

Ch. 88 - *The* **SECOND** *World* **WAR**, 1939-45

Learning Intentions

In this section, you should understand:

- The role of the Nazi state at war.
- The role of the Soviet state at war.
- The influence of technology in war.
- The role of the wartime alliances.
- The role of Churchill.



THE NAZI STATE AT WAR

The Invasion of Poland, 1939

At dawn on 1 September 1939, the German invasion of Poland began. The German army employed the bold new tactics of **Blitzkrieg or lightning war**, based on surprise and speed. The **Luftwaffe**, led by Stuka dive-bombers, attacked the Polish Air Force, knocking most of the planes out of action on the ground. Within two days the air force had ceased to exist and the Luftwaffe had **control of the air**.

At the same time, the **Panzer (tank) units** advanced rapidly into Poland. They bypassed the main Polish army units. They worked with the air force and used a **pincer movement** to cut off the supply and communication lines of the Polish army. Following behind the Panzers, the **infantry units** broke down any remaining resistance.

Within a week, German units were on the outskirts of Warsaw, others then progressed halfway into Poland. As part of the secret clauses of the **Nazi-Soviet Pact**, the Soviet army attacked from the east, almost three weeks into the war. Warsaw held out until 27 September but the Polish government had fled to Romania long ago. Poland had been humiliated in a month.



The Invasion of Poland, 1939

The results of the invasion: Britain, France and even Hitler were surprised by the speed of the victory. A country of 33 million with an army of 1.7 million was crushed before it could fight back.

The cost to Germany was 10,000 killed and 20,000 wounded. In accordance with their pre-war Pact, Poland was divided between Germany and the Soviet Union. Within a few months the victorious countries had executed 18,000 Poles for **offences**, and the Germans began the process of herding Jews into **ghettos**.

German Invasion of Poland, September 1939



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What was Blitzkrieg?
2. How successful was the German invasion of Poland?

The West

Meanwhile in the West virtually nothing happened. Hitler left just enough forces to defend the **Siegfried Line** knowing that the French and British would be slow to **mobilise** (get their armies ready). Hitler, on the other hand, was triumphant. He had Central and Eastern Europe at his mercy. He offered peace to the British and French, which they rejected.

The Winter War - The Russo-Finnish War

Stalin, the Russian leader, was concerned about the future defences of Leningrad. He wanted Finland to hand over some territory to Russia to strengthen **Leningrad**. When the Finns refused, Russia **invaded** Finland on 30 November 1939. This appeared an unequal contest a country of 180 million with an army of 1 million and much greater numbers of tanks and planes, against a country of 3 million with just over 30,000 soldiers. However, much to the surprise of the Russians, the Finns held out for over three months, finally surrendering in March 1940. The Russian army could not progress in the snow, while the Finns used ski patrols to ambush and harass them. The Finns had built a strong defence line - the **Mannerheim Line** - and this held up the Russians. But the main reason for the slow progress of the Russians was **Stalin's purges** in the 1930s which weakened the Soviet officer corps.

KEY CONCEPT BLITZKRIEG (LIGHTNING WAR)

Blitzkrieg was developed by German generals at the beginning of the Second World War in campaigns against Poland, France, North Africa, the Balkans and Russia.

1. The air force attacks the enemy air force, as well as roads and railways.
2. Concentrated tank divisions break through the enemy lines and advance well into enemy territory, cutting off supplies and reinforcements coming to the main army (pincer movement). The main infantry defeats the weakened enemy infantry units.



The Phoney War

While the Russo-Finnish War was in progress, the western front experienced **the phoney war** - a period of seven months after the defeat of Poland when there was no fighting along the western front between France, Britain and Germany.

The French took up a **defensive position** along the **Maginot Line**.

Both the Allies and the Germans waited and built up supplies and armaments for the next round of fighting.



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How successful was the Soviet Union in the Russo-Finnish War?
2. What was the Phoney War?

The Invasion of Denmark and Norway, April 1940

The invasion of **Denmark and Norway** brought the phoney war to an end. Hitler needed Norway to protect valuable **Swedish iron ore** supplies which came through the Norwegian port of Narvik in winter. The loss of Swedish ore would cripple his war effort. Hitler also saw the value of the long **Norwegian coast** which could be used for sheltering ships and submarines. Britain was also planning to take Norway but when Hitler became aware of these plans he got there before them.

First, however, Hitler captured **Denmark** in less than a day. At the same time his warships transported troops to attack and capture six Norwegian cities, including Trondheim and Bergen. He also used paratroopers to take bridges and airfields. But British and French forces also landed, particularly around Narvik. The **Luftwaffe** gave the Germans an advantage and eventually the British and French troops had to be evacuated. Hitler imposed **Vidkun Quisling**, a Norwegian Nazi, in government but a Nazi official soon replaced him due to his incompetence.

Results: Hitler's success in Norway undermined the position of **Neville Chamberlain**, the British Prime Minister. **Winston Churchill** replaced him as Prime Minister the day Hitler began his new campaign, the attack on France. Churchill told the House of Commons, *'I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat.'*



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What difficulties did Germany face in conquering Norway?

The Invasion of France, May 1940

Now that Hitler had safeguarded his northern side, he again turned to plans for **invading France**. Hitler was presented with a war plan by **General Manstein** which he ordered to be carried out in spite of the objections of the Army High Command. Manstein's plan took full advantage of the **speed** and **mobility of blitzkrieg**.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did Germany attack France?

The Invasion Begins

The invasion began on 10 May 1940. Early that morning 2,500 Luftwaffe aircraft attacked airfields in Holland, Belgium, France and Luxembourg, destroying many enemy planes. The right wing of the German army swung into Belgium, easily capturing the huge Belgian fort at Eben Emael. But the Belgian attack, and the takeover of Holland, were mainly **decoys**. At the first signs of the attack the British and French armies advanced into Belgium. This ideally suited the main German attack which came through the **Ardennes mountains** and forests. Here **General Guderian's** Panzer units advanced rapidly towards **Sedan**, breaking through the French lines. After this they moved westwards towards the English Channel, cutting off the British and French armies in Belgium.



