

## History 12

### Lecture Notes: World War II

#### The Origins of the War:

World War II was the most destructive conflict in the history of this planet. It is impossible to calculate the exact losses of the war, but we do know that no other conflict cost as much in lives or property damage. Given the enormous consequences of the war, it should come as no surprise that men have sought to learn lessons from the conflict.

Most people have pointed the finger of guilt at Adolf Hitler. It was he who began the conflict, not Germany and not western leaders - though their policy of appeasement greatly facilitated Hitler's aggressiveness.

Politicians generally see appeasement as the root cause of the war. Churchill, very much an outsider at the time, has been seen as largely correct in his contemporary assessment of the political situation. Chamberlain and Daladier have been accused of lacking backbone. The lesson learned by Anthony Eden (later a British Prime Minister who saw the Egyptian nationalist Nasser as a latter-day Hitler) and John Foster Dulles (American Secretary of State during the early Cold War years - who demanded strong American resistance to Communism) was that he who appeases will be dumped upon. Appeasement became a dishonourable word. Munich became synonymous with cowardice.

A.J.P. Taylor, in his important book The Origins of the Second World War, adopted a rather novel new approach. He linked the two world wars together; according to Taylor, both were products of a German drive for domination in Central Europe. Thus Hitler was not the crucial factor. He was merely a supreme opportunist who was without long range goals and who only sought success. The German problem had survived the First World War and had become intensified. The harsh treaty of Versailles made war inevitable. Since the publication of this volume in 1961, there has been an energetic debate on the subject by historians.

Most historians now regard the truth as lying somewhere in between. Taylor's assertion that Versailles was a significant factor leading to war fails to note that much of the treaty had been dismantled by the late 1930's - indeed much of it had been renegotiated before Hitler appeared on the scene. Taylor thus sets up his thesis that Hitler didn't contribute that much - yet in doing so he ignores the destabilizing effects of this bellicose dictator's erratic actions.

Taylor's understating Hitler's unique contribution to instability in the 1930's is unfortunate, for he is correct in noting that the "German problem" did not go away with the Allied victory in 1918. Though greatly diminished in military power after her

defeat, she was still far more powerful than most of her neighbours, with the notable exception of France - yet even here, Germany's growing population and economic potential pointed to ultimate German domination in Europe. Taylor downgrades the assertion that Hitler deliberately sought a major war. Perhaps he is correct in this assertion, though there is strong evidence in the Hossbach Memorandum that he was preparing for war. The new view is that Hitler did in fact seek a conflict, but that what he wanted was war with Poland, and not with the West.

Military historians have provided us with evidence that Germany was not prepared for a long, drawn-out conflict in 1939. What she was prepared for were short, sharp conflicts against limited opposition. Hitler was aware of the effects of total war on Germany during the years 1914-1918. Such a war demands social cohesion, yet this was not the case in Nazi Germany. Hitler had many enemies - Social Democrats, Jews, Roman Catholics and even elements of the military provided a potentially explosive domestic situation.

Short wars would serve to keep such tensions under control, however. They would also not drain the economy so much as to deprive German citizens of their comforts. German blitzkrieg tactics were predicated on the need to avoid, at all costs, a war of attrition. Small wars would keep German options open, whereas total war eliminates options. German industrial capacity, though sufficient to fight a single major opponent, could not sustain a long war against a combination of enemies - especially should the U.S. become involved. Historians note that until 1942, Germany was able to fight their kind of war. Consumer goods were still being produced in large quantities until that time. Yet, after a lucky start, Hitler became quite overconfident. In launching his war against the Soviet Union, Hitler finally blundered into disaster. After 1942, when the Soviets recovered from their initial set-backs, Germany was in serious trouble.

