

Unit 2: World War II (1935-1945)

This unit emphasizes the events that led to the United States joining the Allies in World War II against the Axis Powers.

Unit Focus

- United States foreign policy toward Soviet Union during administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt
- reasons World War II began in Europe
- reasons United States declared war against Japan, Germany, and Italy
- events leading to defeat of Germany during administration of President Harry S Truman
- ways horrors and extent of Holocaust were revealed
- reasons United States dropped atomic bomb and Japan surrendered



Introduction

When the war broke out in Europe and Asia, the United States publicly adopted a policy of **isolationism**. Many Americans did not want to become involved in the problems of Europe and Asia. They felt this way for several reasons. The Depression was still on, and most Americans were more concerned with their own economic well-being than with the fighting on foreign soil. In addition, many Americans still remembered World War I and its terrible destruction. Also, many Americans believed that the Atlantic and Pacific oceans would protect the United States from attack by the dictators of Germany, Italy, and Japan.

The United States Policy toward the Soviet Union

The United States had severed relations with Russia following the Russian Revolution in 1918. In 1933 President *Franklin D. Roosevelt* restored diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. The United States wanted to begin trading with the Soviet Union. In addition, the United States hoped the Soviet Union might help stop Japanese expansion in Asia.

The United States and Europe



The United States feared another world war.

The United States was worried about the new dictators in Europe, especially *Adolf Hitler* in Germany and *Benito Mussolini* in Italy. These countries were building up their militaries and by 1935 were attacking and attempting to take over other countries. The United States feared that the aggression of Germany and Italy would lead to another world war.

Neutrality Acts

In 1937 the United States Congress passed the Neutrality Acts to keep the country neutral and prevent it

from being drawn into war. A neutral nation does not take sides in a war. The laws prevented Americans from traveling on ships of warring nations. They also prevented Americans from selling munitions to warring countries.



"A Good Time to Look at Them"

The United States was very concerned about the aggression of Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese but was not yet ready to do much about it.

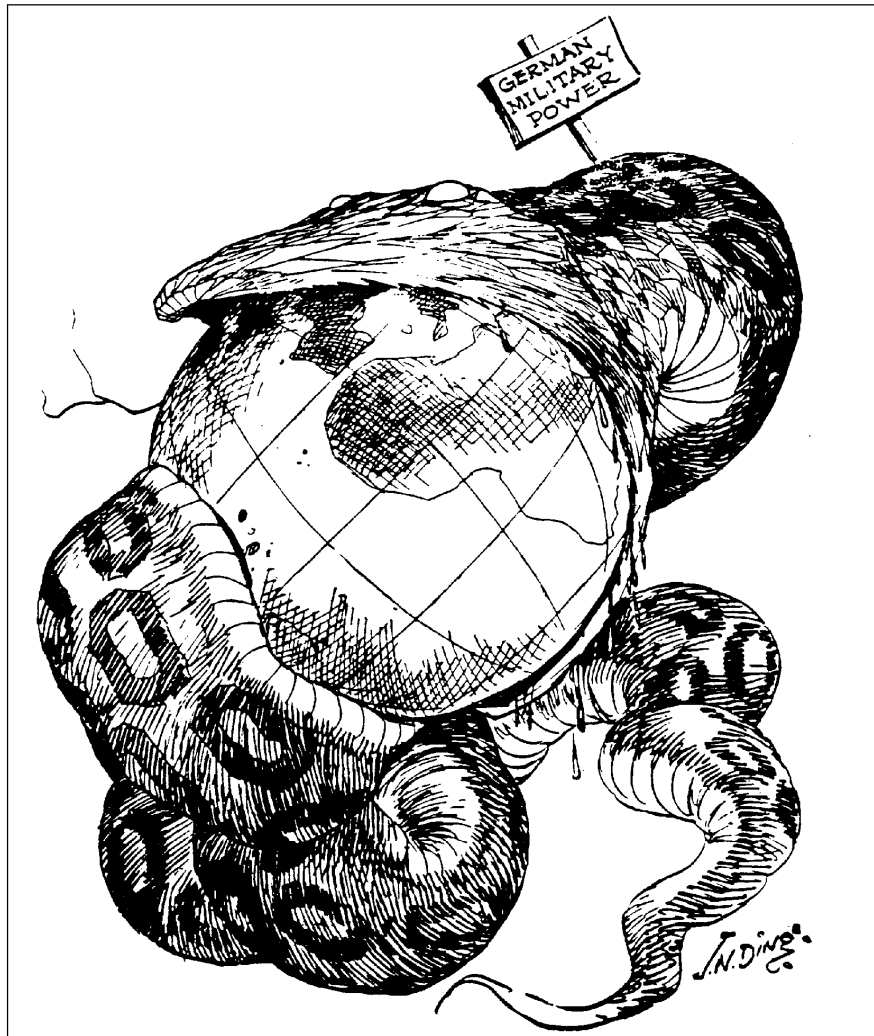
Courtesy of the J. N. "Ding" Darling Foundation