Dunkirk

The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and the French army fell back to Dunkirk when they realised what was happening. Fortunately for the 300,000 soldiers in Dunkirk, Hitler ordered a halt to the advancing tanks. This breathing space allowed the British to put **Operation Dynamo** into action. With the **Royal Air Force (RAF)** defending the air, 860 boats and ships crossed and recrossed the English Channel over a period of about 10 days to rescue 300,000 soldiers, two-thirds English and one-third French. The British army had been saved even though they lost many tanks, trucks, heavy guns and rifles. British propaganda turned the defeat into victory and a morale booster at home.



The Fall of France, June 1940

The remainder of the French army, aided by 100,000 British troops, continued the fight for the next few weeks. But they had no hope against the overwhelming superiority of the Germans. They advanced southwards and took the Maginot Line from the rear.

Eventually the outstanding German successes enticed **Mussolini** into the war. He failed to honour the Pact of Steel when the war broke out in September 1939. Now he wanted to share in Hitler's glory. On 10 June, he invaded southern France. He said, *'I need a thousand dead in order to take my seat at the table with the victors.'*



WHY WAS GERMANY SO SUCCESSFUL IN 1939-41? - SUMMARY

- 1. The Military Balance:** Germany had a **stronger army** than either Poland, Norway, France or Britain:
 - a. In 1939, it had 125 divisions compared to 80 for the French and 4 for the British.
 - b. It had over 4,000 aircraft compared to 1,200 French and 1,700 British. Its planes were faster and better armed than the French.
- 2. Military Tactics:** Germany had better military tactics. Its **use of blitzkrieg** explains why the enemy countries collapsed so quickly. Tanks and aeroplanes worked together for a rapid advance, cutting off the enemy supplies. Paratroopers were also used behind enemy lines. In contrast, the Poles and French used tanks in the same way as in the First World War in support of the infantry, and therefore slowly.
- 3. Failure to Help Poland:** France failed to act when Hitler invaded Poland. At the time France had a far greater army along its border with Germany. But the French military leaders still believed in a defensive stance, as had been used in the First World War.
- 4. Failure to Act Decisively against Norway:** The British and French realised the importance of Norway for German iron ore supplies coming from Sweden. They planned to cut them off, but they delayed their attack and gave Hitler the chance to get there before them.



WHY WAS GERMANY SO SUCCESSFUL IN 1939-41? - SUMMARY

5. **The Weakness of France:** France had failed to prepare fully for the war. It was late rearming, it neglected its air force and the new methods of fighting. Its war plan, which involved invading Belgium, was a failure. Its people were divided between Left and Right.
6. **The British Expeditionary Force:** The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) of almost 400,000 men was tied to the French war plan. It was attached to the left wing of the French army and followed the French into Belgium. Soon they retreated to Dunkirk when they realised that the German army was about to cut them off in Belgium.
7. **The War at Sea:** Germany had success in the War at Sea early in the war.
8. **The War in the Desert:** The German army had success in the War in the Desert up to 1941.
9. **Failure – The Battle of Britain and the Blitz:** The German army failed to invade and conquer Britain.



Armistice

The French government survived for another couple of weeks. They moved from Paris to Bordeaux. A new Prime Minister, Marshal Pétain, a hero of the First World War, sought an armistice with Germany. Hitler ensured that the armistice was signed on 21 June in the same railway carriage, and in the same place in Compiègne, where Germany had signed its surrender in 1918 at the end of the First World War. Now Germany dictated the terms to France:

- The Germans controlled the north and west of France while the rest, **Vichy France**, was under French government control.
- The French army was **disarmed** and **demobilised**.
- France had to **pay** the cost of occupation.

Results: The defeat was a disaster and shame for France. The country and its army had been destroyed in 40 days. The British navy destroyed the French fleet at **Mers-el-Kebir** in Algeria to ensure it did not get into German hands. The future of France rested with either the Vichy government or with **General de Gaulle's Free French** movement which he set up in London. Hitler and his allies now ruled most of Europe from the Atlantic seaboard to the border with the Soviet Union.

The Battle of Britain, August-September 1940

Hitler now planned the invasion of Britain - **Operation Sealion**. He had between 20 and 45 divisions ready to be transported across the English Channel. But he needed **control of the air** to protect the ships and barges. He knew the **Luftwaffe** had to defeat the **RAF**. This was the Battle of Britain.

Winston Churchill urged on the British people,

'We shall defend our island whatever the cost may be.. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duty and so bear ourselves that if the British Commonwealth and Empire last for a thousand years men will still say, "This was their finest hour."



The Battle

The Battle of Britain was fought in a number of **stages**. First, Hitler began by attacking ships in the English Channel to draw the RAF into battle. Then he followed this with attacks on the **airfields** and **radar stations**. The RAF was stretched as pilots not only from Britain but also from Commonwealth countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand), as well as Poland and Czechoslovakia, battled against wave after wave of German planes. On **Eagle Day** (13 August) the Luftwaffe sent in five waves of bombers and fighters. This pattern was followed on many other days. However, even though the RAF pilots were exhausted, they were inflicting heavy losses on the Luftwaffe.

In spite of some success against the RAF, Hitler changed his target to the **bombing of London** in September in response to a British attack on Berlin. He hoped to break the **morale** of the civilian population. London was attacked 24 times that month and people took to living in cellars and in the Underground. From November onwards, the Luftwaffe raided only at night because of the heavy daytime losses. But this was not successful either. London was protected by 1,500 barrage balloons, 2,000 anti-aircraft guns and, most importantly, 750 Spitfire and Hurricane fighter planes. Instead, the bombing of London relieved pressure on the RAF and the airfields. In the middle of September Hitler **postponed** the invasion of Britain and by October **he called it off**. He had lost the **Battle of Britain**. The Battle of Britain was Hitler's first defeat. Britain now became the centre of resistance to Hitler.



The Blitz

The aerial bombing of British cities, known as the **Blitz**, continued after the Battle of Britain. The Blitz lasted from September 1940 to May 1941. From November onwards, the Luftwaffe raided only at **night** because of the heavy daytime losses. In that period, Luftwaffe bombers not only attacked London, which was bombed many more times, but also industrial cities such as Coventry, Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool. The Luftwaffe dropped 35,000 tonnes of bombs and lost 650 aircraft. By May 1941, 43,000 people in Britain had been killed and 1.4 million had been made homeless. By that time Hitler needed the Luftwaffe to lead the attack on Russia.



