that time these actions were unjustified.

**Justice Frank Murphy disagreed with the majority opinion, arguing that internment was racially motivated.**

This exclusion of "all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien," from the Pacific Coast area on a plea of military necessity in the absence of martial law ought not to be approved. Such exclusion goes over "the very brink of constitutional power" and falls into the ugly abyss of racism ... it is essential that there be definite limits to military discretion, especially where martial law has not been declared. Individuals must not be left impoverished of their constitutional rights on plea of military necessity that has neither substance nor support. ...

No one denies, of course, that there were some disloyal persons of Japanese descent on the Pacific Coast who did all in their power to aid their ancestral land. Similar disloyal activities have been engaged in by many persons of German, Italian and even more pioneer stock in our country. But to infer that examples of individual disloyalty prove group disloyalty and justify discriminatory action against the entire group is to deny that under our system of law individual guilt is the sole basis for deprivation of rights. ... To give constitutional sanction to that inference in this case, however well-intentioned may have been the military command on the Pacific Coast, is to adopt one of the cruelest of the rationales used by our enemies to destroy the dignity of the individual and to encourage and open the door to discriminatory actions against other minority groups in the passions of tomorrow. ...

I dissent, therefore, from this legalization of racism. Racial discrimination in any form and in any degree has no justifiable part whatever in our democratic way of life.



**Japanese American girl saying the Pledge of Allegiance**

resources were now being poured into producing military equipment and supplying the troops, consumers faced shortages of all kinds. To deal with the scarcity of resources, the government rationed many goods, including gas and sugar, by distributing coupon books that allotted families a set amount of each item. In an effort to save wool, cotton, and nylon, the War Production Board (WPB) dictated fashion trends by forbidding tailors to make cuffs, vests, or double-breasted jackets for men. The WPB's demand that bathing suit manufacturers use 10 percent less material meant that skintight one-piece bathing suits soon took the place of billowing bathing costumes on America's beaches. Hemlines on ladies' skirts also rose to save fabric.

The government spent as never before, expanding the federal budget from \$9 billion in 1939 to \$100 billion by 1945. As in World War I, the nation used conscription to fill the ranks and enlisted the help of big business to provide the masses of guns, tanks, ships, and bullets that a modern army needed. Numbers help convey the immensity of the American war effort. The military grew from 227,000 to 16 million, of whom 10 million were conscripted. American industry produced 77,000 ships, 300,000 airplanes, 2.5 million trucks, and 20 million small arms for the American and Allied armed forces. Nearly 15 million civilians relocated during the war to take advantage of opportunities in cities with booming wartime industries such as Los Angeles, New Orleans, Seattle, Detroit, and Philadelphia. The sudden growth of many cities forced hundreds of thousands of recent migrants to live in "the backs of stores, in public buildings, warehouses, and garages," the Bureau of Labor reported.

To combat the growing labor shortage, the War Manpower Commission, a wartime agency charged with keeping American workers on the job, tried to lure "Mrs. Stay-at Home" into the wartime workforce. Whether swayed by wartime propaganda or attracted instead by new employment opportunities and higher wages, droves of married women entered the workplace. Nearly 19 million women held jobs during the war, for the moment a record high. Many of these women would have worked anyway. Only 3 million new female workers entered the wartime workforce. Not all Americans supported this change in the domestic life of the nation, however. Male workers resented competing with women for desirable positions. Many mothers also expressed mixed feelings about leaving their children in day care.

Over 350,000 women served in the armed forces, including 150,000 in the Women's Army Corps

(WAC). The majority of women in uniform served as nurses and clerks, fulfilling vital communication and record-keeping services. Many men and the media found these clerical roles easy to deride. The

## "Instead of cutting the lines of a dress, this woman cuts the pattern of aircraft parts."

1943 newsreel, *Glamour Girls of '43*.

press nicknamed the WACs the "Petticoat Army" and their quarters "Fort Lipstick." The recruiting slogan for the WACs—"Release a man for combat"—publicly underscored the different risks faced by women and men in the military.

Female soldiers also performed more traditionally "male" tasks, serving as gunnery instructors, mechanics, and truck drivers, and 1,000 women even flew combat aircraft from domestic manufacturers to overseas bases. General Douglas MacArthur called female troops "my best soldiers." At least one congressman, however, offered a competing vision, wondering "what has become of the manhood of America?" now that women had a formal place in the armed forces.

Once victory seemed ensured in 1944, government-sponsored propaganda reversed course, embracing a vision that emphasized women's domestic responsibilities instead of their public duties. Toward the end of the war, the *Saturday Evening Post* carried this "Mothers at Work" ad (23.11) that urged women to consider the toll that working outside the home had on their children. The ad also emphasized this woman's imminent postwar need for new appliances. As expected the overall percentage of women working returned to 28 percent (from a wartime high of 36 percent) in 1947 as women quit their

### 23.11 "Mothers at Work"

As the war drew to a close, official posters and private advertisements encouraged women to revert to their traditional roles as homemakers.

**Mother, when will you stay home again?**

Some substitutions neither will stay home again, doing the job she likes best—making a home for you and family, when he gets back. She knows that all the hydraulic rakes, line support clips and blocks and electric ratcheting equipment that ADEL turns out for airplanes are helping bring that day closer.

Meanwhile she's learning the vital importance of precision in equipment made by ADEL. In her post-war home she'll need appliances with the same high degree of precision and she will get them when ADEL conceals its famous Design Simplicity to products of equal dependability for home and industry.

**ADEL**

ADEL PRECISION PRODUCTS CORP.  
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN  
BRANCH OFFICES: CHICAGO, INDIANAPOLIS, ST. LOUIS, PHOENIX, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

**FOR WAR (AND PEACE) BUY BONDS**

What competing visions of working women emerged over the course of the war?

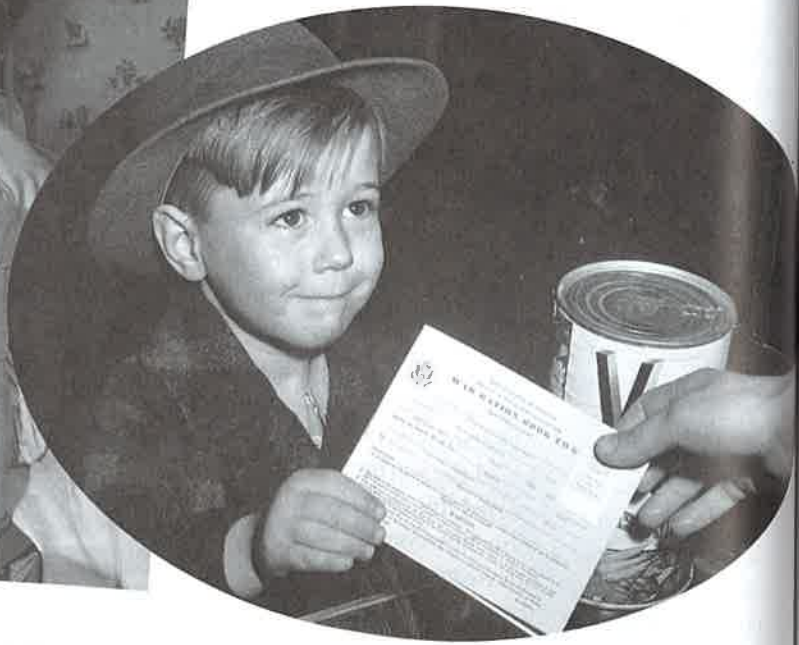
jobs to raise families or employers fired them to free up positions for returning veterans. Similarly, only a few thousand women remained in uniform as the military cut slots reserved for female troops. Their position within the armed forces rebounded a bit, however, when an act of Congress in 1948 gave women a permanent, though segregated, place in the army, navy, and air force. The debate over whether to limit female soldiers to support tasks or use them in active operations was only just beginning.

Even children pitched in to help the war effort. To encourage children's active participation, the government released photographs of small girls and boys doing their bit (23.12). This young boy takes care of the family shopping while his parents work in war-related jobs, handing the family's ration card to the merchant. At home this little girl carefully saves tin and foil in separate jars for the local scrap drive, all scarce materials needed by the military. Classrooms across the nation collected pennies and nickels for war bonds, which the federal government sold to Americans to help finance the war. The remoteness of the war often made it seem like a great adventure to children, who enthusiastically scoured their neighborhoods for aluminum, rubber, and tin foil, sometimes banging pots and pans outside homes until residents came forth with a donation. War games gained popularity on the nation's play-

grounds, and some children joined the Junior Commandos, a group that let young uniformed recruits, only a few years away from qualifying to fight in the army, train on a rugged obstacle course. With the wartime economy booming, many Americans concluded that wars, by nature, were good for the economy. However, a set of unique factors made World War II particularly beneficial to the American economy.

- The war effort withdrew 16 million servicemen and women from the workforce just as millions of new positions were created, absorbing all surplus labor and creating a labor shortage.
- Massive government spending on the war, not the war per se, ended the Depression. If the government had been willing to spend \$323 billion (the total cost of the war) on New Deal programs, then the economy would likely have rebounded earlier.
- The wartime boom years came at the expense of future generations. Direct taxation paid for less than half of the war's cost. It took until 1970 for the government to finish paying off its war debt.

During the war, prosperity and unity of purpose failed to guarantee tranquility in labor relations on the home front. Competing visions on the meaning of wartime sacrifice emerged immediately. The chairman of the National War Labor Board dramatized the difficulty of asking unions for wage



**23.12 Children and War**

Children helped in the war effort by collecting metal for neighborhood scrap drives and by shopping with a ration card while their parents worked.

Why was World War II unique in comparison to other American wars?

concessions by noting, "If you say to the boys, 'Why don't you make a sacrifice for your country?' they are going to say, 'That is fine. I am making a sacrifice for my country, but I am not going to make it to increase the profits of General Motors.'" Workers were right to suspect that big business profited tremendously from the war. Government contracts with generous profit margins, federal loans for factory conversion or expansion, and tax write-offs went overwhelmingly to the nation's one hundred largest companies. Even companies that at first glance appeared peripheral to the war effort prospered. Both Coca-Cola and Wrigley's Gum, for instance, managed to get their products declared essential war commodities, thus gaining access to carefully rationed sugar and shipping space. By following American

servicemen around the globe, Coca-Cola cultivated a worldwide taste for its beverage. Wrigley's Gum convinced the War Department that gum reduced stress in war workers and combat troops. The company provided a free stick for every soldier's combat rations.