However, the United States secretly shipped supplies to the Allied forces. The military also spied on the **Axis Powers** of Germany, Italy, and Japan. Many ships were attacked in the Atlantic Ocean including United States cargo, passenger, and navy ships, but this was largely kept from the United States citizens so they would not be alarmed. The United States needed more time to build their military before total involvement in World War II.

World War II Begins in Europe

In 1939 Germany invaded Poland. As allies of Poland, Great Britain and France immediately declared war on Germany. World War II had begun in Europe.

Germany's leader, Adolf Hitler, continued to invade other countries. Between 1933 and 1942, Hitler invaded and took over 15 countries. France surrendered to Germany in 1940, leaving Great Britain to fight Germany alone. Germany began to attack Great Britain by bombing its cities, factories, and seaports.

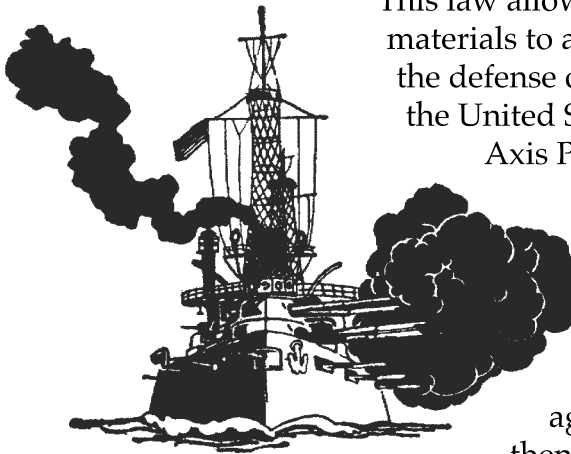


Germany's leader, Adolf Hitler, continued to invade other countries.

Courtesy of the J. N. "Ding" Darling Foundation

The United States Prepares for War

In 1940 Franklin Roosevelt was elected President for the third time. The President and the Congress grew more concerned as Hitler's "war machine" marched through Europe while Japan captured countries in Asia. The *Axis Powers'* military success prompted the Congress to spend money to increase the American military. They began spending one billion dollars to build a navy large enough to battle on both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. They also passed the **Selective Service and Training Act**. This law drafted men between the ages of 21 and 35 into military training.



In 1941 Congress passed the Lend-Lease Act. This law allowed the United States to ship war materials to any country that was important to the defense of the United States. The law let the United States aid countries fighting the Axis Powers.

In December of 1941, Japan attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor. The President asked the Congress for an immediate declaration of war against Japan. Germany and Italy then declared war on the United States.

Wartime Conferences

The **Allied Powers** included the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. These countries became Allies after each was attacked by an Axis country. The leaders of the Allied Powers held several conferences during World War II. At these conferences, they discussed plans for the war and for the **postwar**, or period after the war.

One agreement between President Roosevelt and *Winston Churchill*, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, was called the *Atlantic Charter*. In this charter, they agreed to work together to establish a just peace after the Axis Powers were defeated.

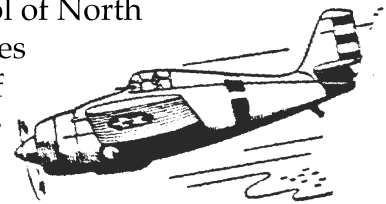


Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of Great Britain

War on Two Fronts

The United States had to fight the war on two *fronts*, or in two places. One front was in Europe and North Africa against Germany and Italy; the second front was in Asia and the Pacific against Japan. On either front, the United States military had to transport soldiers and supplies across the oceans. The United States decided to fight the war in Europe and North Africa first and then move against Japan in the Pacific.