Why did Britain Win the Battle of Britain?

- The British **Spitfire** and **Hurricane** fighter planes were a match for the German **Messerschmitts** and easily defeated the slow **Stuka**. The Luftwaffe lost nearly twice as many planes as the RAF.
- Hitler made a mistake in changing tactics to bombing London because this relieved pressure on the RAF.
- Churchill rightly praised the **pilots** of the **RAF**; *'Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.'*
- **Radar** helped in this battle by giving advance warning of attack. British fighters were able to conserve fuel while German fighters had limited time over Britain.



What was the importance of the War at Sea?

The War at Sea played a vital role in deciding who won the war. Britain was dependent on supplies reaching the country from its empire and above all, from the US. **President**

Roosevelt of America responded to urgings from **Churchill** and provided the vital supplies:

- In September 1940, he gave **50 warships** to Britain.
- In January 1941, under the **Lend-Lease Act** Roosevelt could supply military equipment to Britain without payment.



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why was the Battle of Britain fought?
2. Why did Britain win?
3. What was the significance of the Battle of Britain?
4. What was the Blitz?
5. What did Britain do to cope with the Blitz?

EXAM QUESTION

What part did Churchill play in the Second World War?



KEY PERSONALITY: WINSTON CHURCHILL

Winston Churchill had a **long career** in politics behind him when the Second World War broke out in 1939. He was **Chancellor of the Exchequer** from 1924 to 1929 (see pp. 233-35) but he failed to get a cabinet seat in the 1930s, his 'wilderness years'. In the 1930s he warned against the danger of the Nazis and was opposed to the policy of appeasement. In 1939, Neville Chamberlain appointed Churchill to the War Cabinet in charge of the Royal Navy (Lord of the Admiralty). Churchill proposed the mining of Norwegian waters to prevent Germany getting iron ore supplies through Narvik. But disagreement in cabinet delayed the implementation of the plan (Operation Wilfred) and then it was too late to prevent the successful German invasion of Norway.

Churchill succeeded Chamberlain as Prime Minister in May 1940. He took over at a time when Britain needed **strong leadership** during the Battle of Britain and the Blitz. He resisted Foreign Secretary Halifax's proposal that there should be a **negotiated peace** with Hitler after Dunkirk and the Fall of France.



KEY PERSONALITY: WINSTON CHURCHILL

Churchill was the **ideal war leader**. He spoke with enthusiasm, inspiring British people to resist. He also had great energy. In 1943 he travelled 40,000 miles, at the age of 70, to encourage and co-ordinate efforts to defeat Hitler. He **worked well** with the American President, Roosevelt. He was delighted with the Lend-Lease Act which gave military goods to England without payment. He strengthened the relationship with the US when he met Roosevelt in Newfoundland in 1941 and they agreed the **Atlantic Charter**. He attended the **Allied Conferences** in Casablanca, Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam and so was involved in the **major decisions** in running the war, and the peace after the war.

After the war, Churchill, as a leader of the Conservative Party, was defeated in the general election in Britain. He continued to advocate the US-British link, now in opposition to Communism and **the Iron Curtain**. He also called for European unity.

When the war began, Britain faced danger from **commerce-raiders** such as the **Admiral Graf Spee**, and the **Scharnhorst**. These operated in the North and South Atlantic attacking convoys coming from the US or West Africa. The most powerful of these ships was the **Bismarck** but it too was sunk like most of the others. The threat from these had been alarming and spectacular, but not serious. A much more serious threat came from the U-boats. From the middle of 1940, German **U-boats** were able to use bases in Norway and France to advance into the North Atlantic. **Wolf packs** (groups of U-boats) moved out from strongly protected submarine lairs. They had considerable success in attacking convoys of ships protected by destroyers. In April- June 1941, for example, the U-boats sank 1 million tonnes of Allied shipping.





Allied Counter-measures

Allied losses were at their highest in 1942, but by 1943 counter-measures by the Allies began to work - greater protection for the convoys with more warships, the use of **Ultra** to crack the German navy codes and follow the path of the submarines, the use of long-range aircraft, depth charges, sonar, a huge programme of shipbuilding to replace sunken ships and the entry of the US into the war in December 1941. By 1943 the Allies had won the war at sea, but in the process over 2,700 Allied merchant ships and 100 warships had been sunk by the U-boats.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What role did the War at Sea play in the Second World War?
2. How did technology influence the War at Sea?

GERMAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE BALKANS

The War in the Desert - Italian and German Failure in North Africa

Italy Loses its African Empire

At the start of the war, Italy had an African empire that included Libya, Ethiopia and Somaliland. But defeat at the hands of the British army meant that Italy lost its empire by 1941.

The Battle of El Alamein

British successes forced Hitler to send **Rommel** (the Desert Fox) and the **Afrika Korps** to Libya in April 1941. Rommel recaptured all the territory lost by the Italians along the North African coast into Egypt. Churchill now installed **Montgomery** as commander of the Eighth Army. He prepared for the **Battle of El Alamein** by using information obtained from breaking German codes.

Montgomery defeated Rommel at the **Battle of El Alamein** in October 1942. Over the next few months, Rommel was forced to retreat to Tunisia. He was in great danger here when a new Allied army - the **Americans** - under Eisenhower, landed in Algiers (in **Operation Torch**). Rommel was recalled to Germany, and the Desert War ended in an Allied victory (May 1943).

Results of the Desert War: Victory for the **Axis Powers** (Germany and Italy) would have given them control over Egypt and the Suez Canal and access to oil in Saudi Arabia. Instead, this was the first victorious Allied campaign; it was a **turning point** in the war. The Axis powers lost control of North Africa. In contrast, the Allies maintained their grip on the Mediterranean Sea, and they prepared for the invasion of Italy.