During the war, labor's clout, like that of big companies, also expanded. Union rolls swelled from 8.7 to 14.7 million thanks in part to supportive War Labor Board policies. Industrialists tried to use the wartime rhetoric of sacrifice to rein in these growing unions. In one published advertisement, for example, the Jenkins Valve firm linked work slowdowns (used to pressure a company to agree to labor's demands) to the unnecessary deaths of American sailors. The ad showed a small child staring at a sailor's cap that had washed up along the shore; above ran the caption "Is a Plant Slow Down Worth It?" Unions did not completely abandon strikes, but overall the war ushered in a less militant era of collective bargaining.

## Racial Discord

The war provided many opportunities for racial minorities to assert their claims for equal rights in all aspects of American social and political life. These groups offered a strikingly different view of the war's ultimate purpose. Unlike the majority of white Americans who confined their thoughts to the

struggle against fascism abroad, many civil rights leaders championed a competing vision that sought to eradicate discrimination at home. Using the war to promote a **double-victory campaign** against both fascism overseas and racial prejudice at home, these activists promoted a vision of an egalitarian and color-blind society.

At first the wartime boom threatened to leave African Americans behind because many essential wartime industries refused to hire blacks. In 1941, the African American labor leader A. Philip Randolph

threatened to assemble 10,000 blacks in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., to "demand the right to work and fight for our country." Nationally known for successfully organizing a union for black railroad

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**"If you are going to ... go to war ...  
in a capitalist country, you have  
to let business make money  
out of the process or business  
won't work."**

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Secretary of War HENRY L. STIMSON

---

porters, Randolph realized that FDR's lock on the black vote gave him little reason to offer more than sympathy in private meetings with black leaders about rampant racial discrimination. To pressure FDR to act on blacks' behalf, a step certain to anger the president's white Southern supporters, Randolph resolved to publicly protest employment discrimination.

Randolph's idea for a march on Washington immediately attracted the support of civil rights groups and the ire of the White House. When FDR tried to convince Randolph to call off the march, Randolph stood firm, telling the president, "We feel as you have wisely said: 'No people will lose their freedom fighting for it.'" Seeking to avoid an embarrassing demonstration that highlighted racial problems at home, FDR agreed to issue an executive order that forbade discrimination in the defense industry and government if Randolph canceled the march. Roosevelt's order also established the Fair Employment Practices Committee to handle complaints of discrimination. For the first time since Reconstruction, the period following the Civil War, the federal government was intervening directly to protect the civil rights of African Americans. Randolph's aborted demonstration later inspired the 1963 march on Washington, where black civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech standing before the Lincoln Memorial (see Chapter 27).



Interest in direct action grew throughout the war. The Fellowship of Reconciliation's Committee on Racial Justice initiated a wave of sit-ins where groups of blacks and whites entered segregated restaurants together and refused to leave when denied service. In Washington, D.C., Howard University students successfully picketed segregated restaurants with signs that read "We Die Together. Let's Eat Together" and "Are You for Hitler's Way or the American Way? Make Up Your Mind."

Nearly 1 million blacks served in the armed forces during the war, including Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis, the first African American general in the U.S. Army. The War Department finally agreed to train African American pilots, and the Tuskegee Airmen (who received their stateside training at Alabama's Tuskegee Institute) amassed an admirable war record in Europe. The military remained segregated, however, and the overwhelming majority of black soldiers served in noncombatant units where they cleared beaches in France of mines, manned supply lines transporting food and ammunition to front-line troops, and built roads and railroads for the advancing army.

Within the United States black servicemen continued to receive daily reminders of their second-class status. When a group of black soldiers entered a whites-only restaurant in Salina, Kansas, the owner stopped them. We "just stood there inside the door, staring at what we had come to see—the German prisoners of war who were having lunch at the counter. . . . This was really happening. It was no jive talk. The people of Salina would serve these enemy soldiers and turn away black American G.I.'s," one soldier recalled. The proper epitaph to mark each black soldier's grave in the Pacific, African Americans sarcastically told one another, would be "here lies a black man killed fighting a yellow man for the protection of a white man."

The double-victory campaign laid the groundwork for the postwar civil rights movement by pioneering new strategies that would later prove extraordinarily successful. The accelerated migration northward also created new bases of political power that would aid the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Throughout the war hundreds of thousands of African American civilians hit the road in search of job opportunities in midwestern and western cities. In 1943 Los Angeles welcomed 10,000 black migrants a month, most from Texas and Louisiana. Overcrowding and changing demographics created explosive racial situations in many

urban areas. The most serious wartime race riot took place in 1943 in Detroit, Michigan. Home to the nation's largest automobile manufacturers, Detroit became the leading producer of military goods as these companies began manufacturing jeeps and tanks for the military. Plentiful jobs drew thousands of migrants to the city, including African Americans who had trouble finding adequate lodging in the strictly (albeit unofficially) segregated city housing market. White workers, resentful at working next to black workers, staged work slowdowns in the city's wartime defense plants. To protest racial discrimination some black residents initiated a "bumping campaign," purposefully nudging whites off sidewalks. The anticipated confrontation finally came on a warm spring afternoon when several groups of black and white teenagers tussled at a crowded amusement park located on Belle Isle. As the violence escalated, a mob of 5,000 whites formed to attack blacks as they crossed the bridge back to the mainland. Racial rampaging soon engulfed the entire city. Hundreds of African Americans were injured and twenty-five were killed before state and federal troops restored order. Nine whites also died in the rioting.

Horace Pippin, a self-taught African American painter who rocketed to fame in the late thirties, took note of the racial discord on the home front in his 1943 painting *Mr. Prejudice* (23.13). Pippin's composition expressed doubt that the double-V campaign would succeed. In the painting a racist white worker, backed by a Klansman, hammers a chisel down the center of a V, the symbol of victory. A fellow worker stands to his left, holding a noose—a reference to lynching. The Statue of Liberty, portrayed as an African American woman, is toppling down as the dream of racial unity unravels. The fractured V threatens to crack into two, permanently dividing the friendly white soldiers reaching out to their black comrades in arms—a doctor, sailor, aviator, and soldier who are all serving loyally during the war.

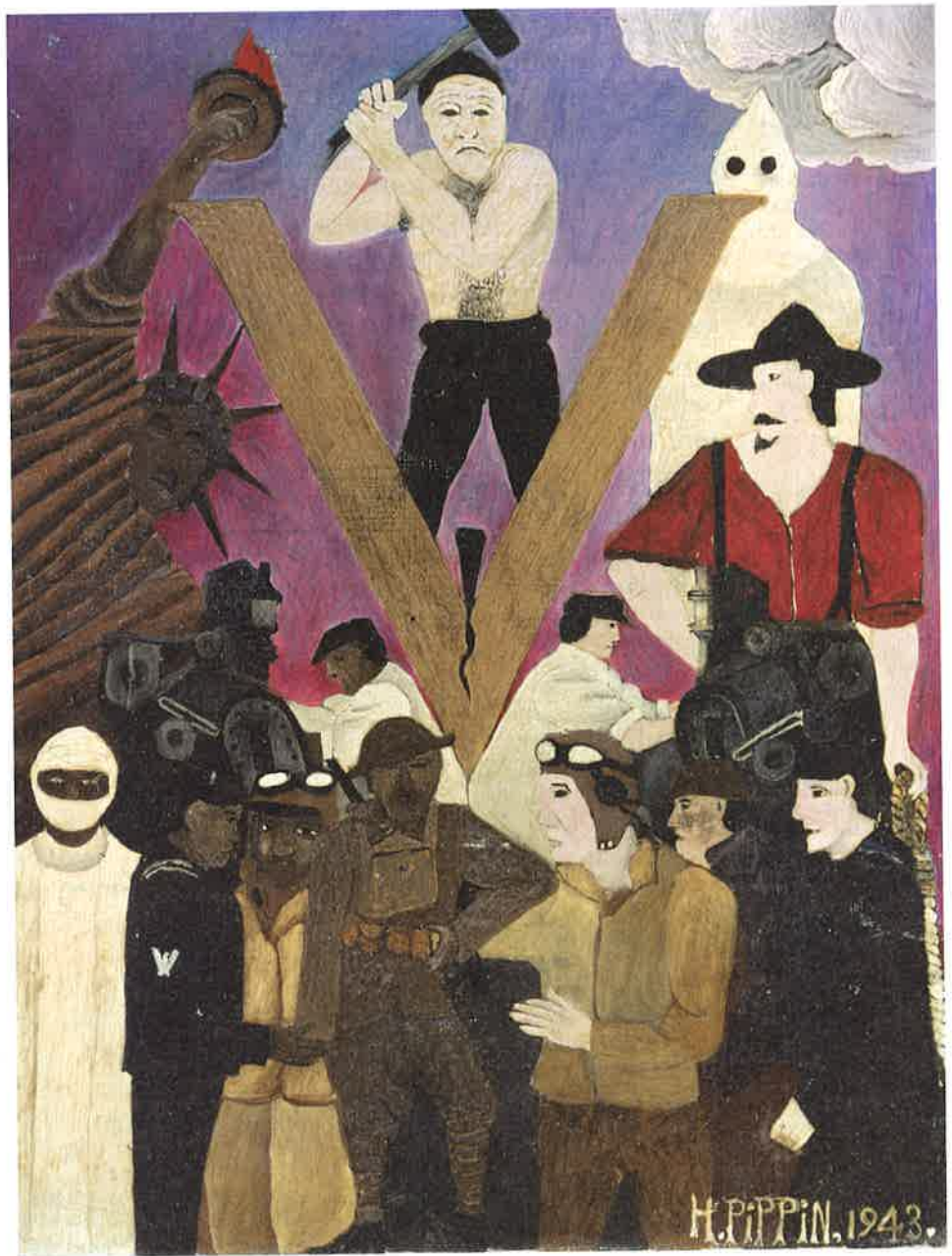
African Americans were not the only targets of racial violence, however. The same summer that racial violence rocked Detroit, white sailors and soldiers on leave in Los Angeles began a ten-day rampage against Mexican American zoot-suiters, youths who wore baggy pants, long oversize coats, and broad-brimmed hats. The zoot-suit was a fashion trend established by African American men in the thirties. By the war years white Americans viewed zoot-suiters at best as juvenile delinquents

How did African Americans challenge racial discrimination during the war?

who refused to dress and act properly, and at worst as marauding criminal gangs bent on robbery and rape. Some *pachucos*, as zoot-suiters called themselves, engaged in criminal activity, but most limited their adolescent rebellion to wearing different clothes from adults.