#### The Polish Campaign:

Against Poland, Germany deployed 40 normal infantry divisions and 14 mechanized or partially mechanized divisions. Employing tactics that had originally been designed by British planners in the 1920's and adapted for the German army by General Heinz Guderian, the German forces attacked a similar number of Polish infantry divisions, backed up by 12 cavalry brigades (of which only 1 was armoured). On September 1, 1939 the attack was launched. On September 8, some German units were in the outskirts of Warsaw. By September 10 it was clear that Poland faced disaster as its forces were being encircled and outflanked by fast-moving German mobile units while being pounded from the air by the Luftwaffe. On September 17, disaster struck as Soviet troops entered from the east. One day later, the Polish government fled into exile. Warsaw gallantly held out until September 28, while other units continued to hold out until October 5. The issue had been decided, however.

#### The Baltic States and the Russo-Finish War:

Part of the Nazi-Soviet pact included an agreement that the Baltic states would fall within the Soviet sphere. On October 10, Soviet troops entered Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Finland refused to capitulate to Soviet demands. On November 30, 1939, the U.S.S.R. attacked.

Though they succeeded in the Far North, the Soviets were repulsed elsewhere. Soviet preparation had been inadequate and Soviet troops inferior to their Finnish counterparts. The terrain was also difficult to traverse. Lastly, Soviet communications from the railhead to the frontier were wholly inadequate. The Western governments were pleased to note Soviet failures and even thought of sending military help to Finland via Scandinavia - taking control of the vital resources of the area in the bargain - but fortunately they did not carry through with the plan, which might have placed them on a war footing against both totalitarian regimes at once! On February 1, 1940, the Red Army attacked again, finally forcing Finland to seek peace in early March, on terms favourable to the Soviet Union.

#### The Phoney War (Sitzkrieg):

From September, 1939 to April, 1940, the war in the West was strangely inactive. German and French troops, hunkered down in their defensive positions behind the West Wall and the Maginot Line, both awaited a major push. At sea things were more active.

- 110 vessels were sunk by German U-boats in the first 4 months of the war.
- both sides engaged in busy minelaying activities.
- The German surface fleet, after some initial raiding success, was either sunk or forced to return to the safety of its home ports and was not an important factor for the remainder of the war.
- A British destroyer chased the German vessel "Altmark" into a Norwegian fiord and rescued 300 British prisoners on board. This violation of Norwegian neutrality convinced Hitler that the Allies could not be trusted to stay out of Scandinavia.

#### Scandinavia, 1940:

During March 1940 the British seriously considered a landing on the Norwegian coast and the mining of the Norwegian coastline. The British came to an agreement with the new French Premier, Paul Reynaud on March 21. Mines would be laid and troops landed at four Norwegian Ports. The move was delayed with catastrophic consequences, for on April 1, Hitler had ordered the invasion of Norway - to be carried out on April 9.

- On April 9, Germans landed at Oslo, Kristiansand, Stavanger, Bergen and Trondheim. Norwegian resistance was quickly

- overcome, since Norwegian forces were not even mobilized and local Nazi's, led by Vidkun Quisling helped the invaders.
- Allied troops were also landed on the coast, but they were too little, too late. Though Allied troops continued to fight in Norway until late May, the situation elsewhere forced the withdrawal of these forces.
  - At the same time as Norway was attacked, so too was Denmark. Complete German success came within hours.

#### The Low Countries and France:

On May 10, 1940, the long awaited German assault in the West began. France, hunkered down behind the supposedly impregnable Maginot Line, felt confident that the Germans could be repulsed. This was quite a different war to the one expected by the French, however. This was not to be a static war of attrition like World War I; this was a war of movement.

#### Holland:

- Holland was attacked immediately, with parachute landings at key locations to secure bridges across the Dutch waterways and airfields.
- By May 12, German tanks were in the outskirts of Rotterdam.
- On May 13 the Dutch government fled to Britain.
- Rotterdam was bombed, and within 4 days of the outbreak of hostilities, Holland capitulated.