War in the Mediterranean and the Balkans



REVIEW QUESTION

1. What were the results of the War in the Desert?

The War in Eastern Europe

Germans and Italians in the Balkans

In October 1940, **Mussolini** attacked Greece from Albania. He wanted to impress Hitler but the attack failed. Germany had to come to Mussolini's rescue. In the process, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Greece were occupied by the Germans (1941). The **British** who had helped the Greeks were expelled from the mainland, and their naval base in Crete was captured. Germany ensured **control of the Balkans** so that Hitler was protected from attack when he invaded Russia.



t **THE** *t* **STALINIST** *t* **STATE** *A* **t** **WAR** *A* **R**

Operation Barbarossa: The Nazi Invasion of Soviet Russia, 1941

Hitler's Reasons

Both Hitler and Stalin knew that the Nazi-Soviet Pact (1939) only postponed the day when they would go to war with each other. Hitler wanted the **open spaces** of Eastern Europe and Russia to provide the oil, grain and the living space (lebensraum) for his master race. In the process he wanted to **destroy Communism** in Russia. *'The fight Battle of the Bulge which is about to begin is a war of extermination,'* he said.

German contacts with the Soviet army in Poland, and the poor performance of the Russians against Finland in the Winter War (1939-40) convinced Hitler that, 'We have only to kick in the door and the whole rotten structure will come crashing down.' Hitler was sure he 'would not make the same mistake as Napoleon.'

Operation Barbarossa: The Nazi Invasion of Soviet Russia, 1941

The Invasion Begins

The invasion code-named **Operation Barbarossa** had to be postponed from mid- May to 22 June because Hitler had to help Italy in the Balkans. This delay proved to be crucial to the outcome of the plan. Three million men, 4,000 aircraft and 3,000 tanks began the invasion in a **three-pronged attack** towards **Leningrad** in the north, **Moscow** in the centre, and **Kiev** in the south.



Operation Barbarossa: The Nazi Invasion of Soviet Russia, 1941

German Success

The Germans were very successful. The Russian landscape with its rolling countryside was ideal for blitzkrieg (lightning war). In 18 days the Germans advanced 400 miles and the Russians lost 2,000 aircraft, 1,500 tanks and 300,000 prisoners. In the north **Leningrad** was put under siege, in the centre the Germans got to within 15 miles of **Moscow**, and in the south they captured and advanced beyond **Kiev**.

The German advance was so rapid that **Stalin** was surprised by its speed. He did not believe the warnings of invasion he got beforehand. His initial reaction was confusion and fear as he shut himself up in the Kremlin for three days. But once he overcame his depression, he provided the **strong leadership** which Russia needed to overcome the invasion.



Operation Barbarossa: The Nazi Invasion of Soviet Russia, 1941

Russian Retreat

The Soviet (Red) army lost heavily in men and machines even though it tried to avoid direct clashes with the Germans. However, the Red army was kept **intact** and retreated in an **orderly fashion**. The Russians also used a **scorched earth policy** - destroying crops, buildings and bridges. They kept pressure on the German army as **Communist guerrilla fighters** harassed the enemy lines.

But the Germans' advance ran into trouble - they had bad maps, the autumn rains brought mud and soon these were changed to snow. Radiators burst, petrol solidified and soldiers froze. Night temperatures fell to minus 40 degrees. The Germans were halted short of **Moscow** by the severe winter and a Russian counter-offensive led by **Marshal Zhukov**.



Operation Barbarossa: The Nazi Invasion of Soviet Russia, 1941

The Battle of Stalingrad, 1942-43

In 1942, the Germans began the offensive again. This time they concentrated their attack in the south towards **Stalingrad** and the **oilfields of the Caucasus**. The Germans were running short of oil but instead of concentrating solely on the Caucasus, Hitler sent part of his army to attack Stalingrad. By dividing his forces, Hitler failed to achieve either target.

This was a major turning point in the war in the east. At the same time the siege of Leningrad was lifted after 900 days. From now on the Russians went on the offensive. In July 1943 they won the Battle of Kursk where more tanks were involved than in any other battle in history. A year later in the Battle of Minsk a much larger Red army again defeated the Germans.

The German attack on **Stalingrad** was slowed down by vicious street fighting. The Germans captured most of the city but the Russians held on to a small area of land along the River Volga. Each night more men and supplies were ferried across the river. Then in November 1942, the Russian general, **Marshal Zhukov**, broke through the German lines to the north and south of Stalingrad. His attack trapped the German Sixth Army under **von Paulus** in Stalingrad. Hitler refused permission for von Paulus to attempt a breakout. Instead, efforts to break through to von Paulus failed so the Battle of Stalingrad continued over the winter. But he was forced to surrender, against Hitler's wishes, in February 1943.

This was a **major turning point** in the war in the east. At the same time **the siege of Leningrad** was lifted after 900 days. From now on the Russians went on the offensive. In July 1943 they won the **Battle of Kursk** where more tanks were involved than in any other battle in history. A year later in the **Battle of Minsk** a much larger Red army again defeated the Germans.



WHY WERE THE GERMANS DEFEATED IN RUSSIA?

1. **The delay in starting the campaign** in 1941 meant that Hitler did not have enough time to capture Moscow before the autumn rains and winter snow slowed progress
2. **Relocation of factories:** Stalin gave orders between 1939 and 1941 to dismantle many factories and move them over the Ural Mountains out of the range of German planes. Tank, plane and munitions production kept going during the invasion.
3. **German use of terror** - the SS executed thousands of Jews, thousands of Soviet prisoners-of-war were killed or allowed to die, and the civilian population were terrorised behind the German lines - rather than crushing the people, these actions ensured greater resistance from the Russians.
4. **Stalin used the call of nationalism** to motivate the Russian people to resist. In a message to the Russian people, he said, *'The war you are waging is a war of liberation, a just war.'* Stalin set an example in the Great Patriotic War by staying in the Kremlin in Moscow during the war.



The War Turns

By 1942, the war had turned against Hitler. From now on the defeat of Germany was only a matter of time:

- In December 1941, Hitler had made the mistake of **declaring war** on the US. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor which brought America into war in the Pacific Ocean and Asia, America and Germany were still at peace. But Hitler **underestimated** the power of the US he saw it as corrupt because of its mixture of races and the influence of the Jews. By declaring war on the US, Hitler gave Roosevelt the opportunity to make Hitler's defeat in Europe the main **objective** of US policy.
- All of Hitler's plans up to 1942 were based on his belief that he would achieve his goals with **short wars**. But Germany's failure to defeat Britain and Russia meant the country had to mobilise for a **long war** and her resources would not match those of Russia and America.