The explosive growth in the Mexican American community, coupled with a general intolerance for any nonconformity in time of war, set the stage for the conflict in Los Angeles. Street fights between sailors and Mexican American men escalated into full-scale rioting when organized groups of servicemen began attacking boys as young as twelve and Mexican American businesses. Local white civilians joined in the rioting, and when a mob came upon a zoot-suiter, they often beat and stripped him and sometimes even burned his clothes. The casualties included more than a hundred seriously injured Mexican Americans, and at least a hundred more who refused hospital care. Newspapers in Los Angeles egged on the white crowds by praising their efforts to rid the city of the "hoodlums" and "gangsters." Federal investigators cited racial prejudice as the cause of the riots, but Los Angeles nonetheless passed an ordinance that prohibited wearing zoot-suits on city streets. The image of Mexican Americans as disaffected youths belied the reality that 500,000 Latinos served alongside whites in the armed forces during the war, playing a large role in the doomed defense of the Philippines and heavily represented among Medal of Honor winners.

Perceived as natural-born warriors, Native Americans encountered less hostility within the armed forces than blacks or Latino Americans. More than 25,000 Native Americans served, including the famed Navajo code talkers who transmitted secret messages between units in their native language, baffling the Japanese, who never deciphered it. Military service offered many young Native Americans their first decent wages and a chance to leave the reservation. Government officials expected military service to hasten the process of assimilation, since Native American



**23.13** Horace Pippin, *Mr. Prejudice* (1943)

The fractured V in Pippin's painting suggested that the African American vision of using the war to secure democracy at home and abroad was in jeopardy. [Source: Horace Pippin (1898–1946), "Mr. Prejudice," 1943. Oil on canvas, 18 × 14 inches. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Matthew T. Moore. Photo by Graydon Wood, 1994-109-1]

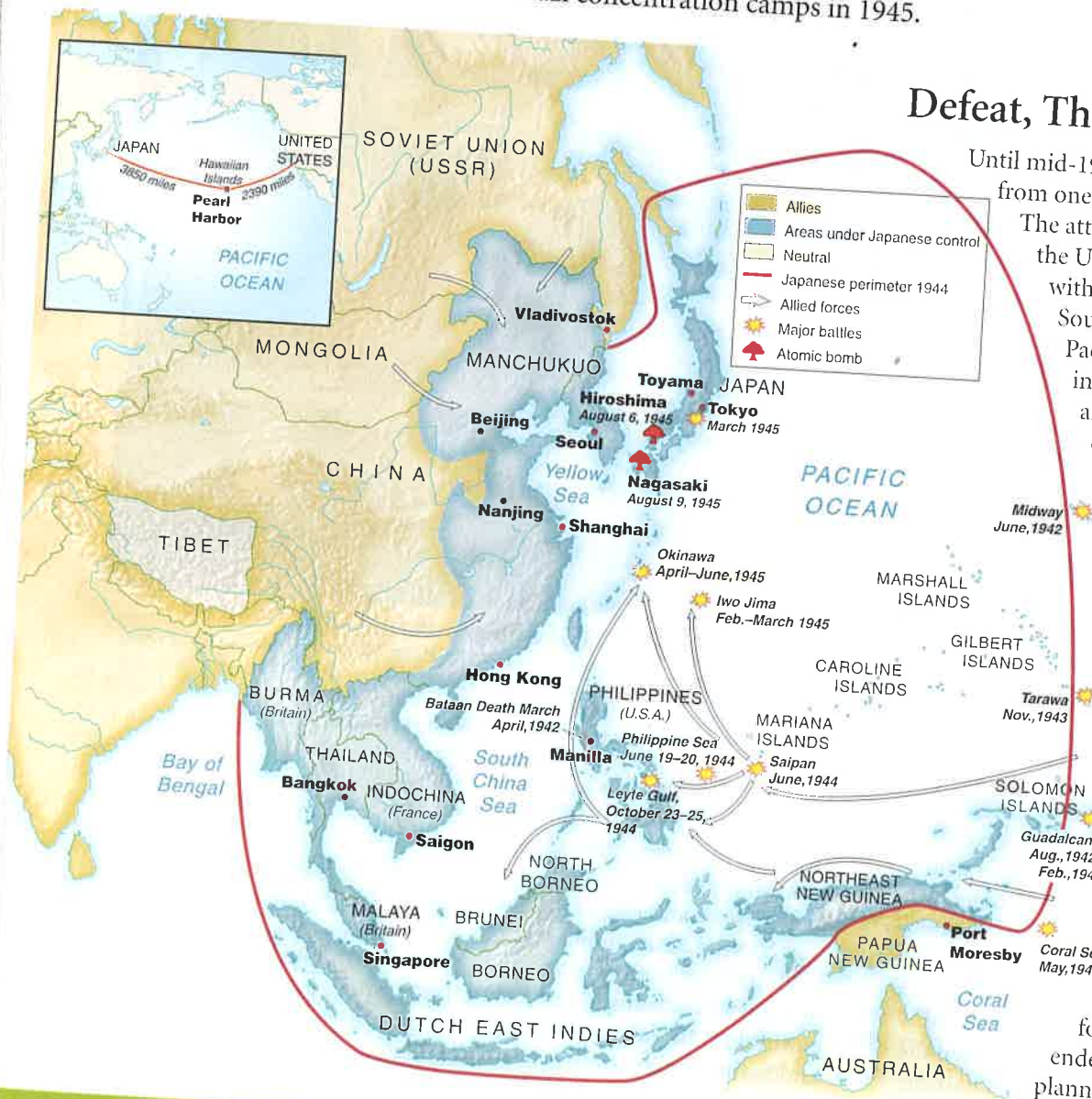
soldiers lived among whites. Yet sending men into combat also gave some tribes a reason to resurrect rituals surrounding battle, such as requiring returning soldiers to spend time in a sweat hut to cleanse themselves of the evils associated with war. Serving in the military, therefore, became a catalyst that both expanded veterans' knowledge of the wider world and reinforced their own cultural traditions, helping them to see themselves and mainstream society in a different light.

# On the Front Lines



No bombs fell on American cities and no occupying armies marched through the streets, but with 16 million men in the armed forces, nearly everyone knew someone who might not make it home. The United States essentially fought two separate wars in World War II, one against Germany and its allies in Europe; the other against Japan in the Pacific. The initial news from the battlefield was not good, as the American armed forces encountered one setback after another. America had determined foes in Japan and Germany, and defeating them required time and patience. Important first victories finally came, but the closer the Allies got to Japan and Germany, the harder their enemies fought. Initially leery of exposing Americans to blood and gore, over time magazines and newspapers began to publish photographs that registered the rising toll of death at the front. The public welcomed photographs of enemy destruction as evidence that the nation was nearing victory, but reacted strongly to any sign of suffering by American soldiers. Nothing prepared the public, however, for the shocking details that emerged from liberated Nazi concentration camps in 1945.

**23.14** War in the Pacific  
Allied victories at Guadalcanal, the Coral Sea, and Midway halted the Japanese expansionist drive, preparing the way for the Allied island-hopping campaign in 1944-1945.



## Defeat, Then Victory

Until mid-1942 the American military reeled from one defeat to another in the Pacific. The attack on Pearl Harbor prevented the United States from interfering with Japan's sweeping conquest of Southeast Asia and the western Pacific island chains, as shown in this map (23.14). American and Filipino soldiers fought courageously in the Philippines, but lacking supplies these troops finally surrendered in the spring of 1942.

To solidify its control of East Asia, Japan planned to attack Australia through Port Moresby, on the island of New Guinea, and then fight a decisive battle with the American navy in the western Pacific that would force the United States to sue for a negotiated peace. The Americans thwarted these plans in the Battle of Coral Sea (May 3-8, 1942) and the Battle of Midway (June 4-6, 1942). In the former a duel of naval aircraft ended with Japan calling off its planned invasion of Australia. In

What does this map reveal about the military challenges facing the United States in the Pacific?

the latter American dive-bomber squadrons surprised a convoy of Japanese aircraft carriers in the midst of refueling their planes. Japan's heavy losses at Midway prevented Japan from launching any major naval offensives for the rest of the war. Midway was a crucial turning point that put Japan permanently on the defensive.

America adopted a "Europe First" strategy, but the war in the European theater began equally poorly for the Allies. Initially the United States wanted to get needed supplies across the Atlantic and open up a second front against Germany in Western Europe. Meeting the first goal required winning the Battle of the Atlantic. For eighteen months the Allied cause looked grim as German submarines controlled the seas and sank an average of one hundred ships a month. The extensive submarine activity on Map 23.1 illustrates the ferocity of the struggle to control the Atlantic. Finally, in the summer of 1943, the tide began to turn in the Allies' favor. Better air surveillance, improved radar, the discovery that the Germans had broken the convoy-routing code, and breaking the German submarine code all contributed to Allied success in the Atlantic.

The issue of opening a second front in Europe remained. Roosevelt was reluctant to commit large numbers of American land forces until he could field an army that was better equipped and supplied than those of its adversaries. But he recognized that committing American ground troops to the war in Europe would build morale at home; it would also prevent the Russians from seeking a separate peace with Germany.

Soviet leader Joseph Stalin urged Britain and the United States to invade Nazi-occupied France in 1943. Churchill and FDR refused. Britain worried

about repeating the trench stalemate of World War I, while the Americans doubted that their inexperienced army could prevail against the first-rate German troops stationed in France. As an alternative FDR and Churchill decided to attack through "the soft underbelly of Europe" by first establishing supply and air bases in North Africa and then attacking Italy. Despite some American blunders on the battlefield, by the summer of 1943 the Allies had gained control of North Africa and invaded Sicily, as shown in the map "The European Theater" (23.15).

