

Chapter 35: America in World War II 1941–1945 Chapter Contents

Book Title: The American Pageant

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## Chapter 35

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## 35-1 The Allies Trade Space for Time

Given time, the Allies seemed bound to triumph. But would they be given time? True, they had on their side the great mass of the world's population, but the wolf is never intimidated by the number of the sheep. The United States was the mightiest military power on earth—potentially. But wars are won with bullets, not blueprints. Indeed America came perilously close to losing the war to the well-armed aggressors before it could begin to throw its full weight onto the scales.

Time, in a sense, was the most needed munition. Expense was no limitation. The overpowering problem confronting America was to retool itself for all-out war production, while praying that the dictators would not meanwhile crush their adversaries who still remained in the field—notably Britain and the Soviet Union. Haste was all the more imperative because the highly skilled German scientists might turn up with unbeatable secret weapons, including rocket bombs and perhaps even atomic arms.

America's task was far more complex and back-breaking than during World War I. It had to feed, clothe, and arm itself, as well as transport its forces to regions as far separated as Britain and Burma. More than that, it had to send a vast amount of food and munitions to its hard-pressed allies, who stretched all the way from the USSR to Australia. Could the American people, reputedly “gone soft,” measure up to this herculean task? Was democracy “rotten” and “decadent,” as the dictators sneeringly proclaimed?

Chapter 35: America in World War II 1941–1945: 35-2 The Shock of War  
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## 35-2 The Shock of War

National unity was no worry, thanks to the electrifying blow by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor. American Communists had denounced the Anglo-French “imperialist” war before Hitler attacked Stalin in 1941, but they now clamored for an unmitigated assault on the Axis powers. The handful of strutting pro-Hitlerites in the United States melted away, while millions of Italian Americans and German Americans loyally supported the nation's war program. In contrast to World War I, when the patriotism of millions of immigrants was hotly questioned, World War II actually speeded the assimilation of many ethnic groups into American society. Immigration had been choked off for almost two decades before 1941, and America's ethnic communities were now composed of well-settled members, whose votes were crucial to Franklin Roosevelt's Democratic party. Consequently, there was virtually no government witch-hunting of minority groups, as had happened in World War I.

American song titles after Pearl Harbor combined nationalism with unabashed

imposed isolation and eventually led to the overthrow of the last Japanese shogun (military ruler) and the restoration of the emperor. Within two decades of Perry's arrival, Japan's new "Meiji" government had launched the nation on an ambitious program of industrialization and militarization designed to make it the economic and political equal of the Western powers.

As Japan rapidly modernized, its citizens increasingly took ship for America. A steep land tax imposed by the Meiji government to pay for its reforms drove more than 300,000 Japanese farmers off their land. In 1884 the Meiji government permitted Hawaiian planters to recruit contract laborers from among this displaced population. By the 1890s many Japanese were sailing beyond Hawaii to the ports of Long Beach, San Francisco, and Seattle.

Between 1885 and 1924, roughly 200,000 Japanese migrated to Hawaii, and around 180,000 more ventured to the U.S. mainland. They were a select group: because the Meiji government saw overseas Japanese as representatives of their homeland, it strictly regulated emigration. Thus Japanese immigrants to America arrived with more money than their European counterparts. Also, because of Japan's system of compulsory education, Japanese immigrants on average were better educated and more literate than European immigrants.

Women as well as men migrated. The Japanese government, wanting to avoid the problems of an itinerant bachelor society that it observed among the Chinese in the United States, actively promoted women's migration. Although most Japanese immigrants were young men in their twenties and thirties, thousands of women also ventured to Hawaii and the mainland as contract laborers or "picture brides," so called because their courtship had consisted exclusively of an exchange of photographs with their prospective husbands.

Like many Chinese and European immigrants, most Japanese who came to America expected to stay only temporarily. They planned to work hard for wages that were high by Japanese standards and then to return home and buy land. In Hawaii most Japanese labored on the vast sugar cane plantations. On the mainland they initially found migratory work on the railroads or in fish, fruit, or vegetable canneries. A separate Japanese economy of restaurants, stores, and boardinghouses soon sprang up in cities to serve the immigrants' needs.

### **Campaign Against the Japanese, Hollywood, California, 1923**

Long before Japanese Americans were interned during World War II as a security risk, they faced intense discrimination throughout the United States.

Library of Congress

But the very success of the Japanese proved a lightning rod for trouble. On the West Coast, Japanese immigrants had long endured racist barbs and social segregation. Increasingly, white workers and farmers, jealous of Japanese success, pushed for immigration restrictions. Bowing to this pressure, President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908 negotiated the "Gentlemen's Agreement," under which the Japanese government voluntarily agreed to limit emigration. In 1913 the California legislature denied Japanese immigrants already living in the United States the right to own land.

Legally barred from becoming citizens, Japanese immigrants (the "Issei," from the Japanese word for *first*) became more determined than ever that their American-born children (the "Nissei," from the Japanese word for *second*) would reap the full benefits of their birthright. Japanese parents encouraged their children to learn English, to excel in school, and to get a college education. Many Nissei grew up in two worlds, a fact they often recognized by Americanizing their Japanese names. Although education and acculturation did not protect the Nissei from the hysteria of World War II, those assets did give them a springboard to success in the postwar era.