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did Hitler invade the Soviet Union?
2. How successful was the invasion?
3. How did the Russians cope with the invasion?
4. What happened at the Battle of Stalingrad?
5. Why was Germany defeated and the Soviet Union successful in Operation Barbarossa?

EXAM QUESTION

How was 1942 a turning point in the Second World War?



We **WARTIME ALLIANCES,** *1939-45*

Axis Powers

Germany, Italy and Japan formed the **Axis Powers**. Germany and Italy joined together in the Pact of Steel before the war, but Mussolini did not join the war until Germany had largely defeated France in June 1940. Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact (against Communism) with Germany before the war, so in September 1940 the three countries - Germany, Italy and Japan - agreed the **Tripartite Pact** and became known as the **Axis Powers**.

However, Japan did not join the war until it attacked **Pearl Harbor** in **December 1941**. Hitler declared war on the US as part of the Tripartite Pact, but this was a disastrous mistake. Now the US could take part in ground, air and naval campaigns against Germany and help Britain and the Soviet Union.

Germany's alliance with Italy contributed to the defeat of Germany in the war. Hitler had to help Mussolini's weak forces several times.

- Rommel was sent to North Africa to help the Italians there and was eventually defeated.
- Hitler delayed the invasion of the Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa) to help Italy in the Balkans, which contributed to his defeat in the Soviet Union.

Allied Conferences

The leaders of Britain, Russia and America worked together to defeat Hitler. **Churchill**, the British Prime Minister, realised that Britain could not defeat Nazi Germany on its own. He worked tirelessly to maintain good relations with Roosevelt of the US and Stalin of the Soviet Union. He met Roosevelt nine times and Stalin five times during the war. Up to 1941 Britain was largely alone, but when Hitler invaded Russia, Churchill formed the Anglo-Russian Alliance with Stalin. This provided supplies for Russia through Lend-Lease.

Churchill and Roosevelt formed a strong bond, even before America entered the war.

Afterwards these leaders, along with Stalin, met at a series of key conferences which decided the shape of the war and made arrangements for the peace settlement after the war.



Lend-Lease

Even before the US entered the war, Britain depended on that country for **Lend-Lease** (March 1941), a programme whereby the US supplied Britain (and later other countries) with war supplies. This enabled Britain to survive until the US was brought into the war after the attack on Pearl Harbor (December 1941).

The Atlantic Charter, 1941

Also before US involvement in the war, Britain's relationship with the US was strengthened by the **Atlantic Charter** (August 1941). Roosevelt and **Churchill** met in Newfoundland and issued the charter, which set out their view of the post-war world. In this, they made '*known certain common principles.. on which they base their hopes for a better future for the world*'.

- All people have the right to decide their own form of government.
- All people should live their life in freedom from fear and want.
- There should be improved economic conditions and social welfare.
- All nations should abandon the use of force.

Churchill hoped his meeting with Roosevelt would 'get the Americans into the war'. It did not because the American people were opposed to entering the war until after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor (December 1941). Nevertheless, Churchill was satisfied that the meeting strengthened the relationship between Britain and the USA.



Casablanca Conference, January 1943

Roosevelt and **Churchill** met again in Casablanca in North Africa. Stalin, who was not present due to the serious war situation in Russia, urged them to open a second front in the west. This would relieve pressure on the Soviet Army.

Roosevelt and **Churchill** agreed on **co-ordinating Allied military strategy** against the Axis powers for the next year. Instead of opening a second front in France, they agreed on the invasion of Sicily and Italy to knock Italy out of the war. This was in line with **Churchill's** invasion sequence of North Africa (which had already happened), then Italy and finally France.

They also agreed:

- To organise a major anti-submarine campaign
- To organise the bombing of Germany.
- They also sought the **unconditional surrender** of Germany.



Teheran Conference, November-December 1943

At the Teheran (Iran) Conference, **Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin (the Big Three)** met together for the first time. The issue of the second front was central to the conference. Stalin was annoyed at what he saw as the long delay in opening the second front in the west.

Churchill favoured an **invasion in the Balkans**. But **Roosevelt** and the **Americans** favoured the **invasion of France**. Other decisions also favoured Stalin. They decided:

- to plan the **D-Day landings** for May 1944
- to form a **new organisation for peace** after the war to replace the League of Nations
- **Russia** would get part of **Poland** after the war as a **buffer zone**
- in compensation, **Poland** would get part of Germany - the decisions concerning Poland were kept secret.

Yalta Conference, February 1945

Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin met at **Yalta** in the **Crimea**. This was the most controversial conference. Stalin was in a strong position in the war (he occupied most of Eastern Europe) and Roosevelt was sick. Many of the decisions favoured the Soviet Union. They decided:

- the **Polish-Russian border** would follow the partition line agreed between Stalin and Hitler in 1939
- the **Polish-German border** would follow the line of the **Oder-Neisse rivers**
- countries liberated by the Allies would have free elections
- the **United Nations** would be formed
- Germany would be divided into **four Occupation Zones** after the war (**US, British, French and Russian**)
- Germany would pay **reparations**, mainly to the Soviet Union
- the Soviet Union would declare war on Japan three months after defeating Hitler.



Potsdam Conference, July-August 1945

Truman, Churchill/Attlee and **Stalin** met in Potsdam, outside Berlin. The war in Europe was over, but the Japanese were still fighting in Asia. In America, **Roosevelt died in April 1945** and he was replaced by President **Truman**; in Britain **Churchill** lost the general election so during the Conference **Clement Attlee** replaced him as Prime Minister.

The tension, which eventually developed into the **Cold War**, was evident. This was not helped by the revelation that America had the atomic bomb. They failed to agree on major issues.