#### Belgium & France:

- Again parachute landings brought rapid success, with troops dropped on top of the Belgian fortress of Eben Emael and near key bridges. Dummy parachutists were also dropped over a wide area to cause confusion behind Belgian lines.
- A successful British & French reinforcement of the Belgians halted the German advance on a line from Antwerp to Namur, but German advances further south made this position untenable.
- Von Runstedt's Army Group A had the most notable success. Advancing through the supposedly impassable Ardennes, by May 12 the Germans had crashed through to the Meuse. Soon the Germans were across and driving toward the Channel.
- The rapid German advance created great confusion behind the French lines. When Guderian crossed the Aisne, the French commander informed Reynaud that there were no reserves available to counter the Germans and that Paris might fall in two days.
- On May 20, Guderian was at Abbeville and on the 22nd he turned northward to threaten Calais and Dunkirk. Reinhardt passed around the British rear, heading in the same direction. Thus the Allied forces were cut in half, with the forces in the north now encircled, with their backs to the sea.
- Pressed to take some initiative, a British counter-stroke

was launched in the area of Arras. Though only a tiny force of two weak tank battalions and two infantry battalions were involved, it badly shook the German High Command. The heavy British tanks were more than a match for their light German counterparts, and only the decision to turn anti-aircraft guns against <sup>the</sup> saved the Germans from disaster. Had this attack been of two armoured divisions, instead of two battalions, the outcome of the battle might have been far different.

- British evacuations began soon after this failure. On May 23 the evacuation of 4,000 troops at Boulogne began, and a further 1,000 were taken from Calais by trawlers, drifters and yachts in the nights of May 25 and 27.
- The greatest evacuation took place from Dunkirk, beginning on May 26. While being pounded from the air, the British managed to pull out 126,000 troops by May 30. By June 2, <sup>with the aid of</sup> the remainder of the B.E.F. was complete. 224,000 British and 94,000 other Allied troops had been brought out through the harbour or plucked from the beach. By the morning of the 4th, when the operation was ceased, some 338,000 Allied troops were safely landed in England, though their equipment lay abandoned at Dunkirk. The success of the operation was due to the efforts of the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy, and also to the brave work of thousands of fishermen and private yachtsmen who took part. It was also due to an inexplicable decision by Hitler to stop the German advance on May 24. Perhaps the decision was based on discomfort over the Arras counter-attack, or perhaps Hitler felt Britain might come to peace terms if it was not humiliated by the surrender of its armies at Dunkirk. Whatever the case, hundreds of thousands of troops escaped to fight again.
- Elsewhere, Allied fortunes were bleak. In 3 weeks, over 1,000,000 Allied troops had been captured, despite the further evacuation of 220,000 Allied troops from France's northwestern ports.
- On June 7, German tanks under Major General Erwin Rommel broke through toward Rouen and on June 9, they crossed the Seine.
- On June 10, as the French government moved south to Tours, Italy declared war on France and Britain.
- On June 12, the French military commander told Reynaud that France was beaten.
- On June 14, Paris fell.
- After further removing the government to Bordeaux, on June 16, Reynaud resigned and his successor, Marshal Petain asked the Germans for an armistice.
- On June 22nd, at Hitler's insistence, the French surrender took place in the same railway coach, at Compiègne, that the 1918 armistice had been signed in. Germany occupied the northern and western coasts, gaining fine submarine bases, and the French army was demobilized. Marshal Petain governed unoccupied France from Vichy, but this was little more than a puppet government that collaborated with the Germans.

The German successes against France exceeded the wildest expectations of the German High Command. Even Hitler himself temporarily lost his confidence. The credit for the victory probably lies with German leadership in the field. Guderian's brilliant leadership of the German panzers and German air superiority were key factors in the fall of France. In the words of the military analyst B.H.Liddell-Hart:

Far from having the overwhelming superiority with which they were credited, Hitler's armies were actually inferior in numbers to those opposing them...he had fewer and less powerful tanks than his opponents possessed. Only in airpower, the most vital factor, had he a superiority... Their success could easily have been prevented but for the opportunities presented to them by Allied blunders that were largely due to the prevalence of out-of-date ideas.