The American Allies fought Germany and Italy first in North Africa. By July of 1943, the Allies were in control of North Africa and had invaded southern Italy. The Allies lost 70,000 men in the invasion. In September of 1943, the Italian government surrendered to the Allies. In 1945 Benito Mussolini was captured and shot by a group of Italians.



The Normandy Invasion



Dwight D. Eisenhower

One of the most important battles of the entire war was the invasion of France at Normandy. The Allied Supreme Commander, General *Dwight D. Eisenhower*, sent the largest military force in history into France to battle Germany. An army of 176,000 men aboard nearly 5,000 ships crossed the English Channel on June 6, 1944.

They received air cover from 11,000 planes.

Fighting was bloody, but the invasion, called **D-Day**, was a success. It allowed the Allies to begin its main attack into Germany. Eleven more months of fighting lay ahead.

The War Continues and President Roosevelt Dies

In 1944 President Roosevelt won his fourth term in office. The pressures of the war, however, caused Roosevelt to fall ill. He went on vacation to Warm Springs, Georgia, where on April 12, 1945, he



*President
Franklin D. Roosevelt*

died suddenly. The nation was saddened by his death. The new President was *Harry S Truman*, who had been Vice President under Roosevelt.



President Harry S Truman

Germany Is Defeated

The United States, Great Britain, and France continued to invade Germany from the west. The Soviet Union invaded Germany from the east. The two forces met at the Elbe River in central Germany on April 25, 1945. The German army was crushed. Adolf Hitler escaped capture by killing himself.

V-E Day

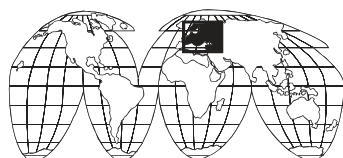
Germany surrendered to the Allies on May 7, 1945. The next day, May 8, was declared **V-E Day**, or Victory in Europe Day in Great Britain, France, and the United States. May 9 was celebrated as *V-E Day* in the Soviet Union. The Allies had won the war and began preparing to help Europe establish the peace.

Concentration Camps

When the Allies entered Germany, they discovered more than 100 **concentration camps** like Auschwitz and Maidanek, and **death camps** like Treblinka and Chelmno and their horrifying truth. These *concentration camps* served as death prisons and *death camps*, or killing centers, with large gas chambers and crematoriums, or ovens, to burn the bodies of the victims.

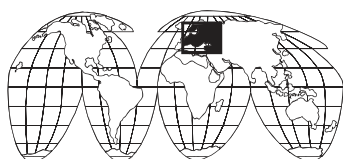
The healthy Jews, or about 10 percent of the new arrivals, had been made to work as slaves and were then eventually starved and killed. All others, including all children and older people, were sent immediately to be killed at death camps.

Note the following two maps. The first one shows the locations of concentration camps and killing centers. The second map shows the deaths per country.



Concentration Camps and Killing Centers

Courtesy of South Carolina Department of Education



*Holocaust Deaths per Country**

Courtesy of South Carolina Department of Education

*See map on page 55 for names of countries.

Pincus Kolender

Following is an account by Pincus Kolender, a concentration camp survivor who lives in South Carolina today. Pincus and his wife Renee Kolender, also a concentration camp survivor, said,

“When our children were young, they always used to ask how come people have grandfathers and grandmothers and we don’t. So we explained to them our experiences and they understood.”

Pincus Kolender lived in Poland and came from a very religious, poor family. He was born in Bochnia, one of Poland’s largest cities, in 1926. He had two brothers and a sister. Bochnia had a large Jewish community with many synagogues, Jewish houses of worship, and many schools for Jewish children. Although his family always experienced some anti-Semitism, his early life was happy. Pincus was 14 years old when his family was forced to move to the Bochnia ghetto. Unlike some other families, his family was not required to move to another city because the ghetto was in his hometown.

In 1942 Pincus and his brother were taken from the Bochnia *ghetto* where they had lived for about two years to the Auschwitz (Ow-Switch) concentration camp in Poland. In the following account he describes his life in Auschwitz and how he survived and eventually served in the United States Army.