They decided:

- Nazi war criminals would be prosecuted
- Nazis were to be dismissed from government posts. This was part of a process of **denazification** which would be imposed on German society.
- the Council of Foreign Ministers would draw up peace treaties with the Axis Powers
- German reparations would include machinery and equipment from factories. But Truman wanted to ensure that Germany would not be treated as harshly as it had been by the Treaty of Versailles (1919). So the occupying countries would only be able to take reparations from their own zones.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What alliances were formed by the Axis Powers?
2. Who were the participants in each of the following conferences:
 - a. Casablanca
 - b. Tehran
 - c. Yalta
 - d. Potsdam?
3. What were three main agreements in each conference?



THE TECHNOLOGY OF WARFARE

The Air War

In 1941, the Blitz on British cities ended as Hitler concentrated on the invasion of Russia. But it was not until after America joined the war in December 1941 that the Allies began **the systematic bombing** of Germany. Roosevelt and Churchill decided at the Casablanca Conference (1943) that the main aim of the strategic bombing was: *'The progressive destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial and economic system, and the undermining of the morale of the German people to a point where their capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened.'*



THE TECHNOLOGY OF WARFARE

Technology played a vital role in the Second World War. As the war developed into a total war, all aspects of life - political, economic and propaganda as well as technological - were needed to ensure victory. Technological developments were needed to stay **one step ahead of the enemy or sometimes to catch up.**

The First World War (1914-18) was dominated by artillery, machine guns and trenches. But two new weapons - **tanks and aeroplanes** - which played a small part in the First World War, dominated the Second World War.

In between the wars, **military thinkers** came up with new strategies to make use of the new technology. German commanders, for example, favoured the use of tanks and planes together for greater speed and mobility. This was their **blitzkrieg** (lightning war) tactics.



THE TECHNOLOGY OF WARFARE

There was also the **opposite development** between the wars, when France and Germany used the latest technology to construct huge fortifications, **the Maginot Line** and **the Siegfried Line**. But the Second World War showed that the new defensive fortifications were no match for the new faster tanks and planes:

- Tanks and planes **speeded up warfare** and made it **more destructive**.
- Tanks were used together to drive in behind the enemy troops and cut them off (blitzkrieg) (pincer movements). The Germans used these tactics to great effect in the invasions of Poland and France.
- During the war tanks developed quickly. The **German Panzers** were successful at the beginning of the war. But they came up against stronger **Russian tanks (T-34)** so the Germans had to build a tank with stronger armour and more powerful guns (**Tiger**).
- **Aeroplanes** were used to get **control of the air**. Aeroplanes could be used to bomb enemy troops and ships. They could also be used to bomb cities and industries. Planes were also used to transport troops and supplies quickly. But motor transport (trucks) and railways were much more important for transport.
- During the war there were **rapid technological developments** in air warfare:
 - Much **larger bombers** were made which could carry more bombs, and fly faster and further.
 - Long-range **fighter planes** (Mustang) were developed to protect the bombers.
- Air navigation was very dependent on technological developments. The Germans used the **Knickbein** system when bombing Britain. On the other hand, the Allies developed the **Oboe** to allow them to bomb through cloud and smoke.



THE TECHNOLOGY OF WARFARE

New Weapons: The most significant developments in air warfare came too late to affect the outcome of the war. Both sides developed **jet aircraft** which were far faster than existing aircraft. The Germans also developed the **V1 flying bomb** and the **V2 rocket**. The V1 was no faster than an aeroplane so the British were able to defend against it. But the V2 was unstoppable.

Weapons of defence were just as important as weapons of attack. **Radar (Radio Direction And Range)** was first developed by the British and it played a vital role in the **Battle of Britain**. Just as important, but much more secret, was the use of **Ultra** to crack the secrets of the **German Enigma coding machine**. This influenced land battles as well as the **war at sea**. Here Germany built larger and more powerful **submarines** which could stay at sea longer. These were countered by Sonar which tracked the movements of U-boats under the water.

By the end of the war, technology had developed the ultimate weapon which made all others obsolete - **the Atomic bomb**. Developed secretly in the US as the **Manhattan Project**, it was used against Hiroshima and Nagasaki to end the war against Japan.



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How were tanks and planes used in Blitzkrieg?
2. What new weapons were developed during the Second World War and what was their impact?
3. What role did technology play in some of the key battles and campaigns of the war?

EXAM QUESTION

What role did technology play in the Second World War?

Day and Night Bombing

The British and the Americans took **two different approaches**. British Bomber Command under Air Marshal **Harris** used **area bombing of German cities at night**. The British used **Lancaster** and **Stirling bombers**. On the other hand, the **Americans** used **precision bombing by daytime** because they had better bombers, the **Flying Fortresses**. However, they suffered huge losses at the hands of German fighters and anti-aircraft guns. By the **middle of 1944** the Allies had complete control of the air. They were helped by technological developments with better navigational and bomb sighting equipment, and the protection of the long-range fighter, the **Mustang**. Most major German cities were attacked, in particular those in the **Ruhr** industrial area: so also was **Hamburg**. Sixty per cent of the homes were damaged or destroyed, 40,000 people were killed and a million people fled the city.



What were the effects of the Air War?

- The Allies disrupted factory production but the Germans quickly started up again.
- The most effective targets were the oil refineries. German oil production declined in 1944 and this hit the tanks and aircraft.
- The Allies lost a great deal of aircraft and men. About 30,000 aircraft were lost and 180,000 British and US airmen were either injured or killed.
- Hundreds of thousands of German civilians were killed and German morale was weakened.



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What role did the Air War play in the Second World War?
2. How did technology influence the Air War?

The Invasion of Italy, 1943

After defeating the Germans and Italians in North Africa, the Allies turned to Italy. They wanted to knock a weakened Italy out of the war.

In July 1943, in **Operation Husky**, an American army under **Patton** and a British army under **Montgomery** landed and captured **Sicily** in 39 days. The fall of Sicily led to the dismissal of **Mussolini** as Prime Minister by **King Victor Emmanuel**. The new government, led by **Marshal Badoglio**, imprisoned Mussolini and began secret negotiations with the Allies.