Italy's surrender on September 8, 1943, meant little, however. German forces invaded the Italian peninsula, saving Mussolini's regime and keeping Allied troops bogged down in a bloody campaign that lasted until the spring of 1945. When Mussolini tried to escape in 1945 with the retreating Germans, Italian resistance fighters captured him and his mistress, shot them, and strung them upside down in a

**23.15 The European Theater**  
The Soviet army fought alone in Europe until the United States invaded Italy in 1943 and joined with Great Britain to launch the D-Day invasions in 1944.



Why did the United States attack the Axis powers first in Italy, rather than France?

public square in Milan where resistance fighters had been executed.

In 1943 the Allies launched the first major incendiary attack of the war. The bombing raids on Hamburg, a major industrial German city, ignited a firestorm in the hot, dry conditions that killed 45,000 and wounded nearly 40,000. Germany's aerial attacks during the Battle of Britain in 1940–1941 had hardened British views about bombing civilians in Germany, while the Americans preferred trying to hit actual military and industrial installations. Dresden, home to key railroad lines, was the site of another devastating incendiary bombing raid in February 1945, which killed approximately 35,000 Germans. Although many American bombs failed to hit their precisely designated industrial or military targets, in fighting Germany, the United States never formally adopted terror bombing, the strategy of dropping high concentrations of bombs on civilian populations to create panic and misery.

In late November 1943 FDR and Churchill met with Stalin for the first time in Tehran, the capital of Iran, to discuss Allied strategy for the coming year. During the conference FDR privately described Stalin as “altogether quite impressive,” and the president purposefully stayed in the Soviet Embassy to build a good rapport with the Soviet leader. Churchill remained more leery of Soviet intentions to expand its influence into Eastern Europe after the war. The Soviet's victory at Stalingrad (January–February 1943), a pivotal battle that put the Allies on the path to victory, buoyed optimism that the tide had turned in Russia's favor on the Eastern Front. Within a few months, the Soviets would also prevail in Leningrad, ending a 900-day German siege of the

city that lasted from September 1941–January 1943. Churchill wanted to join the fight in the East by launching an Anglo-American invasion of the Balkans through the Adriatic Sea. FDR doubted Americans would support a sustained campaign in Eastern Europe when the nation's traditional lay in defending Britain and France. In addition, the president was reluctant to send American troops into a region that the USSR clearly intended to dominate after the war. The president was wary of antagonizing the Soviet Union when he still hoped to convince Stalin to declare war against Japan once the European war ended. Instead, the United States persuaded Britain to join the United States in an invasion of France in 1944.

The campaign in the Pacific followed a similar strategy of attacking Japan in the “soft underbelly” of its empire in the South Pacific. The Allies opened the campaign with successful, but difficult attacks on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands and on New Guinea. In early 1943 Japan accepted its defeat in the South Pacific by withdrawing its fleet and aircraft to a new defensive line that extended through Southeast Asia, the Philippines, and the Mariana Islands.

To keep up the pressure on Japan, the Allies decided to launch a two-pronged attack on Japanese forces in the Central and South Pacific. From the Central Pacific the Americans hoped to establish a naval blockade that cut Japan off from supplies in the south. The United States quickly took the Gilbert and Marshall Islands. During the subsequent invasion of the island of Saipan in the Marianas, the Americans destroyed so many Japanese naval aircraft in the Battle of the Philippine Sea (June 19–20, 1944) that the battle became known as “the Great Marianas Turkey Shoot.” The final capture of the Mariana Islands in August 1944 put the United States, armed with massive and heavily-loaded B-29s that could travel up to 2,000 miles, within striking distance of Japan.

“I shall return,” General Douglas MacArthur had proclaimed when FDR ordered him to head to Australia and leave his embattled troops on the Philippines in 1942. On October 20, 1944, he fulfilled this promise by wading ashore in the Leyte Gulf four hours after the first American force

### 23.16 General MacArthur's Return to the Philippines

MacArthur used the press to publicize his return to the Philippines in 1944. Military photographers captured his purposeful stride ashore, and that evening MacArthur proclaimed in a radio address, “People of the Philippines: I have returned ... Rally to me.”



How did the tide gradually turn in favor of the Allies in Europe and the Pacific?

casualties. During the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the first kamikaze pilots plowed their planes into the decks of six American ships, setting off a cascade of explosions from the ships' gasoline and ordnance that damaged five and sank one.

A month later seaman James Fahey was on a ship under attack. He and the sailors battled for hours, shooting down a steady stream of incoming aircraft. "The explosions were terrific as the suicide planes exploded in the water . . . the water looked like it was on fire," Fahey wrote in his diary. Parts of the destroyed planes fell onto his ship, and during a lull in the action, the sailors went sifting through the debris for souvenirs. "The deck near my mount was covered with blood, guts, brains, tongues, scalps, hearts, arms etc. from the Jap pilots,"

Fahey recalled. Fahey watched men select body parts to preserve in alcohol and send home to relatives. Soldiers involved in the Pacific island-hopping campaigns exhibited a similar macabre interest in collecting Japanese soldiers' body parts. In May 1944

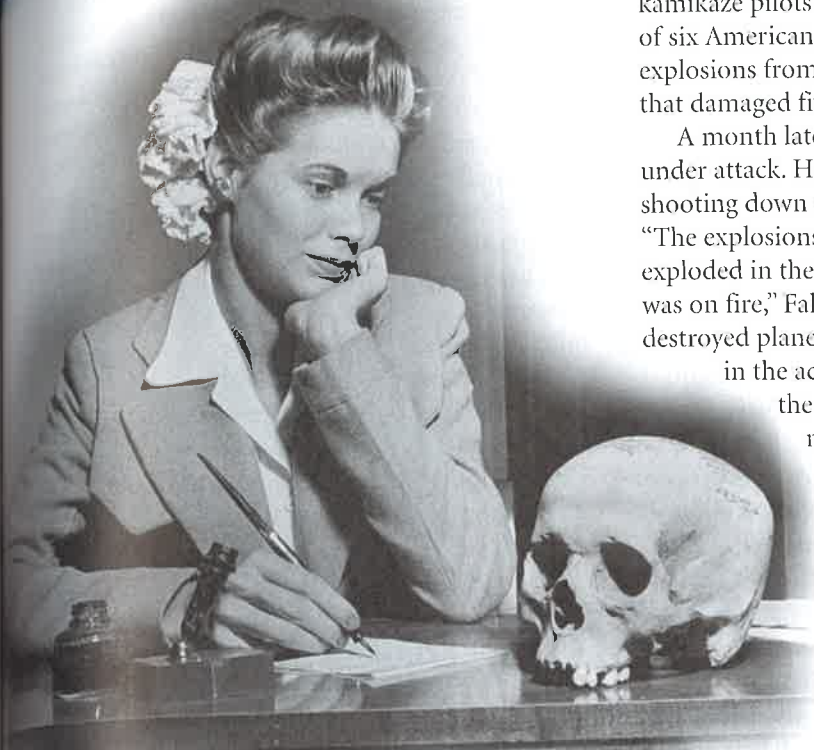
*Life* magazine published "A Wartime Souvenir," showing an attractive young woman writing a thank-you note to her fiancé for sending her a souvenir Japanese skull (23.17). "The armed forces disapprove strongly of this sort of thing," *Life* noted. Yet the image of this woman calmly contemplating her war trophy elicited no controversy. Instead, many Americans exorcised their own desire for revenge against Japan through such images. The press had to **handle** photographs of American war dead more **carefully** (see *Images as History: Combat Photography*, page 706).

## The Final Push in Europe

On June 6, 1944, the Allies launched the D-Day invasion, their long-anticipated invasion of Normandy, a region of northern France, under the command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower. "The eyes of the world are upon you," the popular leader told his troops. Eisenhower, raised in a poor Jehovah Witness Kansas family, became a national hero for his successful planning and execution of the D-Day invasions and subsequent offensives through France and Germany. His achievements and sunny personality would make him an appealing postwar presidential candidate in 1952 (see Chapter 24).

### 23.17 "A Wartime Souvenir"

In 1944, *Life* magazine chose this photo as its picture of the week. The young woman's fiancé sent her a Japanese skull with an inscription that read: "This is a good Jap—a dead one picked up on the New Guinea beach." Collecting enemy body parts as war trophies was common among American troops fighting in Japan, but not in the European theater.



landed in a carefully choreographed act that MacArthur insisted on filming several times to get just right. To build morale and enhance his reputation as a fearless leader, MacArthur presented himself as part of the invasion force, a general who was willing to get his boots wet and resolutely press forward, as seen in this photo (23.16). The Battle of Leyte Gulf (October 23–25, 1944), the largest naval battle in history, ended with an American victory. It took until July 1945, however, to completely liberate the Philippines from isolated infantry garrisons.

With the war advancing well in the Pacific, Americans began to feel optimistic about achieving a swift victory. These hopes faded, however, when Japan switched from fighting a strategic war to waging a war of attrition. Mounting losses, Japan's leaders reasoned, would force the United States to the negotiating table. With conventional weapons like ships, guns, and planes in short supply, Japan introduced a set of suicidal battlefield tactics on land and sea in the fall of 1944 that dramatically intensified the struggle. In the western Caroline Islands, Japanese soldiers resolved to fight to the last man. Forcing the Americans to rout out every enemy soldier from an interlocking system of caves and bunkers prolonged the battle and raised American

# Images as History

## COMBAT PHOTOGRAPHY

War photography brings the realities of combat into the homes of ordinary citizens. How do pictures of combat force viewers to think about the overall meaning and worthiness of the conflict?

For the first year and a half of American involvement, when there was little good news to report, the military believed that photographs of dead American soldiers would weaken morale on the home front. In 1943 Allied victories in the South Pacific and North Africa raised spirits at home—perhaps a bit too much in the eyes of some officials. Aware of the long road ahead and the need for continued sacrifice on the home front, the War Department now approved the dissemination of bloody battlefield photographs.

In September 1943 *Life* magazine published a photograph of three American soldiers lying partially buried in the sand in New Guinea. In the accompanying editorial *Life* anticipated the public's shock at seeing the first photograph of American war dead. "Why print this picture, anyway, of three American boys dead upon an alien shore? Is it to hurt people? To be morbid?" *Life* editors wrote. "Those are not the answers. The reason is that words are never enough."