Pincus at Auschwitz

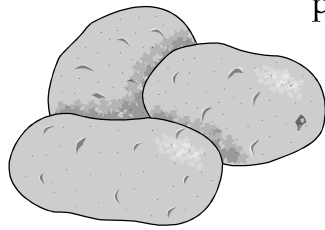
When we left the ghetto, they put us on cattle trains. They packed 100 to 120 people into a sealed car. There was no food on the train. Fortunately it took us only about two days to get to the concentration camp. Trains from places farther east or south, like Greece, sometimes took 10 days. Many of the people on these trains did not survive the trip.

When we got to Auschwitz, we had to undress completely and line up before the gate. We had to line up in fives. A Nazi officer was pointing left, right, right, left. I was fortunate. I went to the right. The ones to the left went to the crematorium. The ones to the right went into the camp.

It was dark, but I could see the people to the left were mostly elderly or young children, so I realized that we were going into the camp. Inside the camp first they shaved our hair. We were stark naked and they tattooed us. I am 161253. They gave us cold showers. It was November. Bitter cold. Then they put us in striped uniforms and took us into Birkenau (Beer-Kin-Now), the killing center at Auschwitz. I was fortunate. After I had been there four weeks, they picked several hundred men to go to Bunno, another part of Auschwitz. It was a labor camp and they gave us a little better food. The barracks were a little nicer. There were about 300 or 400 men to a barrack. We had double or triple bunks. The bunks were actually single beds, but two people had to sleep on one bunk.

The capos woke us at five o'clock each morning. The capos were prisoners who were in charge of the barracks and the work groups. They were mostly Germans, Poles, and some Jews. The Nazis assigned them to guard us. In the morning they gave us one piece of bread mixed with sawdust to eat. We also got a piece of margarine and a cup of coffee. It was not real coffee. We had to work until the evening. In the evening we got soup. If we were fortunate, we might

sometimes find a few potatoes and a piece of meat in the liquid. Most of the time it was just hot water and a few potatoes. For that we had to work nine or 10 hours a day. When we first came there, we worked unloading gravel and coal from trains. If you didn't finish your assigned task, you got a beating.



"If we were fortunate, we might sometimes find a few potatoes and a piece of meat in the liquid."

The first few months I thought I wouldn't make it. For me at Auschwitz the worst enemy was the cold. It was bitter cold. There was also hunger and there were the beatings. But the worst thing was the cold. I had one striped jacket, no sweater, just an undershirt and a thin, striped coat. We worked outside when it was often 10 to 15 below zero. People just froze to death.

The hunger was also terrible. We used to search for a potato peel and fight over it. We were constantly, 24 hours a day, always hungry. We would think about food and dream about it.

To survive in Auschwitz you had to get a break. My break came when I met a friend of mine from my hometown. He gave me the name of a man who had been in Auschwitz for a long time and was a good friend of my family. At Auschwitz, he supervised other inmates. I went to see him and asked if he could give my brother and me different jobs. Lucky for me, he gave us work making metal cabinets. Our job was to carry things. We were not cabinet makers, but we did the lifting. It was indoors. I don't think I could have survived the winter doing more outdoor work. I think he saved my life.

Every few months we had what they called a selection. They came into the barracks and picked out the people who looked very skinny and couldn't work anymore. They looked you over, and if they didn't see much fat on you, they put down your number. The next morning they came with trucks, picked up these people and put them right in the crematorium. It was heartbreaking.

In January, 1945, the Russian offensive started. When the Russians came close to Auschwitz, the Germans took us from the camp and marched us west away from the approaching army. They moved us out in a dead march. We marched a whole night to the Polish city of Gleiwitz, about 70 miles away. My brother kept saying to me, "Let's escape." I kept telling him that this was not the time because I knew we were still in German territory.

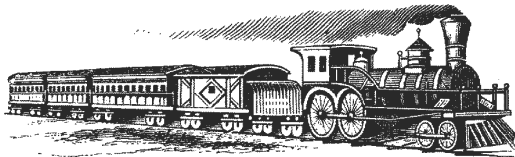
I said, "Where are you going to hide? The population, they are not friendly." But he wouldn't listen. Suddenly I didn't see him anymore. Since then I lost him. I was with him the whole time in Auschwitz.