German Defences

However, when the Italian government signed an armistice with the Allies, the Germans took over Rome and continued the fighting. American and British armies then invaded mainland Italy. They advanced northwards until they were held up by the strong German defensive line, the **Gustav Line**, centred on **Monte Cassino**. It took a number of attacks and the heavy bombing of the monastery on Cassino before the Allies broke through. In June 1944, Rome fell.

The Allies then advanced into northern Italy, capturing a second German defence line, the **Gothic Line**. In the meantime, Hitler's commandos rescued Mussolini and he set up the so-called **Salò Republic** in the north. But his capture by Italian resistance fighters led to his execution in April 1945.

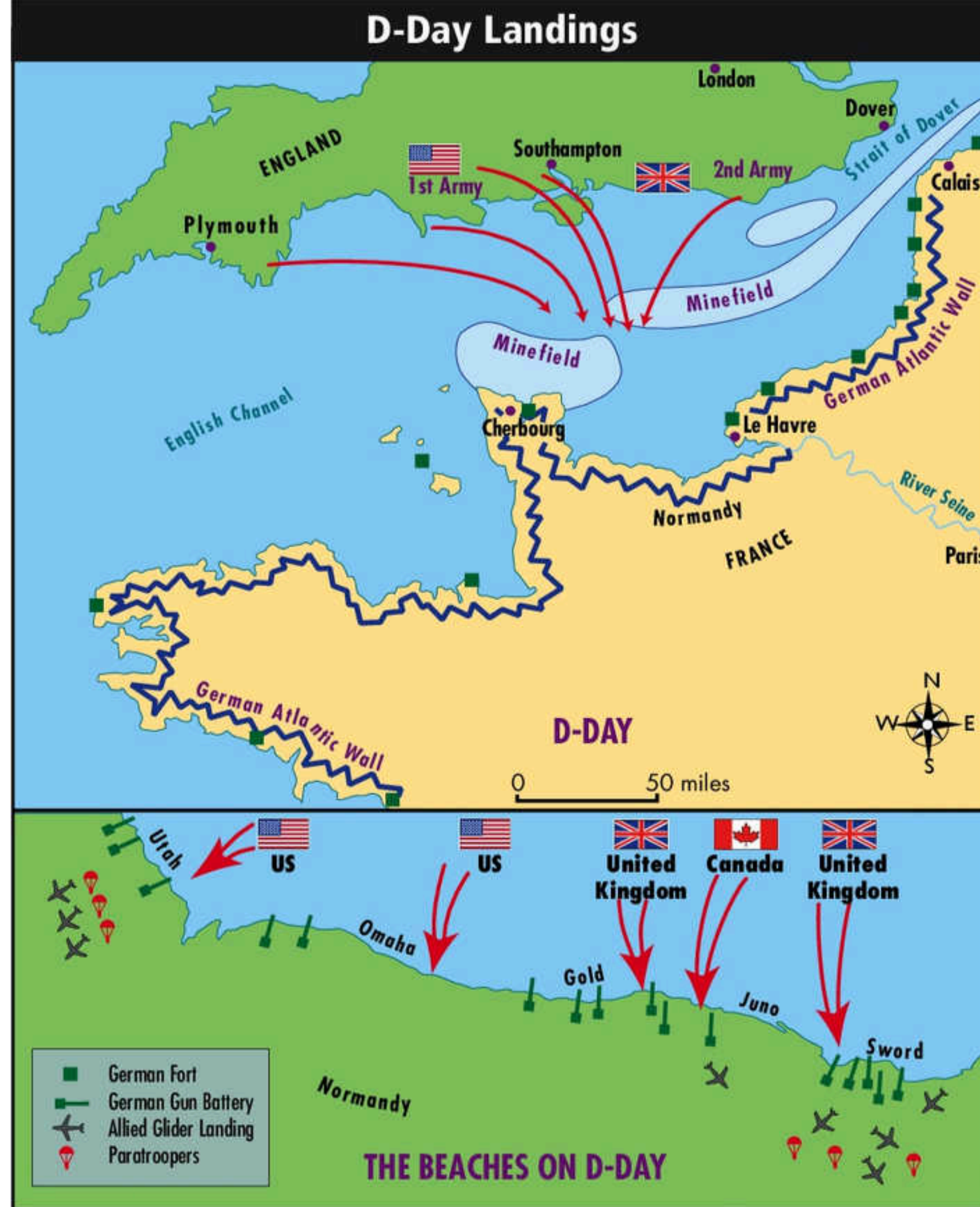


The Success of D-Day - The Normandy Landings, June 1944

The Americans and British knew that if they were to defeat Hitler they had to invade France. Stalin, the Russian leader, was pressing them to open a **second front**. The decision to invade was made at the **Teheran conference** between **Roosevelt, Churchill** and **Stalin**. Later, General Eisenhower was appointed Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force to carry out the invasion plan, code-named **Operation Overlord**.

The Allies fooled the Germans into thinking that the invasion would occur around Calais. Instead they chose the beaches of Normandy because they were not as well defended and they gave direct access to Paris.





The Invasion

On 6 June 1944, around 5,000 ships landed over 150,000 soldiers, 6,000 tanks and armoured vehicles on five beaches in Normandy. They were protected by Allied control of the air, and they were helped by paratroopers dropped behind the German lines. Over the next few days the Allies extended their control out from the beaches.

Allied reinforcements and supplies were brought in through **mulberry piers** - artificial harbours towed across the English Channel. Oil supplies were brought by **PLUTO** - an undersea pipeline that crossed from England to France. The surprise landing, control of the air and the huge resources of the Allies ensured victory on D-Day and afterwards.

By August 1944, the Allies broke out of Normandy and headed for Paris. The city was liberated on 24 August. Two days later **General de Gaulle**, leader of the Free French, marched in triumph down the Champs Élysées. He claimed France for the French and for himself.



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How successful was the Allied invasion of Italy?
2. How did the Allies plan and carry out the invasion of France on D-Day?