Magazine editors chose their images from an ever-increasing supply of casualty pictures. Two-thirds of the 291,557 American troops killed in battle during the war died in 1944–1945. Photographer Joe Rosenthal's "Old Glory Goes Up on Mt. Suribachi, Iwo Jima," a candid shot of five marines and one navy corpsman raising a flag on the Pacific Island of Iwo Jima on February 23, 1945, remains the most famous image from World War II. Rosenthal's Pulitzer Prize–winning photograph would inspire a Marine Corps statue, erected in Washington, D.C., in 1954.

Three of the marines in Rosenthal's photograph died in the ensuing battle. The others returned home and toured the country in an overwhelmingly successful war bond campaign.

Military censors forbade publication of photographs containing identifiable war dead or badly mutilated corpses, worried that such pictures might depress morale on the home front.

"Publication of photos showing some of our boys killed in action had a sobering effect on people and brought the realities of war closer to home," a satisfied War Department official noted.



"Here Lie Three Americans"

The image of six men working together to push the flag upright conveyed the teamwork necessary to defeat Japan, and that the uphill struggle to victory was not quite completed.

Critics later accused Rosenthal of staging this photo, a charge that he denied.



"Old Glory Goes Up on Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima"

How did the political and military situation influence the way Americans viewed these photographs?

Although stormy weather made traversing the English Channel treacherous, and the Americans faced fierce resistance on Omaha Beach, the D-Day invasion was an overwhelming success. The heavy buildup for the attack, involving 175,000 troops, 6,000 aircraft, and 6,000 naval vessels, made complete surprise impossible. But the Allies had dramatically increased the invasion's chances of success by deceiving the Germans into expecting the attack to come farther north. Diversionary bombing, false agent reports, and misleading radio communications convinced the Germans to station the majority of their first-rate infantry divisions farther north. Hitler continued to hold these units in reserve even after the D-Day invasion began, certain that the Normandy landings were just a diversion. The German delay in responding gave the Allies the time they needed to establish a beachhead that stretched for 55 miles by the end of the first day.

*Life* photographer Robert Capa hit the beaches with the troops, living up to his famous statement, "If your pictures aren't good enough, you aren't close enough." Anxious to see Capa's photographs, a rushing darkroom technician used too much heat to dry the film and inadvertently melted nearly all his images. The excessive heat blurred the remaining few, creating a surreal aura to this instantly iconic image (23.18) of an American soldier struggling through the turbulent surf to reach the shore. Capa put down his camera long enough to pull this soldier to safety after a bullet struck him in the right shoulder.

It was still a long way from Normandy to Berlin, however. After two more months of hard fighting, the Allies finally began to push forward. On August 15, 1944, the Americans launched a second invasion through the south of France. Within a month these troops had joined with the Normandy invasion forces to establish a continuous Allied front from the English Channel to the German frontier. Hitler had no intention of going down without a fight. In December 1944 the Germans launched a massive counteroffensive. The Battle of the Bulge, so named for the Germans' pocket of penetration into Allied lines, was the largest battle fought by the American Army in Europe. Fighting in the snow and bitter cold, the Allies suffered 77,000

**"Two kinds of people are staying on this beach, the dead and those who are going to die."**

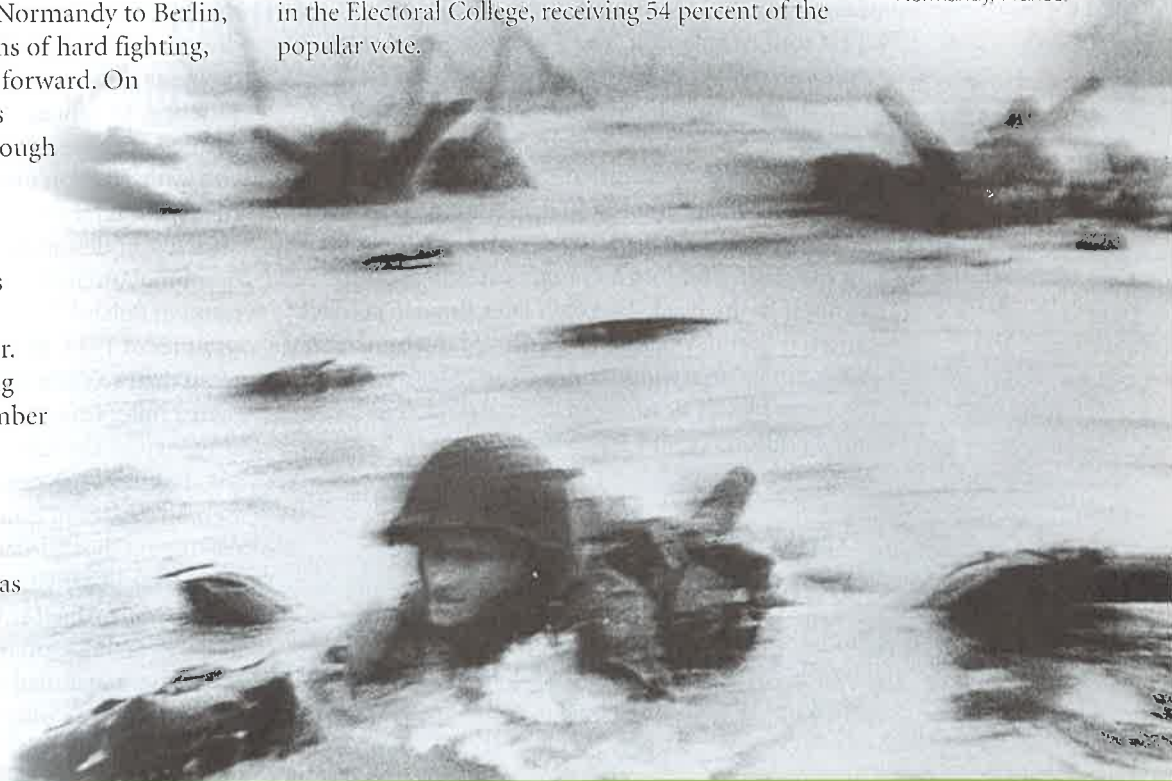
Colonel GEORGE TAYLOR, urging his dazed troops forward on Omaha Beach during the D-Day invasions

casualties before finally halting the German counter-attack a month later.

When Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin met in February 1945 at Yalta, a town in the Ukraine, to discuss their next step, Roosevelt was fresh off an unprecedented fourth-term victory in the 1944 presidential election. The Republican candidate Thomas Dewey, a popular New York State governor, had attacked Roosevelt as a "tired old man" no longer up to the challenge of running the war. Roosevelt solidified support within the Democratic Party by replacing the controversial liberal Henry Wallace with Harry S Truman, a straight-talking moderate senator from Missouri, as his vice-presidential candidate. The selection of an acceptable vice-presidential candidate was important to Democratic Party bosses who feared that the ill Roosevelt might not live to complete a fourth term in office. Suffering from advancing heart disease and the strain of war, Roosevelt nevertheless managed to display renewed energy during the campaign, convincing Americans not to "change horses in mid-stream." He won 432 to 99 votes in the Electoral College, receiving 54 percent of the popular vote.

#### **23.18 D-Day Invasion, 1944**

Robert Capa's grainy photograph conveyed the chaos and danger American soldiers faced when they hit the beaches in Normandy, France.



Why did the Allies prevail on D-Day?



At the Yalta Conference the larger question of how to defeat Germany was behind the Allies. The issues now on the table included governing postwar Germany, ensuring victory over Japan, and maintaining peace in the postwar world. At the conference FDR secured a Soviet promise to enter the war against Japan three months after Germany capitulated. In return Stalin wanted the United States and Britain to grant the Soviet Union territorial concessions in Japan and China. For the moment FDR acceded to Soviet control of Eastern Europe, but secured a pledge from Stalin to hold free elections in a liberated Poland.

The decision at the Yalta Conference to name the United States, Britain, France, China, and the USSR as permanent members of the proposed United Nations Security Council, each with the power to veto any resolution, cleared the way to officially create a United Nations (UN) to replace the now-defunct League of Nations. Delegates from fifty nations met in San Francisco between April 25 and June 26, 1945, to found the UN, an international organization that offered nations a place to discuss their differences and collectively promote economic development and peace throughout the world. To ensure that the United States joined the UN, its creators made participation in UN peacekeeping missions voluntary. In addition the Security Council veto gave the United States (and other major powers) a way to control UN activities. Unlike after World War I, when the United States failed to join the League of Nations, the United States was one of the first countries to join. The UN subsequently built its headquarters in New York City.

Now unstoppable in Europe, the Allies crossed the Rhine River into Germany in March. On April 30, 1945, Hitler committed suicide in a bunker 55 feet under the ground in Berlin. After dictating his will and marrying his longtime companion Eva Braun, Hitler bit into a cyanide capsule and shot himself in the head. Two days later Russian soldiers entered Berlin, where they destroyed the bunker and took Hitler's burned remains so an autopsy could confirm he was dead. Germany surrendered unconditionally on May 7, 1945.

## America's Response to the Holocaust

In the spring of 1945, Allied troops began liberating the concentration camps holding Jews, Poles, prisoners of war, and a host of other groups that the

German state considered enemies or racially inferior. News of the Final Solution, Hitler's plan to systematically murder the Jews and other "lesser" peoples, first reached the West in August 1942. Along with other nations, the United States condemned "in the strongest possible terms this bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination." During the war mainstream American newspapers, fearful of reporting falsified atrocity stories amid a glut of war news, had published little about the Holocaust, the term used to describe this Nazi-engineered extermination. The United States did little initially to aid European Jews. In January 1944, however, the Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, who was Jewish, protested to FDR that anti-Semitism within the State Department had thwarted a plan to ransom 70,000 Rumanian Jews with private funds, leaving the United States open to charges that it was acquiescing to the "murder of the Jews." FDR immediately issued an executive order establishing the War Refugee Board (WRB). Over the next year the WRB saved approximately 200,000 lives by convincing Rumania and Hungary to stop deportations and helping Jews and other victims of Nazi persecution escape or survive in hiding. *The Holocaust* special feature depicts both the response of the United States to the Holocaust and the scope of German atrocities.