### **Three Boys at Manzanar, by Toyo Miyatake (1895–1979)**

Miyatake was an acclaimed Japanese American photographer with his own studio in Los Angeles before he and his family were evacuated to the Manzanar internment camp. He was determined to pursue his craft there, at first working secretly and then with the knowledge of the authorities. His pictures are the only photographic records of daily camp life taken by an internee. The guards allowed him to step outside the barbed-wire fence to take this photograph.



Archie Miyatake/Picture Research Consultants & Archives

## 35-3 Building the War Machine

The war crisis caused the drooping American economy to snap to attention. Massive military orders—over \$100 billion in 1942 alone—almost instantly soaked up the idle industrial capacity of the still-lingering Great Depression. Orchestrated by the **War Production Board (WPB)** (Established in 1942 by executive order to direct all war production, including procuring and allocating raw materials, to maximize the nation's war machine. The WPB had sweeping powers over the U.S. economy and was abolished in November 1945 soon after Japan's defeat.), American factories poured forth an avalanche of weaponry: 40 billion bullets, 300,000 aircraft, 76,000 ships, 86,000 tanks, and 2.6 million machine guns. Miracle-man shipbuilder Henry J. Kaiser was dubbed “Sir Launchalot” for his prodigies of ship construction; one of his ships was fully assembled in fourteen days, complete with life jackets and coat hangers.

The War Production Board halted the manufacture of nonessential items such as passenger cars. It assigned priorities for transportation and access to raw materials. When the Japanese invasion of British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies snapped America's lifeline of natural rubber, the government imposed a national speed limit and gasoline rationing in order to conserve rubber and built fifty-one synthetic-rubber plants. By war's end they were far outproducing the prewar supply.

Farmers, too, rolled up their sleeves and increased their output. The armed forces drained the farms of workers, but heavy new investment in agricultural machinery and improved fertilizers more than made up the difference. In 1944 and 1945, blue-jeaned farmers hauled in record-breaking billion-bushel wheat harvests.

These wonders of production also brought economic strains. Full employment and scarce consumer goods fueled a sharp inflationary surge in 1942. The **Office of Price Administration (OPA)** (A critically important wartime agency charged with regulating the consumer economy through rationing scarce supplies, such as automobiles, tires, fuel, nylon, and sugar, and by curbing inflation by setting ceilings on the price of goods. Rents were controlled as well in parts of the country overwhelmed by war workers. The OPA was extended after World War II ended to continue the fight against inflation, but was abolished in 1947.) eventually brought ascending prices under control with extensive regulations. Rationing held down the consumption of critical goods such as meat and butter, though some “black marketeers” and “meatleggers” cheated the system. The **National War Labor Board (NWLB)** (Established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to act as an arbitration tribunal and mediate disputes between labor and management that might have led to war stoppages and thereby undermined the war effort. The NWLB was also charged with adjusting wages with an eye to controlling inflation.) imposed ceilings on wage increases.

Labor unions, whose membership grew from about 10 million to more than 13 million workers during the war, fiercely resented the government-dictated wage ceilings. Despite the no-strike pledges of most of the major unions, a rash of labor walkouts plagued the war effort. Prominent among the strikers were the United Mine Workers, who several times were called off the job by their crusty and iron-willed chieftain, **John L. Lewis**.

Threats of lost production through strikes became so worrisome that Congress, in June

The armed services enlisted nearly 15 million men in World War II and some 216,000 women, who were employed for noncombat duties. Best known of these “women in arms” were the **WACs (Women's Army Corps)** (The women's branches of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Coast Guard, established during World War II to employ women in noncombatant jobs. Women now participated in the armed services in ways that went beyond their traditional roles as nurses.) , **WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service)** (The women's branches of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Coast Guard, established during World War II to employ women in noncombatant jobs. Women now participated in the armed services in ways that went beyond their traditional roles as nurses.) (navy), and **SPARs (U.S. Coast Guard Women's Reserve)** (The women's branches of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Coast Guard, established during World War II to employ women in noncombatant jobs. Women now participated in the armed services in ways that went beyond their traditional roles as nurses.) . As the draft net was tightened after Pearl Harbor, millions of young men were plucked from their homes and clothed in “GI” (government issue) outfits. As the arsenal of democracy, the United States exempted certain key categories of industrial and agricultural workers from the draft, in order to keep its mighty industrial and food-producing machines humming.

But even with these exemptions, the draft left the nation's farms and factories so short of personnel that new workers had to be found. An agreement with Mexico in 1942 brought thousands of Mexican agricultural workers, called *braceros*, across the border to harvest the fruit and grain crops of the West. The **Bracero program** (Program established by agreement with the Mexican government to recruit temporary Mexican agricultural workers to the United States to make up for wartime labor shortages in the Far West. The program persisted until 1964, by when it had sponsored 4.5 million border crossings.) outlived the war by some twenty years, becoming a fixed feature of the agricultural economy in many western states.