Advance on Germany

By 1944, the Allies were advancing on Germany from three sides. The advance progressed as follows:

1. In the **east**, the **Russians** moved into Poland in March 1944. However, they refused to help the **Warsaw Uprising** organised by Polish resistance fighters. Over 200,000 Poles were killed as the Germans crushed the Uprising. A few months later, in early 1945, the Russians took Warsaw and set up a Communist-controlled government. This was the first of the **Communist satellite states** in Eastern Europe which were to last for 45 years.
2. In the **west**, the **British** and **Canadians** pushed into **Belgium** and captured the sites of the **V1 flying bombs** and **the V2 rockets**. **American** progress was halted temporarily when the Germans attacked at the **Battle of the Bulge** in December 1944. But the attempt failed, with a huge loss of German lives. A few months later the British and Americans crossed the Rhine.
3. In the **south**, there was slower progress in **Italy** because of the mountains and the German defence lines. But by April 1945 the Germans there surrendered.





Hitler's Suicide

As the Americans and British advanced across Germany and the Russians attacked Berlin, **Hitler** committed **suicide** in his own bunker, along with his former mistress and then wife, **Eva Braun**, and close associate, **Goebbels**. On 7 May 1945, the German government, now led by **Admiral Doenitz**, surrendered unconditionally. The Allies had won **Victory in Europe**.

The Soviet army then joined in the **war against Japan**. But, by then, the Japanese army had been weakened and the **first atomic bomb** had been dropped on **Hiroshima**. The Russians overran **Manchuria** and captured 500,000 Japanese troops while the **second atomic bomb** was dropped on **Nagasaki** before Japan surrendered.



WHY DID GERMANY LOSE THE WAR?

Short war to Total war: Hitler planned for a series of short wars, using **Blitzkrieg**, to achieve his targets. In between the wars, he would build up his resources. But the war turned into a long war where all the resources of a country were needed (total war), and Germany could not match the resources of the Allied Powers.

Failure to defeat Britain: Hitler's failure to defeat the British at Dunkirk, and in the Battle of Britain, meant that Britain continued to be a centre of resistance in the west when he turned to attack Russia.

Greater resources: Hitler attacked the Soviet Union and declared war on America, two countries with far greater resources than Germany:

- **Population:** The combined population of Britain, Russia and America was 344 million; Germany and her allies 181 million.
- **Army, navy, air force:** the Allies had 27.5 million; Germany and her allies had 17.5 million.
- **Oil production:** the Allies produced 2,200 million barrels a year; Germany and her allies 60 million barrels a year.
- **Military equipment:** Russia alone produced 24,700 tanks, 25,400 aircraft; Germany produced 9,300 tanks and 14,700 aircraft.
- America became the **arsenal of democracy** - under **Lend-Lease**, US war supplies were given free to her allies; America gave Britain \$31 billion dollars and Russia \$10 billion of supplies; America produced 300,000 aircraft and 86,000 tanks.



WHY DID GERMANY LOSE THE WAR?

Italy's role: Because of the weakness of the Italian army, Hitler had to send Rommel and the Afrika Korps to Africa to help the country, and delayed the beginning of Operation Barbarossa to help the Italians in the Balkans. Hitler assumed that he would defeat Russia before winter set in, so he did not make adequate preparations for it.

Hitler's role: Hitler's over-confidence in his ability as a military leader. He supported the use of Blitzkrieg at the beginning of the war and this provided Germany with success. But as the war went on he made a number of mistakes, such as his refusal to allow von Paulus to break out of Stalingrad before he was fully encircled.

Brutal treatment: The Germans treated the people of the occupied countries badly and this increased their opposition to the Nazis.

The war at sea: The Allies won the war at sea and kept the sea route to America open.

Bombing raids: The Allied heavy bombing of Germany disrupted the economy and reduced civilian morale.

The success of D-Day: This opened the second front and the Allies advanced on Germany from east and west.



EXAM QUESTION

1. How and why did the Second World War end?

THE RESULTS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

1. Death and Destruction

The war resulted in huge loss of life and destruction of cities and countryside. The Soviet Union had about 20 million soldiers and civilians killed, as much as the total loss for all countries in the First World War. In total, between 40 and 50 million soldiers and civilians were killed in the war. Cities, towns and villages were devastated by aerial bombing and by street fighting. Russia and Poland were the worst affected. In Russia alone 1,700 towns, 70,000 villages and 40,000 miles of railway track were either totally or partially destroyed.



2. Refugees

There were about 20 million refugees at the end of the war:

- Most left home because of the dangers of war to seek refuge in a safer place. The largest group of these was about **10 million Germans** who left their homes in Eastern Europe, fleeing from the advancing Soviet army. They moved to the British, French and American Occupation Zones in Germany.
- **Other refugees** included those taken to Germany as **forced labour**. Some were trying to return to their home country.
- **Jewish refugees** left Europe after the war and headed for **Palestine**. They later founded the state of **Israel**.

Camps were constructed after the war to house them and they were helped by the United Nations or by Allied troops. Many died from cold, hunger or disease.



3. Political Effects

- **Fascism** and **Nazism**, which had dominated the history of the 1930s, were largely wiped out. **Germany** was divided in two, east and west. It remained divided for the next 45 years.
- **The Growth of Superpowers:** The **Soviet Union** replaced Germany as the strongest European power and it developed as a **superpower**. It spread its influence over satellite states in Eastern Europe, where it established Communist governments. The **US** became the other superpower after the war.
- The **conflicting ideologies** (political ideas and systems) of the two superpowers led to **the Cold War** which dominated post-war foreign policy until the fall of Communism in Russia in 1991.
- The other European powers, particularly Britain and France, lost the power they had before the war. They also lost their colonies in a process of **decolonisation** during the 1950s and 1960s.
- The horror of the war encouraged political leaders to create **organisations** that would prevent another war. The failure of the League of Nations led to the setting up of the **United Nations** to sort out disputes between countries peacefully. In Europe, leaders pushed for **European unity** and this led to the founding of the **European Economic Community** (1958).



4. Scientific and Technological Effects

During the war huge efforts were made by all sides to use new technology to win the war. The new technology was often used for peaceful purposes after the war:

- Improvements in **aircraft** led to a huge expansion in air travel after the war.
- The invention of the **V2 rocket**, and the engineers who worked on it, became the inspiration for the US and Russian **space programmes**.
- The invention of the atomic bomb led to a **nuclear arms race** and this became a key factor in relations between the superpowers during **the Cold War**.