The French High Command was obsessed with the idea of defense, to the point where they refused to accept that offensive tactics should be developed. The Generals ignored the advice of experts like Charles DeGaulle, that tanks and armoured vehicles should be massed together to allow rapid movement, rather, they were parcelled out to infantry divisions, which slowed them to the speed of marching men. The role of airpower in close support of army units was completely ignored.

Beyond this failure of leadership lurked other reasons for the rapid collapse:

- France was economically and psychologically unprepared for war. About the only thing that the political Right and Left agreed on was that war must be avoided. The lack of any action until months after the initial declaration of war meant that no national fervor developed - indeed a peace party, headed by Pierre Laval, even called for an end to the war, since Poland was lost in any case.
- Military defeats gave the fascist elements a chance to come out into the open, and defeatists soon overcame the efforts of Reynaud to convince his colleagues to continue the war from North Africa.

The Battle of Britain:

Following the collapse of France, Britain now stood alone against Germany and Italy. Fortunately, Britain did have a rather substantial anti-tank defense - the English Channel. It was now up to Goering's Luftwaffe to destroy the RAF prior to an invasion attempt.

- In August, the attacks began on harbours, radar stations, aerodromes, and munitions factories.
- In September, London itself was bombed in retaliation for an RAF raid on Berlin.
- The change in tactics toward bombing cities instead of

eliminating the RAF was a tactical error. The RAF could not have sustained the losses encountered early in the battle. The respite given to the airfields allowed the British to keep their fighter defenses operational.

-Because the battle was fought over Britain, the RAF had a few significant advantages:

- RAF pilots who parachuted to safety from destroyed planes could return to action. Luftwaffe pilots were imprisoned.
- British fighters, close to their bases could remain in the air longer than their German counterparts - who could only stay in the air about 90 minutes.
- Radar gave the British advance warning of the approach of enemy planes.

-German air losses were particularly heavy. 1,389 German planes were lost, as against 792 British aircraft.

-Operation Sea Lion, the invasion of Britain, was called off because without air superiority any invasion force would be cut to pieces by the Royal Navy.

#### North Africa and Greece:

Mussolini had no desire to be outdone by Hitler, so he launched two offenses of his own. One in North Africa and the other in Greece. Both came to no good. The British not only threw the Italians back from Egypt, they drove deeply into Libya, thrashing the Italians at Bedafomm, where they captured 130,000 prisoners and 400 tanks. Were it not for the German dispatch of Erwin Rommel and the German Afrika Korps, the Italians would have been annihilated in Libya. The Royal Navy further embarrassed the Italians by sinking half the Italian fleet in harbour at Taranto. In Greece, the Italians were pushed back, having to retreat into Albania.

In 1941 the tide turned in North Africa, as Rommel pushed the British back out of Libya. By June 1942, they were only 70 miles from Alexandria. In April, 1941, German forces invaded Yugoslavia and Greece, soon pushing through to Athens and forcing out the British and Anzac troops who had been rushed to help. In May, 1941, Crete fell. The loss of 36,000 Allied troops was disheartening, but the decision by Hitler to postpone a sneak attack on Russia while the Balkans were cleaned up might well have had significant consequences on Operation Barbarossa.

#### Russia:

Hitler clearly did not trust the U.S.S.R. to remain out of the war. Rather than allow Stalin to be the one to launch the first blow, he decided to do so himself, perhaps hoping that the Japanese might do the same in the Far East. Beyond this, there was, according to Alan Bullock, Hitler's hatred of communism and his desire for Lebensraum:

Hitler invaded Russia for the simple and sufficient reason that he had always meant to establish the foundations of his thousand-year Reich by the annexation of the territory lying between the Vistula and the Urals.