Pressed by some Jewish groups to undertake a dramatic rescue of Europe's Jews by bombing either the concentration camps or the railroads leading to them, Roosevelt demurred. He argued that any diversion of military resources from the ultimate goal of winning the war would only prolong the Jews' suffering. In February 1944 the War Department decided not to send armed forces to rescue "victims of enemy oppression unless such rescues are the direct result of military operations conducted with the objective of defeating the armed forces of the enemy." Bombing Auschwitz, the main Nazi extermination camp in Poland, became a real possibility only in the summer of 1944. In August Allied planes dropped more than 1,000 bombs on synthetic-oil plants less than 5 miles from Auschwitz.

Whether the Allies should have also targeted the gas chambers has provoked heated debate since the war. Advocates of bombing the camps argue that destroying the railroad lines leading to Auschwitz or its gas chambers would have slowed down the killing as liberating Allied troops approached the camps, perhaps saving as many as 100,000 Jews. These would have included Anne Frank, a thirteen-year-old German refugee who was sent to Auschwitz after her

# The Holocaust

The United States reacted slowly to Hitler's persecution of Jews in the Depression-plagued thirties. Strict immigration quotas and anti-Semitism limited visas for Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution. After Kristallnacht, a 1938 German rampage against Jewish businesses and homes, FDR granted more Jews asylum, but acceded to public concern over increasing immigration dramatically. In 1939 the United States turned back the *St. Louis*, a ship carrying Jewish refugees who did not have visas to enter the country. Of all nations, the United States, despite its strict immigration quotas, accepted the largest number of Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution. Once at war FDR refused to bomb the concentration camps from the air, worried that any diversion from attacking the German military would lengthen the war. Instead, American ground troops liberated major concentration camps in Western Europe, including Buchenwald, Dachau, and Mauthausen. The Germans killed over 6 million Jews, 3 million Soviet prisoners of war, 2 million non-Jewish Poles, nearly 200,000 disabled individuals, 10,000 Jehovah Witnesses, and an undetermined number of homosexuals.

**"I have gotten rid of the Jews."**  
ADOLF HITLER, 1944

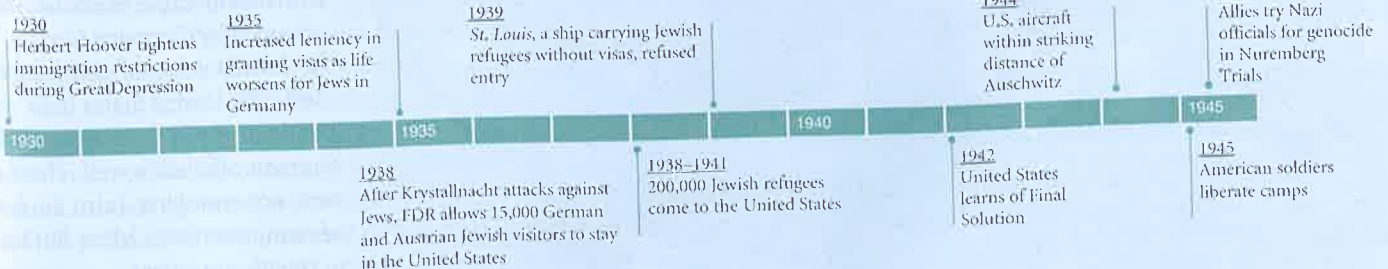


German-run Concentration Camps in World War II

## Jews in the Holocaust



## America and the Holocaust



What insights does this data offer on the scope of the Holocaust and the American response?

**“The wrongs which we seek to condemn and punish have been so calculated, so malignant, and so devastating, that civilization cannot tolerate their being ignored, because it cannot survive their being repeated.”**

American prosecutor, Supreme Court Justice **ROBERT JACKSON**,  
in opening the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials

**23.19** German Civilians Viewing Corpses in a Concentration Camp

Photographs from liberated concentration camps, like this one from Buchenwald, Germany, shocked the world. American military commanders forced German civilians, who professed ignorance about the Final Solution, to view and bury the dead.

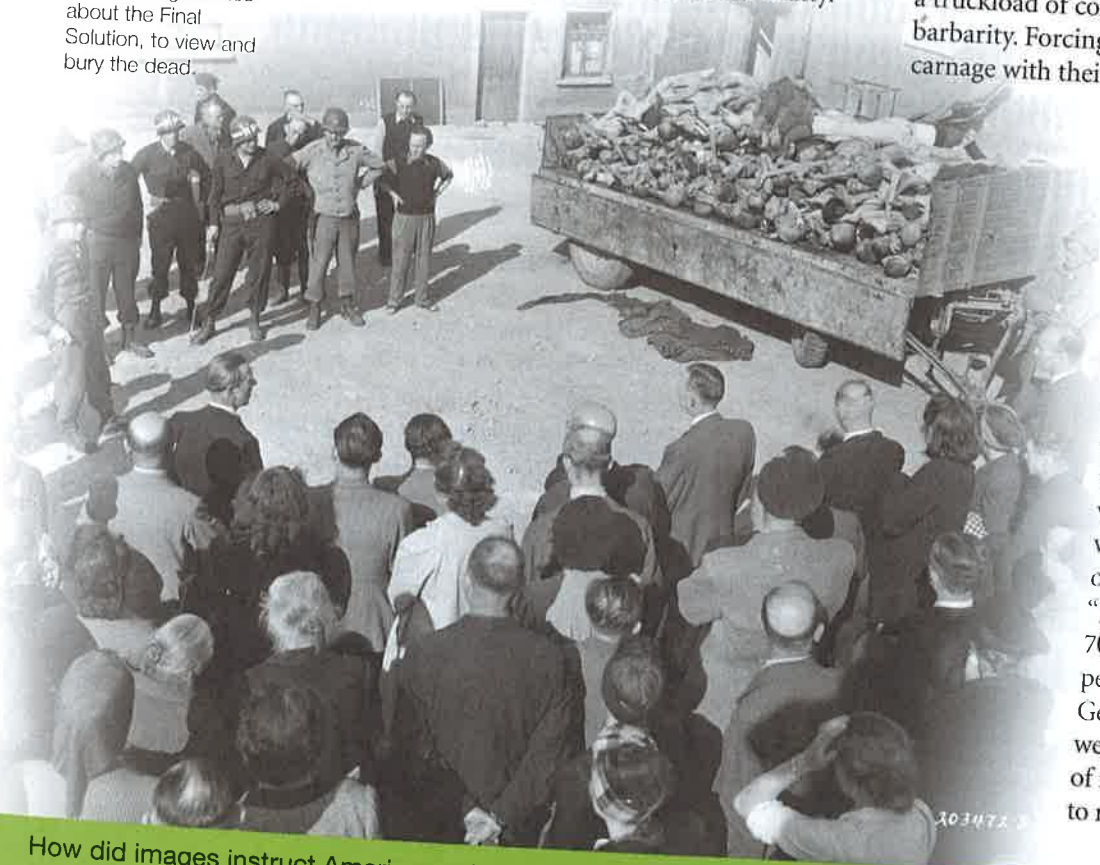
family’s capture in Amsterdam and whose journal of her experience in hiding, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, became a postwar literary classic. Detractors note the determination of the Nazis to use any means possible to slaughter the Jews, including mass executions by firing squads and forced marches, until the very end of the war.

As the camps were liberated, reporters tried through words and pictures to convey how 6 million Jews had met their deaths. Even though Americans had grown accustomed to seeing photos of war dead, nothing prepared them for images from the concentration camps. American commanders invited the press into the camps to head off any possible denials over the scope of the Holocaust. Photographs of concentration camps were, one reporter wrote, “so horrible that no newspaper normally would use them, but they were less horrible than the reality.”

Soldiers set themselves up as witnesses (a term used to describe both survivors and liberators) who could personally vouch for the extent of the horrors by posing in photographs before piles of corpses, next to the ovens used to cremate bodies, or in showers that dispersed cyanide gas instead of water to asphyxiate victims. “You can photograph results of suffering but never suffering itself,” observed one British politician.

By documenting the act of discovering Nazi atrocities, witness photographs helped Americans share the horror that soldiers felt. The American military also posted photographs of concentration camp atrocities in German towns and villages for civilians to see, but many American commanders went further. In the photo shown here (23.19), American soldiers assembled German civilians before a truckload of corpses to listen to a lecture on the barbarity. Forcing German civilians to view the carnage with their own eyes, and in some cases bury the bodies, was part of a deliberate Allied campaign to make all Germans accept responsibility for their nation’s war crimes.

After the war the Allies jointly tried twenty-two Nazi leaders in the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials. In these trials individual Germans were charged with starting the war, authorizing the killing of prisoners of war, and orchestrating the wartime genocide against victims who mostly came from nations occupied by Germany (see the “Jews in Holocaust” chart, page 709). The United States independently tried thousands of other German officials as well. These trials were not enough to calm the fears of many survivors. Many left Europe to resettle elsewhere.



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How did images instruct Americans about the meaning of the Holocaust and their role as liberators?

# Ending the Pacific War



Germany was now under Allied control, but in the Pacific the war raged on. There the fighting took a desperate turn in 1945, and each victory cost the United States dearly. Despite a mounting death toll, American troops edged closer to Japan and officials began planning an invasion of the mainland. News of a successful atomic bomb test detonation in the New Mexico desert dramatically altered existing political and military calculations on how to achieve victory. Employing this new, terrible weapon eventually generated conflicting views within the United States over the ethics of atomic warfare.

## Edging Closer to Japan

Japan's use of "cave and bunker" tactics on land and kamikazes at sea dramatically raised the cost of capturing Iwo Jima (February 19–March 26, 1945) and Okinawa (April 1–June 21, 1945), the last two islands that remained before the United States could launch an invasion of the Japanese homeland. Battles on Iwo Jima and Okinawa produced some of the toughest fighting of the war.