They put us on a cattle train in Gleiwitz and took us to Germany. It took 10 days. They packed us about 150 people to a car with no food. Fortunately for us the cars were open. Everybody had eating utensils. I had a string. At night while the German guards were sleeping, we attached the string to a plate and scooped up snow. That kept us alive. You can live without bread for a long time but not without water. Finally we got to Nordhausen, a large German concentration camp. We were there about 10 days, and then they sent us to a camp called Dora in the mountains. The Germans were making V2 missiles there. We did hard labor, digging tunnels into the mountains. We worked there from the end of January until April, 1945.

Pincus Is Liberated

It was a Friday morning, April 20, Hitler's birthday. The SS came and gave us an extra pat of margarine in honor of the Führer. The British army was approaching so they began moving us again. We were on the train packed 100 to a car. All of a sudden we heard sirens. American fighter planes came and started strafing our train. [Strafing means to attack with machine gun fire from an airplane.] They didn't know there were prisoners on the train. While they were strafing us, the two SS guards hid under the wagon.

Something told me, maybe it was instinct, "This is your chance. Run." I jumped out of the train and ran about three miles. Several others jumped too. The fighter planes strafed us. I could see the bullets flying



"Something told me, maybe it was instinct, 'This is your chance. Run.' I jumped out of the train and ran about three miles."

practically right by my nose. But I kept going. This was my only chance. All I had on was shorts. I didn't even have a shirt because it was very hot in the train and I was barefooted. But I kept running.

I met another fellow who had also escaped. We started walking. It was already late in the morning. We were hungry and cold. We saw a farmer's hut. We went into the farmhouse. The Czech farmer helped us a lot. He gave us food and clothes and kept us warm for about a day. We were skin and bones. If the Germans had caught the farmer hiding us, he would have been executed.

The next morning we had to leave because the Germans were searching for us. Although the war was almost over, they still came into the village looking for prisoners. The farmer found out about it. That night he took us into the forest and gave us a shovel. We dug a deep hole. He gave us blankets, and we slept there for two weeks. Every night he brought us food until the American soldiers came.

The Americans came on May 5, 1945 to Czechoslovakia. The Fifth Army, General *Patton's* army, liberated us. Five years later when I came to America, I was drafted. I served in the Fifth Army.

Courtesy of the South Carolina Department of Education

The Genocide

By 1945 two out of every three European Jews had been tortured, gassed, shot, or burned, as were five million Gentiles or other targeted groups considered "undesirables." Between 1933 and 1945, more than three million Soviet prisoners of war were killed because of their nationality.

Poles, as were other Slavs, became targets for slave labor, and almost two million died. Up to a half million Roma and Sinti (Gypsies) and at least 250,000 people who were mentally and physically challenged were also victims of **genocide**. Homosexuals and others considered to be "anti-social" were also persecuted and often murdered. In addition, thousands of political and religious dissidents such as Communists,

Socialists, trade unionists, and Jehovah's Witnesses were persecuted for their beliefs and behavior, and many died as a result of maltreatment.

Over 11 million people had died; six million of them were Jews, and between one and a half million and two million were Jewish children. The Jews were not the only victims of Hitler but the

only group the Nazis wanted to destroy entirely. Most of the systematic *genocide*, or deliberate killing of a particular group of people, took place in only four years. Each person was an individual, an individual who had dreams, who had a life, who had a family.

The **Holocaust**, as the mass murders became known, shocked the world as its gruesome details were discovered. The Nazis had deliberately set out to destroy the Jews for no other reason than their religious and ethnic



Inmates at Buchenwald concentration camp a few days after their liberation, April 16, 1945. Elie Wiesel, today a Nobel Prize winning author, lies seventh from the left on the second tier of bunks.

Courtesy of the USHMM Photo Archives



A few of the 40,000 Polish children imprisoned in Auschwitz before being deported to Germany.

Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi War Crimes in Poland, courtesy of the USHMM Photo Archives

heritage. The record of the *Holocaust's* mass murders serves as a reminder of the monstrous results of prejudice and intolerance.

German doctors had dictated life or death at the railroad sites carrying trainloads of Jews. The doctors chose adults and children (many of them twins) on which to perform horrifying criminal medical experiments that were certain to kill their subjects (see *Joseph Mengele* on next page). The experiments had

little scientific value but to discover how much torture a victim could endure until death. No place on Earth had such an unlimited availability of people whose cries went unheard.