The attack was tactically a mistake, yet, if Hugh Trevor-Roper is correct, "...to Hitler the Russian campaign was not a luxury: it was the be-all and end-all of Nazism; it could not be delayed. It was now or never."

The attack was launched in three prongs - toward Leningrad in the north, Moscow in the center, and through the Ukraine in the south.

- 3.5 million troops were committed, with 3,550 tanks and 5,000 aircraft.
- The Russians were caught off-guard, and soon Riga, Smolensk and Kiev ~~fell~~ fell.
- Leningrad and Moscow remained outside their grasp, however, as the panzer groups became bogged down in the rain and mud of October, and the freezing cold of November and December (in some places the temperature fell to -38 c.)

#### War in the Far East:

When Japan did finally decide to enter the war, it was not ~~not~~ against Russia, as Hitler had hoped, rather, the Japanese staked everything on a surprise attack on the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbour, prior to seizing the entire eastern seaboard of Asia. Japan had some significant disagreements with the U.S., and by late 1941 felt that there was little alternative to war.

- On July 26, the Japanese gained an agreement with Vichy France to occupy bases in French Indo-China. The U.S. responded by demanding their withdrawal and placing an embargo on oil supplies to Japan. The Americans also demanded a Japanese pull-out from China itself.
- With General Tojo's becoming Prime Minister on October 16, war looked imminent. Taking advantage of the war in the West, Japanese planners decided to launch a major offensive against the British, Dutch and Americans.
- Without declaring war, Admiral Yamamoto's Naval task force struck at Hawaii on December 7. 353 Japanese planes wreaked havoc for 2 hours, destroying 350 aircraft, 5 battleships, and taking 3,700 lives. - But, most importantly, none of the American aircraft carriers were in port during the attack.
- On the same day (December 8 on that side of the date line), Japanese forces also attacked the Philippines and Hong Kong air bases.
- Bangkok was occupied on December 9.
- Land forces also began invasions of the Philippines, Malaya, Burma and several key Pacific islands.
- The British warships "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse" were

sunk by Japanese aircraft as they attempted to intervene.  
-By May, 1942, the Japanese had captured Malaya, Singapore, Burma, Hong Kong, the Dutch East Indies, the Philippines, Guam and Wake Island

The Tide Turns:

The most important outcome of the attack on Pearl Harbour was that now the U.S.A. was involved in the war - against both Japan and Germany. Unless the Axis powers could break Allied resistance quickly, World War II would become a war of attrition in which the superior productive capacity of the Allies would ultimately triumph. Between the summers of 1942 and 1943, the Axis forces' fortunes peaked and the long road to defeat began.

-At Midway in June, 1942, the Americans beat off a major Japanese attack, which included 5 aircraft carriers with 400 planes, 17 large warships and an invasion force of 5,000 soldiers. 4 Japanese carriers were sunk, largely because the Americans had broken the Japanese code and knew exactly where and when the attack would occur. This proved a turning point in the battle for the Pacific. In the huge Pacific theatre, air power was crucial, so the Japanese losses at Midway were significant. The further Japanese loss of two more carriers at the Battle of the Coral Sea further crippled Japanese naval might, though it must be balanced against the loss of two American carriers. Soon the tide would turn, as General Douglas MacArthur began his island-hopping campaign in the Solomon Islands - heading slowly toward Japan.

-At El Alamein in Egypt, Rommel's Afrika Korps were driven back by Montgomery's 8th Army in October, 1942. The vast rearmament programme ensured that when the British attack came, the Germans and Italians were vastly outnumbered (80,000 men and 540 tanks against 230,000 men and 1,440 tanks). In addition, allied air power was also superior - and the British had broken the German code, so off and on they were aware of German advance plans. Soon Allied forces would push the Axis forces into Tunisia, while Allied landings in the French territories of Morocco and Algeria opened a new front in the west. In May, 1943, 275,000 German and Italian troops surrendered and an invasion of Italy was made possible.