The Americans coveted the 7-mile pork-chop-shaped island of Iwo Jima for its airstrips, both to stop Japanese fighter planes from harassing B-29s headed to Japan and to provide emergency landing fields for crippled B-29s returning from mainland bombing raids. In their conquest of Iwo Jima, the Americans took only 216 prisoners out of 21,000 enemy troops, the rest perishing in the fighting. As the marines shot flamethrowers into caves to extract hiding enemy soldiers, "the scene became wild and terrible," one correspondent recalled. "More Japs rushed screaming from the caves. They tumbled over the rocks, their clothes and bodies burning fiercely." The capture of Okinawa, needed as a staging area for the actual invasion of Japan, was equally bloody. Weeks of kamikaze attacks alone took the lives of 5,000 sailors, while ground troops squared off against an entrenched enemy determined to fight to the last man.

As on Iwo Jima vast numbers of Japanese soldiers (70,000) perished. In this battle, however, an equal number of Japanese civilians either took their own lives (they had been told of mass rape and torture if taken prisoner) or were killed by Japanese soldiers if they tried to surrender. The Americans suffered 75,000 casualties in capturing Okinawa. With the actual invasion of the Japanese homeland up next, the Americans feared facing, in the words of Harry Truman, "an Okinawa from one end of Japan to the other."

Meanwhile American pilots brought the war home to the Japanese people from newly established air bases in the Marianas. When the bombing campaign began in earnest in the Pacific theater in 1945, the United States quickly abandoned efforts to differentiate between civilian and military targets as it had in Germany. "There are no civilians in Japan," declared one air force official. "We are making War and making it in the all-out fashion which saves American lives, shortens the agony which War is, and seeks to bring about an enduring peace." The United States targeted sixty-seven Japanese cities for incendiary bombing in 1945, resulting in the destruction of 187 square miles and approximately 300,000 deaths. During one night-time raid the entire city of Toyama burned to the ground. The most destructive air attack of the war came on March 9–10, 1945, when incendiary bombs dropped on Tokyo ignited fires that American bombers kept going by spreading gasoline and chemicals over the city. This attack destroyed 16 square miles and killed nearly 90,000 Japanese—more than would perish from the atomic bomb blast over Hiroshima five months later.

## Dropping the Atomic Bomb

Franklin D. Roosevelt died at the age of 65 of a cerebral hemorrhage on April 12, 1945, while at his cottage in Warm Springs, Georgia. Throngs of mourners lined railroad tracks and city streets as the casket holding FDR's remains traveled first to Washington, D.C., for funeral services in the White House and then to his final resting spot at his home in Hyde Park, New York. Throughout the grieving nation many Americans could barely remember a time when FDR had not been president.

FDR's firm grip on power had kept his vice president Harry Truman in the dark about the four-year, \$20 billion **Manhattan Project**, the code-named secret government research program established to

produce the atomic bomb. Thrust overnight into the presidency, Truman faced a host of critical strategic decisions in Europe and the Pacific, none more important than what to do with the newly developed atomic bomb. In mid-July 1945 the United States exploded its first atomic bomb in the New Mexico desert. *Choices and Consequences: How to Use the Atomic Bomb* traces Truman's options and the consequences of his decision to use the bomb against Japan.

**“The crux of the matter is whether total war in its present form is justifiable, even when it serves a just purpose.”**

German Jesuit Priest in Nagasaki,  
when the atomic bomb was dropped

On August 6, 1945, a B-29 bomber christened the *Enola Gay* dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. As pilot Captain Paul Tibbets turned the *Enola Gay* away from Hiroshima, Sergeant George Caron snapped several photographs, giving Americans their first look at the telltale mushroom cloud formation that came to signify nuclear annihilation. Three days later, acting on a standing order to use the atomic bomb “as made ready,” an American plane dropped a second atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

Saved from firebomb attacks because of their minimal military value, Hiroshima and Nagasaki presented virgin ground for a clear demonstration of the bomb's force. The United States wanted to make a profound impression on the Japanese. Secretary of War Stimson believed “the atomic bomb was more than a weapon of terrible destruction; it was a psychological weapon.” The firebombed ruins of cities like Tokyo, therefore, presented a much less appealing target for demonstrating the full power of a nuclear bomb.

American soldiers scheduled to take part in the planned invasion gave little thought to civilian victims on the ground. “When we learned to our astonishment that we would not be obliged in a few months to rush up the beaches near Tokyo assault-firing while being machine-gunned, mortared, and

shelled, for all the practiced phlegm of our tough facades we broke down and cried with relief and joy. We were going to live. We were going to grow to adulthood after all,” recalled literary critic Paul Fussell in a 1988 essay, “Thank God for the Atom Bomb.”

## The Final Surrender

Truman and his advisers recognized that American possession of the atomic bomb was certain to reshape postwar relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. In the minds of several key presidential advisers, America's nuclear monopoly increased the chances of limiting Soviet influence over Eastern Europe and ending the Pacific war without any Soviet help. Soviet spies in the Manhattan Project had already alerted Moscow of the bomb's existence when Truman finally told Stalin in July 1945 at the Potsdam Conference, held near Berlin, that the United States had developed a potent new weapon. When the first bomb destroyed Hiroshima, the Soviets quickly invaded Manchuria on August 8 to seize their planned territorial objectives before the war ended.

By August 10 the combination of two atomic bomb blasts and the Soviet entry into the war caused Japanese Emperor Hirohito to take the unprecedented step of imposing his own views on official policy. Traditionally the emperor simply approved decisions taken by his cabinet. With the peace and militarist factions within his government still strongly divided over whether to make one last stand against the Allies, Hirohito pleaded for peace. After several key military leaders accepted the emperor's wishes, Japan sued for peace with the condition that the Imperial Institution remain. Truman agreed, thereby modifying the original goal of unconditional surrender. Could a Japanese surrender have come sooner if the United States had guaranteed the emperor's office earlier? Before August 6 Truman likened keeping Hirohito to allowing Hitler to remain in power, and he believed that the American people would never accept these terms for peace. In mid-August, however, Truman concluded that letting Hirohito tell the Japanese people to lay down their arms would facilitate the occupation of Japan. Hirohito paved the way for a peaceful surrender when he addressed the Japanese people on the radio for the first time ever, calling on them to accept his decision. The formal surrender took place on September 2 aboard the battleship *Missouri* in Tokyo

# Choices and Consequences

## HOW TO USE THE ATOMIC BOMB

President Harry Truman considered the bomb a legitimate weapon to use alongside the more conventional tactics of terror bombing, an economic blockade, and a planned invasion of Japan. He did, however, face some choices over how to exploit this new weapon to meet his goals of securing an unconditional surrender from Japan, saving American lives, and establishing American postwar supremacy over the Soviet Union.

### Choices

**1** Demonstrate the bomb's destructive power in a trial demonstration on an uninhabited area to convince Japan to surrender.

**2** Drop one atomic bomb and give Japan time to react.

**3** Drop the two atomic bombs in American possession.

**4** Inform the Soviet Union of the bomb's existence before dropping it.

### Decision

Truman chose to drop both atomic bombs on virgin sites to magnify the psychological shock of one bomb causing so much destruction. Senior advisers rejected a test demonstration of the bomb as impractical. Truman vaguely informed Stalin of "a new weapon of unusual destructive force," unaware that spies in the Manhattan Project had already alerted Stalin of the bomb's existence.

### Consequences

On August 6, 1945 "Little Boy," the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, destroyed three-fourths of the city and killed 80,000 people instantly. "Fat Man" destroyed two-fifths of Nagasaki and killed 35,000 people on August 9. The Emperor announced Japan's surrender on August 14. Truman's attempted secrecy increased Soviet distrust of the United States and unleashed a nuclear arms race between the two nations.

### Continuing Controversies

#### *Should the United States have dropped the bomb?*

Supporters of Truman's decision claim that dropping the bomb ended the war. It saved 1 million American lives by making an invasion of Japan unnecessary and convinced the Japanese government to end the war. Not all supporters, however, agree that the second bomb on Nagasaki was militarily necessary. Critics counter that the bomb was not needed to end the war. Traditional bombing, the blockade, and Soviet invasion of Manchuria would have ended the war without the planned invasion, critics claim. Because the United States accepted a modified surrender that allowed Japan to retain the Emperor, abandoning the demand for unconditional surrender earlier may have convinced Japan to surrender sooner. Finally, some detractors accuse Truman of using the bomb mainly to curtail Soviet territorial ambitions in postwar Europe and Asia.

**Bomb over Nagasaki**

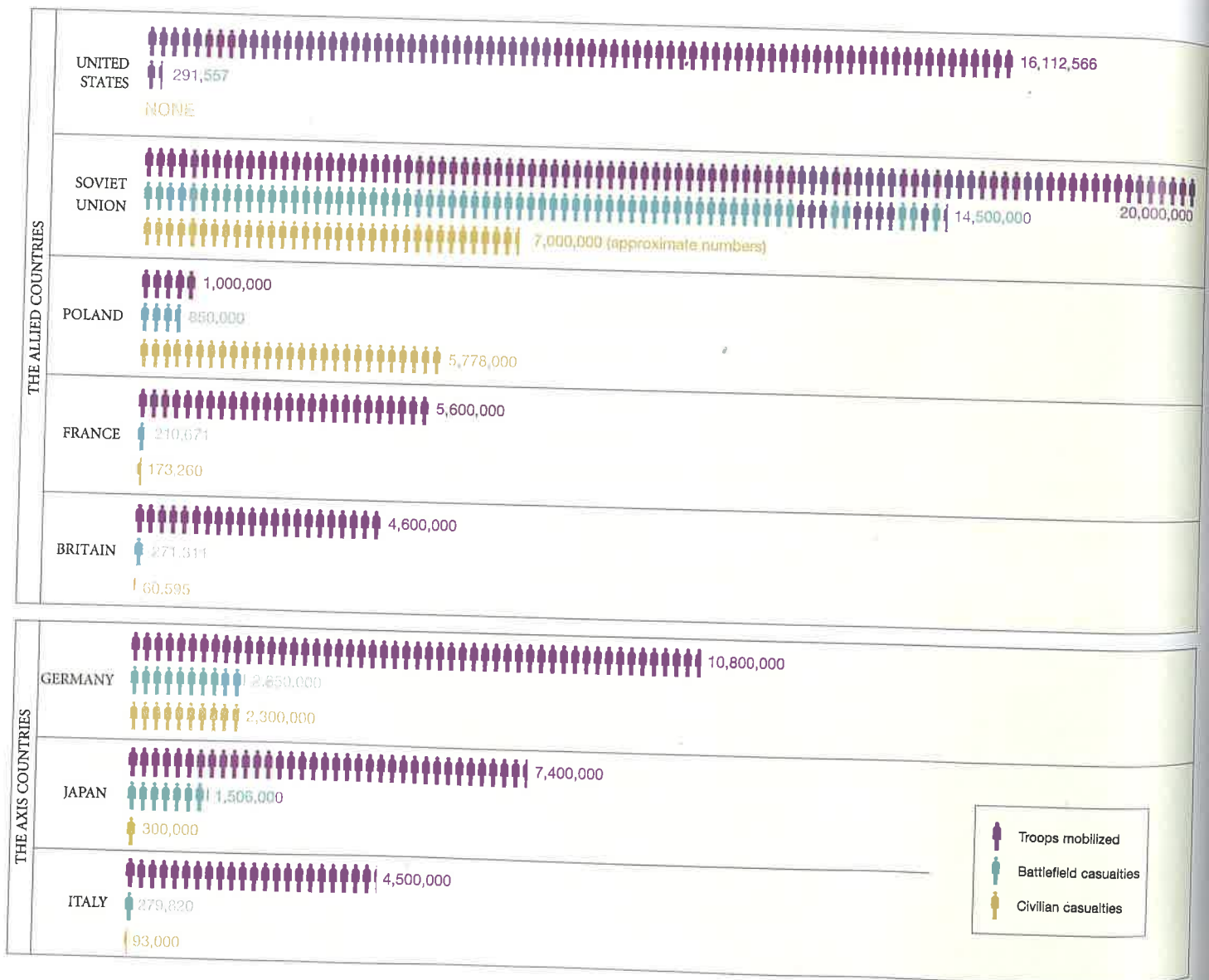
Bay, attended by delegates from Japan and the Allied nations. The deadliest war in human history, whose death toll is charted in “The Human Cost of Global War” (23.20), had finally ended.