In 1945 and 1946, the Allies held war crime trials in Nuremberg, Germany. As a result of the *Nuremberg Trials*, 12 Nazi leaders were sentenced to death. Thousands of other Nazis were found guilty of war crimes. The Nuremberg Trials were published around the world. The testimony went on for 10 months. It revealed evidence of slave labor, medical experiments on human beings, forced starvation, and mass murder. Trials of less important Nazi officials, such as guards at concentration camps, German military officers, and doctors who conducted medical experiments, continue to this day. Similar trials took place in Japan and Italy. (See Appendix D for excerpts from the prison diary of Nazi war criminal *Adolf Eichmann*, who was in charge of the Final Solution.)



Joseph Mengele

Joseph Mengele (1911-1979) was a German war criminal. From 1943 to 1944 he was a chief physician at Auschwitz concentration camp. There Mengele selected 400,000 persons to be killed. Inmates called him "The Angel of Death." He conducted terrifying, inhumane experiments on Jews, twins, dwarfs, giants, and many others. Some of the experiments were to see how long someone could survive in ice cold water. He also tried to change children's eye color by injecting chemical into their eyes. After World War II, Mengele was captured but escaped to South America. Despite international efforts to track him down, he was never captured again. He lived in Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil under various aliases. In 1985 an international team of forensic scientists identified the body of a man who had drowned at a Brazilian beach in 1979. While the body was identified as Mengele, many do not believe he is dead because the evidence was inconclusive.

American Soldiers Liberate Buchenwald Concentration Camp

The following reading is part of an interview with a South Carolinian who helped liberate concentration camps in Germany and Austria at the end of World War II. Most people know Strom Thurmond for his close to 40 years as a United States Senator from South Carolina. However, in 1944, he was serving his country in the army as a member of the 82nd Airborne Division. In the following interview he describes what he saw at Buchenwald (Boo-Kin-Wald) concentration camp in Germany (see Appendix E for another liberator's account).

Senator Thurmond at Buchenwald

Thurmond: I was with the First Army all through the war in Europe. The First Army uncovered the Buchenwald concentration camp, which is located some miles from Leipzig, Germany.

In looking over the camp, I was told that most people died from starving. There must of been several hundred people who had died from starvation stacked up like cordwood. A big pile of dead people and some of them were not dead. Some were barely living, and some of our doctors were able to save some of those people. I never saw such a sight in my life.

Interviewer: *When did you get over there?*

Thurmond: I landed on *D-Day* with the 82nd Airborne Division in Normandy, and we took that part of the country there in France. We went through Paris and into Belgium. That's when the Battle of the Bulge occurred. We were stopped in Belgium, and we had to drop back. That was a terrible fight, the Battle of the Bulge, but we stopped them.

Then we went back through Belgium and on from one place to another until we finally crossed the Rhine River into Germany. Then we got near Berlin and sat on the banks of the river while the Russians took it. That was the order General Eisenhower gave. We were disappointed we didn't have the honor of taking Berlin.

Interviewer: *Then you went on from Berlin to Buchenwald?*

Thurmond: That's right.

- Interviewer:** *The First Army came to Buchenwald and you liberated the camp.*
- Thurmond:** We got there right after it was liberated. Some troops ahead of us had just liberated it. That's when I witnessed these things I'm telling you about. I just can't imagine how any person could be so inhuman as to do to those people what I saw.
- Interviewer:** *At Buchenwald did you have an opportunity to speak to any of the survivors or have contact with any of the survivors?*
- Thurmond:** The survivors were lying on the ground and were so weak they couldn't talk. The doctors had a difficult time telling whether they were living or dead, but they could detect that a few of them were living, and, of course, they were taken and treated and helped anyway they could.
- Interviewer:** *Did you remain there some time?*
- Thurmond:** No, we remained there long enough to survey the situation and to determine it was stabilized. Then others came in and took over the actual work of removing the bodies. The medical corps was still trying to tell who was dead or alive among those who were piled up like cordwood, a great high wall of people, some barely living, others dead.
- Interviewer:** *Could you tell me some more about how people reacted in your group?*
- Thurmond:** We wondered why the German people in Leipzig didn't know what was going on. If they did know, why they didn't do something about it. Some of them claimed they didn't know about it, and they

may not. But others were scared to do anything or take any part. Some of course were indifferent and were trying to save their own lives.