-At Stalingrad a major German thrust toward the oilfields of the Caucasus stalled. Though the city was destroyed by the end of August, the Russians refused to surrender. A November offensive successfully encircled the German 6th Army. Attempts to break the encirclement failed and Hitler refused to allow von Paulus to retreat. He surrendered on February 2, 1943, after holding out just long enough to prevent the Soviets from crushing the main German force. This victory was crucial in shattering the myth of German invincibility. In July & August another battle of attrition

*Oct. 1941 -  
Jan 1942  
30 km from Kremlin  
Gen. Zhukov  
from Moscow*

took place at Kursk. This was the largest tank battle in history to that time. The German panzers were worn down & forced to retreat by superior numbers of Soviet troops & armour - the Soviet T-34 and KV tanks every bit the equal of their German counterparts. These tanks were also being produced at a rate far faster than the Germans could match.

#### The War At Sea:

We have noted the importance of naval air power in the Pacific theatre. One should not underestimate the significance of air and naval power in the Mediterranean and Atlantic.

- The Italian fleet was crippled by the torpedo attack from British aircraft from H.M.S. Illustrious in 1940.
- The last German surface raider, the "Bismark" was sunk in May, 1941.
- Many German transports were lost on the way to Crete in the same month.
- Naval forces escorted convoys taking precious supplies to the Russians by way of Murmansk.

Most important was the campaign against the German U-boats, which sought to deprive Britain of food and raw materials, as well as reinforcements.

- Prior to America's entry into the war, Congress authorized the granting of war-material in the form of old destroyers to Britain in return for the use of Caribbean bases. This began the lend-lease programme, which was later extended to other Allied countries.
- At the start of 1942, the Germans had 90 U-boats operating and 250 more under construction. In the first 6 months of the year, 4 million tons of shipping were lost and only 21 U-boats destroyed.
- In March 1943 alone, 108 ships were lost, yet after this Allied losses began to drop at the same time as more U-boats became operational. U-boat losses also rose steadily.
- By July 1943, the Allies could produce ships at a faster rate than the U-boats could sink them. This was due to improved Allied equipment (the addition of long range patrol aircraft and detection equipment) and additional warships following America's entry into the war.

#### The War in the Air:

We have already noted the contribution of the RAF in the battle of Britain. Its efforts did not cease after that victory. Nor were its efforts limited to convoy protection and anti-submarine operations.

- In the Pacific Theatre, bombers paved the way for the landing of Marines in the "island-hopping" campaign.
- American transport planes kept the vital flow of supplies

to China and to Allied troops in the campaign to recapture Burma.

- The British and Americans later flew in parachute troops to help the landings in Sicily (July 1943) and Normandy (June, 1944), and provided air cover for these operations.
- Most controversial was the Allied bombing of Axis cities. After the attack on Russia, the Luftwaffe could no longer continue large-scale raids against British cities, but the Allies themselves turned to a strategic air offensive, seeking to destroy military and industrial targets as well as undermine civilian morale. The cities of the Ruhr, Cologne, Hamburg and Berlin were all badly damaged. In February, 1945, 40,000 people were killed in a single night's raid on Dresden. Another single raid on Tokyo in March, 1945, killed twice this number and destroyed a quarter of the city. It would seem that despite the destruction, the air campaign did not really pay off until the autumn of 1944. Until that time, production continued to increase in Germany. In October, 1944, the Krupp works were permanently put out of action. By June 1945, Japanese productive capacity had also been destroyed. Two key accomplishments were the destruction of railway communications in Central Europe and the diversion of much needed aircraft from the Eastern Front, helping the Russian advance in the East.

#### The Axis Collapse:

##### Italy:

At first it was felt that the best way to bring about an Axis collapse in Europe would be the elimination of the weak Italians and an invasion of Hitler's Europe from the south. This began with the invasion of Sicily in July, 1943.