When news of the Japanese surrender hit the United States, Americans swarmed into the streets to celebrate the good news. “Every female was grabbed and kissed by men in uniform,” recalled one woman who joined the crowd in Times Square, New York City. The celebrants included a sailor whose impromptu kiss with a passing nurse was captured in *Life* photographer Alfred Eisenstaedt’s candid “Kiss in Times Square” photograph, known as “the smack seen round the world” (23.21). Eisenstaedt never revealed the identity of the kissing couple, preferring to let their shielded faces symbolize the


exuberance of young men and women who had survived the war. In the ensuing years three nurses and eleven sailors stepped forward to claim that they were the individuals in the photograph.

Hirohito escaped facing trial as a war criminal, but the Allies intended to punish other Japanese leaders for their part in the war. In the few weeks between the Japanese surrender and the Allied occupation of Japan, more than 1,000 officials and officers committed suicide and others destroyed thousands of documents concerning Japanese mistreatment of prisoners of war and massacres of civilians in occupied countries. Nonetheless the Allies convicted thousands of Japanese in a series of war crimes trials throughout East Asia, including twenty-eight major Japanese leaders in Tokyo.

**23.20** The Human Cost of Global War  
Worldwide wartime casualties, those killed and wounded, numbered in the millions.



How might this distribution of wartime casualties shape the postwar world?



**23.21 Kiss in Times Square**  
Jubilant greeted the news that Japan had surrendered. Two strangers shared a passionate kiss in Times Square, conveying the life-affirming energy that filled the air.

## Conclusion

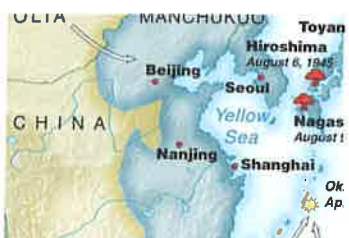
Combat, genocide, and terror bombing took millions of lives during World War II. Americans could rightly see themselves as having both suffered and caused the war's deadly violence. After two years of debating conflicting visions of how best to help Britain defeat Germany in Europe, the impetus for war came from the other side of the globe when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Fighting on multiple fronts, against enemies that took modern warfare to a new level of brutality, the United States eventually found itself willing to adopt an ends-justifies-the-means approach to winning the war.

At home the U.S. government placed Japanese Americans in internment camps, mounted a massive propaganda campaign to rally support for the war, and took control of the economy by rationing scarce commodities. Americans became accustomed to seeing photographs of death and destruction, but

nothing prepared the public for the shock of the Holocaust. The cruelty unleashed during the war and the deadly power of the atom bomb changed the position of the United States in the world, giving the nation new moral and strategic reasons to stay engaged in world affairs after its victory against Germany and Japan.

During the war millions of rural Americans moved to cities, married women entered the workplace in record numbers, and civil rights activists scored significant victories. As men came home from war and Americans rushed to spend their wartime savings, the expected period of peace failed to materialize. Instead, the United States became immediately embroiled in a Cold War with the Soviet Union. For the second time in the same decade, Americans confronted the challenges of exercising world leadership. This time, however, Americans faced the threat of nuclear annihilation.





## 1937

**Japan attacks China**  
Initiates Japan's expansionist drive in East Asia



## 1939

**Germany invades Poland**  
Beginning of World War II

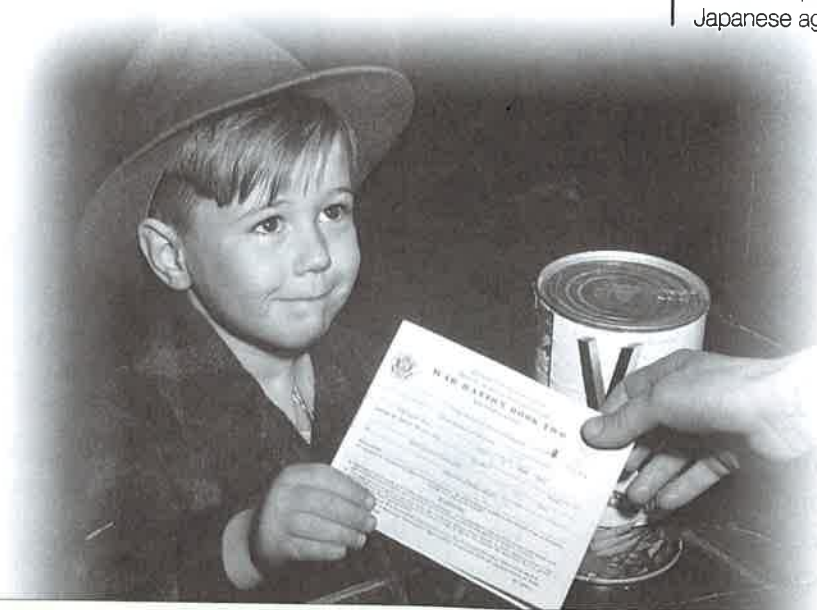
**Neutrality Acts completed**  
Restrictions on arms sales reflected strong non-interventionist sentiments



## 1940

**France falls to Germany**  
Completes Hitler's conquest of continental Western Europe

**Economic sanctions against Japan**  
FDR attempts to halt Japanese aggression



## Review Questions

1. What conflicting visions did Americans offer in response to the expansionist drives of Germany and Japan? How did they influence the American path to war?
2. How did visual images influence Americans' views of the war and their enemies?
3. How did the war affect racial, labor, and gender relations on the home front? What conflicting visions emerged?
4. What distinct strategic challenges and battlefield conditions did the United States face in the Pacific and European theaters? How did the United States prevail against Japan and Germany?
5. Why did the United States drop the atomic bomb?



## 1941

### Lend-Lease begins

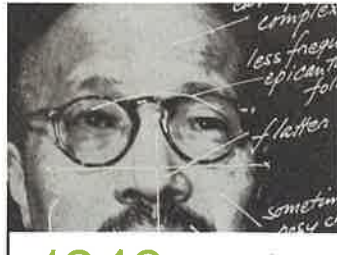
Interventionist vision prevails as America offers economic aid to Allied side

### U.S. ships exchange gunfire with German U-boats

Beginning of unofficial shooting war with Germany in the Atlantic Ocean

### Japanese attack Pearl Harbor

United States officially enters World War II



## 1942

### FDR issues Executive Order 9066

Creation of Japanese American internment camps

### Battle of Midway

Puts Japan on defensive in Pacific naval war

### U.S. government learns of Final Solution

Limited exposure of Hitler's plan to exterminate the Jews



## 1944

### D-Day landings

Beginning of Anglo-American march to Berlin

### Supreme Court upholds constitutionality of internment camps

Rules that national security outweighs civil rights



## 1945

### American troops enter concentration camps

Published images confirm German atrocities

### FDR dies

Harry Truman assumes presidency

### Germany surrenders

End of European war

### United States drops atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Ends war in Pacific, initiates nuclear arms race

## Key Terms

**non-interventionists** Those urging the nation to stay out of overseas conflicts. 686

**interventionists** Those advocating direct engagement in overseas conflicts. 686

**fascist state** A type of dictatorial regime that arose in Germany, Italy, and Spain that glorified the state over the individual. 686

**Neutrality Acts** A series of laws from 1935 to 1939 that restricted arms sales, loans, and transport of goods with nations at war. 687

**"cash and carry"** A policy that required belligerent nations to pay cash for goods and transport them on their own ships. 687

**Munich Conference (1938)** Hoping to avoid war, Britain and France agreed to let Germany occupy the Sudetenland, a German-speaking part of Czechoslovakia. 687

**Axis** Name for nations fighting the Allies, including Germany, Italy and Japan. 688

**Allies (World War II)** Name for powers fighting Germany, eventually including the United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. 688

**Lend-Lease A** 1941 policy that circumvented "cash and carry" by loaning rather than selling arms to the Allies. 689

**Pearl Harbor** A U.S. naval base in Hawaii that the Japanese attacked on December 7, 1941. 690

**internment camps** Camps in the United States that held people of Japanese descent under armed guard in isolated areas. 694

**double-victory campaign** Civil rights call for victory against both fascism overseas and racial prejudice at home. 699

**zoot-suiters** Name given to Mexican American youths who wore oversize suits. 700

**Holocaust** German-engineered wartime extermination of Jews and other peoples that Germans considered inferior. 708

**Manhattan Project** Secret U.S. wartime project to develop an atomic bomb. 711