Interviewer: *Do you have any idea how many people were left there by the time you got there?*

Thurmond: They disposed of them as they died. This particular pile of people must of been several hundred.

Courtesy of South Carolina Department of Education



The dead found by American soldiers.



The dead stacked in a cart.

Courtesy of Tallahassee Jewish Federation

Consequences of Acting or Not Acting

The Holocaust was not simply the logical and inevitable consequence of unchecked racism. Various factors contributed to the Holocaust and had been built upon gradually from racism:

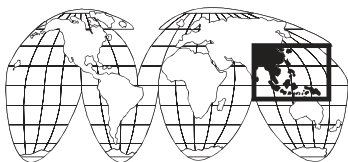
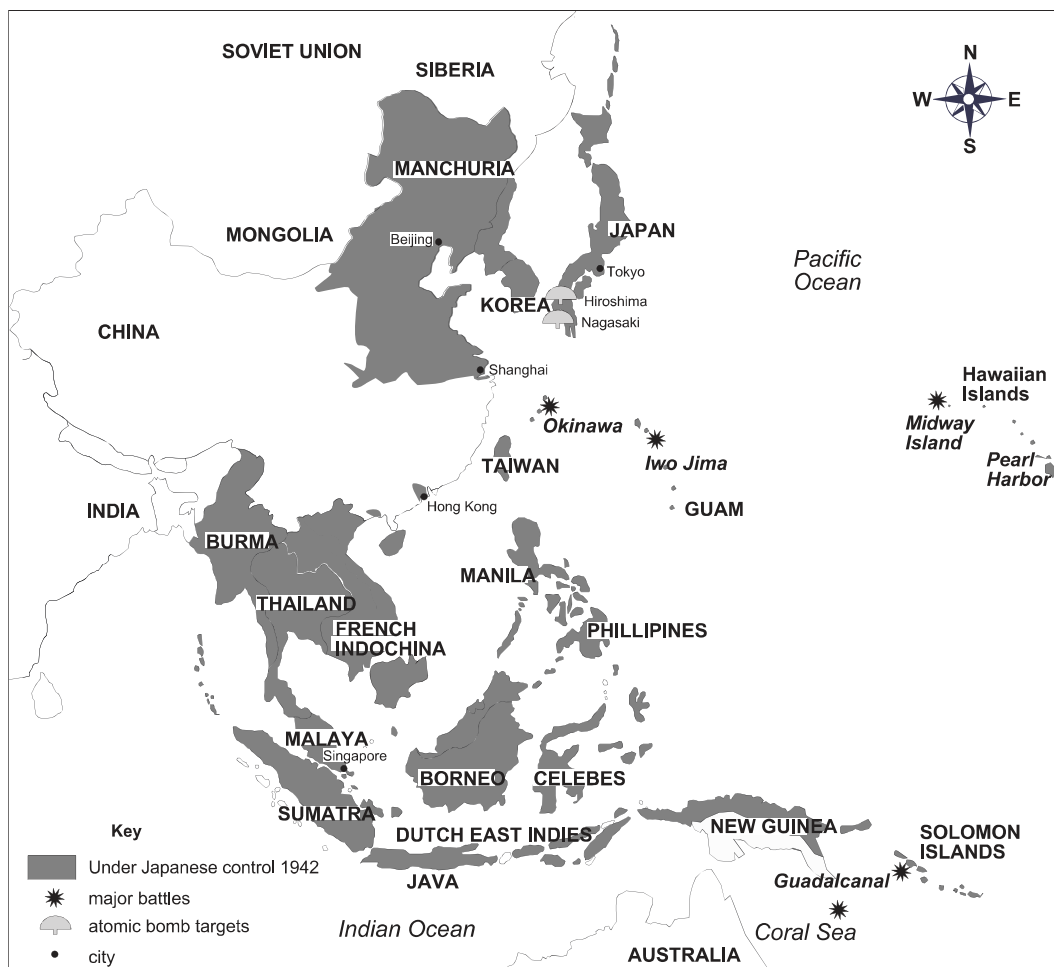
- combined with century-old bigotry
- renewed by a nationalist trend in Europe during the last half of the 19th century
- fueled by Germany's defeat in World War I and its national humiliation following the Treaty of Versailles after World War I
- made worse by worldwide economic hard times, the ineffectiveness of the German Weimar Republic (1919-1933), and international indifference
- ignited by the political charm, strong military control, and manipulative propaganda of Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany

Just because the Holocaust happened does not mean it was inevitable. The Holocaust took place because individuals, groups, and nations made decisions to act or not to act. At best, less than one-half of one percent of the total population of non-Jews under Nazi occupation helped to rescue Jews.

Decades later, the Holocaust stands to remind the world of the consequences and what can happen if hate, *xenophobia* (unreasonable fear and hatred of strangers and foreigners), and anti-Semitism are tolerated. Today, the world still receives reports of the suffering of innocent people at the hands of governments. No person or nation can afford to turn their eyes or ears away without expecting a repeat of genocide in some part of the world.

The War in the Pacific

In the Pacific, the Japanese had captured one island after another. The war against Japan had to be fought across the Pacific Ocean. This required a vast fleet of ships and aircraft. The Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor had destroyed or damaged many American ships and planes. The Japanese won a series of victories after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. Consequently, the United States had to rebuild its fleet. However, after the Battle of Midway, the Allies took the offensive in the Pacific.



World War II in the Pacific

By 1943 The United States was defeating Japan in the Pacific. The navy and marines captured Tarawa, Kwajalein, and Saipan. United States General *Douglas MacArthur* defeated the Japanese in the Philippine Islands in October of 1944 but at a high cost in American lives. Five thousand men died taking the tiny island of Iwo Jima in early 1945. The battle for Okinawa cost 11,000 American troops.

The Atomic Bomb

The United States military had to decide on a **strategy**, or plan, for forcing Japan to end the war. The military estimated an invasion of Japan would result in the deaths of millions of people on both sides.

President Truman learned that scientists had developed a powerful new weapon called the **atomic bomb**. The *atomic*



mushroom cloud from an atomic bomb

bomb could destroy Japan's ability to fight.

It would also, however, kill and wound thousands of Japanese civilians. On the other hand, if the United States had to invade Japan, thousands and thousands of American and Japanese lives might be lost on both sides. After much thought,

President Truman gave the order to use the bomb to end the war. The decision to use the bomb reflected the reasoning that the bomb would bring a speedy end to the war and help determine the grounds for peace.

On August 6, 1945, the first atomic bomb was dropped on **Hiroshima**, Japan (see Appendix F for eye-witness accounts of the bombing of Hiroshima). The city was destroyed and almost 80,000 Japanese died instantaneously in the blast. By the end of 1945, more than 140,000 people would die as a result of the attack. In spite of the devastation, Japan did not surrender. Three days later, a second bomb was dropped on the city of **Nagasaki**. In that bombing, 35,000 died instantaneously. By the end of 1945, more than 200,000 had died as a result of injuries and radiation poisoning caused by the atomic blasts. Environmental and psychological effects of these bombings are still felt today.

Faced with this awesome destruction, the Japanese finally decided to surrender. The victory over Japan, or **V-J Day**, took place on August 14, 1945. With the defeat of the last Axis Power, World War II came to an end.

The Cost of the War

World War II was the most destructive war in history. Hundreds of billions of dollars were spent to fight the war, but the loss of life was a greater cost. It is estimated that 60 million soldiers and civilians died. The United States lost 292,000 lives in the fighting, and more than 670,000 Americans were wounded.

Summary

The United States tried to remain neutral when war broke out in Europe in the 1930s. But President Roosevelt and the United States Congress grew concerned about the threat to American allies. Then, after Pearl Harbor was attacked by Japan, the United States joined the Allies in the war against the Axis Powers—Germany, Italy, and Japan. Germany surrendered to the Allies on May 8, 1945, and the horrors of the Holocaust were revealed in detail, with the genocide of six million Jews and millions of others, including Poles, Gypsies (Roma and Sinti), Soviet prisoners of war, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, and people with disabilities. The Allies finally defeated the Axis Powers in August of 1945, after the dropping of two atomic bombs on Japan.