- The campaign succeeded quickly and Mussolini was dismissed by the King.
- By October, 1943, the Allies had captured Naples and Marshal Badoglio, Mussolini's successor, signed an armistice which brought Italy onto the Allied side.
- Germany responded by sending troops through the Brenner Pass to occupy Rome and the north of the country.
- The fighting now became more bitter in the rugged Italian mountains. Monte Cassino fell in May and Rome in June, but the north did not fall until April, 1945.

##### France:

The Russians, facing the bulk of the German military, clamoured constantly for the opening of another front in France. This, the Allies were reluctant to do following the 1942 fiasco at Dieppe. However, by mid-1944, the British and Americans felt confident that a successful invasion could be launched.

- On June 6, 1944, D-Day, landings began along a 60 mile

stretch of the Normandy coast between Cherbourg and Le Havre. New engineering marvels like the "Mulberry harbours" and PLUTO (pipeline under the Ocean) helped the 326,000 men land and remain well-supplied. Eventually 3 million men were landed in France.

- Paris fell on August 25 and Brussels and Antwerp were captured in September.
- Setbacks occurred at Arnhem (Holland) in September, and in the Ardennes, during the Battle of the Bulge, when Hitler risked everything in a December assault that cost him 600 tanks and 250,000 men. By January 16, the attackers were compelled to withdraw.
- Throughout February the Allied air forces softened up German defenses. Patton's 3rd army reached Coblenz in early March, while further south, other forces actually crossed the Rhine. The main attack was to come from Montgomery's forces in the North, however. Here the Rhine was crossed on the night of March 23-24. Soon the Western Front disintegrated as many Germans were anxious to see the Western Allies advance as far as possible, to forestall Soviet occupation

#### The Eastern Front:

It was in the East that fighting was the bloodiest, however, as it had been throughout the war. After the Battle of Kursk, Russian advances continued relentlessly. Weakened by the transfer of troops westward after the D-Day offensive, German and other Axis troops simply could not hold back the weight of the Russian assaults. Some brilliant counterattacks won limited respites for the Germans, but the end result could no longer be questioned. could no longer be questioned.

- In August, 1944, Rumania changed sides and joined the Allies. This opened up the south, where German forces were already feeling pressured by partisan attacks in Greece and Yugoslavia.
- Belgrade fell to Tito's partisans on October 20.
- Russian troops were in the suburbs of Budapest by November 4
- Finland, which had fought alongside Germany, capitulated in September.
- Russian forces halted outside of Warsaw - long enough for the Germans to put down a Polish uprising - but the city did fall on January 17.
- By April 25, Berlin was encircled. On the same day, Soviet and American troops shook hands at the Elbe River.
- On April 30, Hitler took his own life as the street fighting in Berlin grew ever closer.
- His successor, Admiral Doenitz did not care to fight on, but prior to his surrender, he saved as many of his westward fleeing civilians and troops as possible. Fully 55% of the Army of the East were transferred into the British-U.S. area of control prior to surrender.
- At midnight, May 8, 1945 the war in Europe came to an end.

The Pacific:

The Allies faced two choices in attacking Japan. They could either advance through the Aleutians in the North Pacific, or through Micronesia in the South.

- First the Solomon Islands and the Bismark Archipelago were retaken, along with the Gilbert Islands.
- Next the American advance continued toward Guam and Saipan in mid 1944, and also through the Philippine Islands. Japanese resistance was fierce but futile as overwhelming Allied superiority in numbers and equipment guaranteed their success - though at a very high cost. At Leyte Gulf the war's greatest naval engagement was fought, virtually eliminating the Japanese navy as a force to be reckoned with. Kamikaze attacks caused great damage to American naval units, however, and were a clear example of the kind of resistance that might be met in the event of an invasion of Japan. Similarly, the attack on the volcanic island of Iwo Jima showed that Japanese fighting spirit was far from broken, but its capture allowed more than 2,000 B-29 bombers to use it in the next five months.
- During the assault on Okinawa, the Japanese launched 355 Kamikaze raids and also sent the world's biggest battleship the "Yamato" on a suicide mission, with only enough fuel for a one way trip. It was sunk on April 7.
- In Burma, an Allied advance in early 1945, making use of irregular forces dropped behind Japanese lines, liberated Rangoon on May 1, 1945.

Throughout July 1945, the Japanese mainland was continually bombed, as if in preparation for an invasion. This was not about to happen, however. On August 6, 1945, a solitary American bomber dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima. On August 9, another device destroyed the city of Nagasaki. Truman insisted that the use of these devices was to save Allied lives by preventing an invasion of Japan. Others don't believe that the bombing was necessary, since the Japanese had already put out peace feelers in July, via Russia. Liddell-Hart suggests that the real reason for dropping these devices was to end the war quickly, preventing the Soviets from gaining too much territory in the East and giving them an excuse to share the occupation of Japan. The Soviet Union joined in the eastern conflict between the dropping of the two bombs.

On August 10, 1945, Japan issued a statement agreeing to the Allied demands. Though many refused to accept defeat, the Emperor's decision was eventually accepted and on September 2, 1945, the war officially came to an end. Japanese forces still held onto Korea, Manchuria, vast tracts of China and South-East Asia and many Pacific Islands, but they were isolated and could not be resupplied. Japan had no choice but to surrender or face complete and utter destruction.

### Why did the Axis Powers Lose the War:

- Shortages of key strategic materials put the Axis powers at a distinct disadvantage.
- The Allies learned from their early failures and went on to build planes and aircraft carriers - key weapons in the wars in both the Atlantic and Pacific.
- The Axis powers took on too much. All of the Axis powers "became stretched out far beyond their basic capacity for holding their gains" - says Liddell-Hart. For Germany, Italian incompetence drained Hitler's resources.
- The combined resources of the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R. and the British Empire were so great that the longer the war lasted, the less chance the Axis had. Stalin's building up of a vast industrial capacity east of the Ural mountains, beyond the German advances was tremendously important. By 1944, the Russians alone had 4 times as many tanks as the Germans and could field twice as many troops. When American production peaked, it could turn out over 70,000 tanks and 120,000 aircraft a year.
- Both sides made tactical mistakes during the war, but the Axis could not afford to do so. Japan concentrated on building battleships when carriers were needed. Hitler did not equip his forces for a winter campaign when he first attacked Russia, then needlessly sacrificed an Army at Stalingrad.

### Effects of the War:

The destruction of this war was horrendous, particularly for the U.S.S.R.

- At least 30 million people were killed - over half of which were from the U.S.S.R.
- A further 21 million people were uprooted from their homes, leaving the victors with the problem of repatriating them. Among these were the survivors of Hitler's final solution, those who were not counted among the 6 million Jews butchered by the Fuhrer's men.
- There was no all-inclusive peace settlement of the kind that was arrived at the end of the First World War. This was partly the result of mistrust between the Allies, but it was also due to the nature of the victory. This one was total. The victors simply imposed their will directly on the vanquished, stationing occupying forces to police the results. There would be no possibility of a new stab-in-the-back theory.
- The war stimulated rapid social and scientific developments. In Britain the welfare state was a direct response to needs that became apparent in war time. Nuclear weapons changed the nature of war.
- European domination of the world, already being called into question during the 1930's was now seen to be over. The old colonial powers were drained by the war and would never

regain their strength. Two new powers came to dominate world politics, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.

- Far from emerging from the war united, the victorious Allies showed signs of splitting even before the end of the war. American liberalism and Soviet Communism would be the new competing ideologies that people of the world would feel compelled to choose from in the initial Cold War years.
- The United Nations would seek to replace the old League, hopefully with better results.