Even more dramatic was the march of women onto the factory floor. More than 6 million women took up jobs outside the home; over half of them had never before worked for wages. Many of them were mothers, and the government was obliged to set up some 3,000 day-care centers to care for “Rosie the Riveter's” children while she drilled the fuselage of a heavy bomber or joined the links of a tank track. When the war ended, Rosie and many of her sisters were in no hurry to put down their tools. They wanted to keep on working and often did. The war thus foreshadowed an eventual revolution in the roles of women in American society.

Poster appeals and slogans urging women to enlist in the WACs (Women's Army Corps) were “Speed Them Back, Join the WAC,” “I'd Rather Be with Them—Than Waiting for Them,” “Back the Attack, Be a WAC! For America Is Calling,” and (a song throwback to World War I) “The WACs and WAVES Will Win the War, Parlez Vous.”

Yet the war's immediate impact on women's lives has frequently been exaggerated. The great majority of American women—especially those with husbands present in the home or with small children to care for—did not work for wages in the wartime economy but continued in their traditional roles. In both Britain and the Soviet Union, a far greater

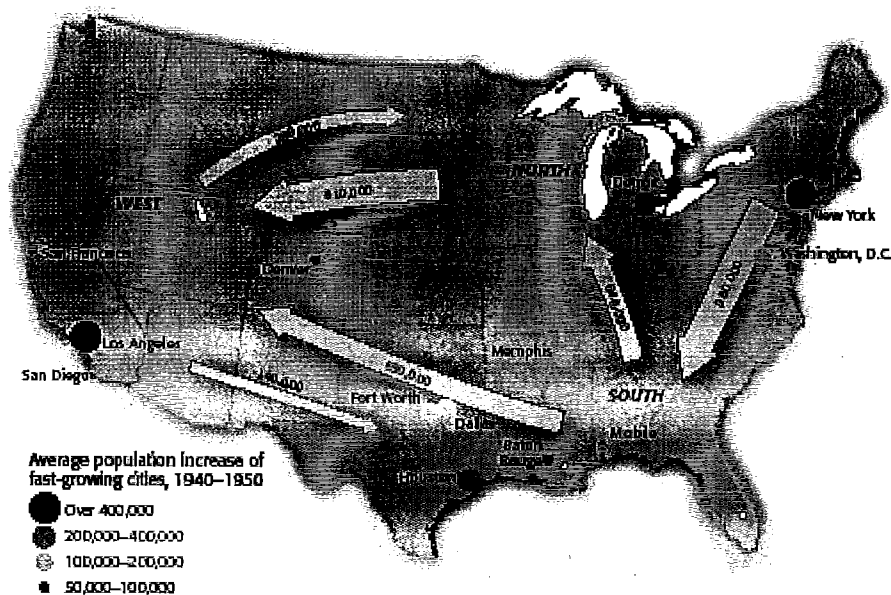
## 35-5 Wartime Migrations

The war also proved to be a demographic cauldron, churning and shifting the American population. Many of the 15 million men and women in uniform, having seen new sights and glimpsed new horizons, chose not to go home again at war's end. War industries sucked people into boomtowns like Los Angeles, Detroit, Seattle, and Baton Rouge. California's population grew by nearly 2 million. The South experienced especially dramatic changes. Franklin Roosevelt had called the South "the nation's number one economic problem" in 1938; when war came, he seized the opportunity to accelerate the region's economic development. The states of the old Confederacy received a disproportionate share of defense contracts, including nearly \$6 billion of federally financed industrial facilities. Here were the seeds of the postwar blossoming of the "Sunbelt" (see Map 35.1).

### Map 35.1

#### Internal Migration in the United States During World War II

Few events in American history have moved the American people about so massively as World War II. The West and the South boomed, and several war-industry cities grew explosively. A majority of migrants from the South were blacks; 1.6 million African Americans left the region in the 1940s.



(Source: United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.) © Cengage Learning

An African American soldier angrily complained about segregation in the armed forces during World War II:

*“Why is it we Negro soldiers who are as much a part of Uncle Sam's great military machine as any cannot be treated with equality and the respect due us? The same respect which white soldiers expect and demand from us?... There is great need for drastic change in this man's Army! How can we be*



National Archives

The northward migration of African Americans accelerated after the war, thanks to the advent of the mechanical cotton picker—an invention whose impact rivaled that of Eli Whitney's cotton gin. Introduced in 1944, this new mechanical marvel did the work of fifty people at about one-eighth the cost. Overnight, the Cotton South's historic need for cheap labor disappeared. Their muscle no longer required in Dixie, some 5 million black tenant farmers and sharecroppers headed north in the three decades after the war. Theirs was one of the great migrations in American history, comparable in size to the immigrant floods from Ireland, Italy, and Poland. Within a single generation, a near-majority of African Americans gave up their historic homeland and their rural way of life. By 1970 half of all blacks lived outside the South, and *urban* had become almost a synonym for *black*. The speed and scale of these changes jolted the migrants and sometimes convulsed the communities that received them.

The war also prompted an exodus of Native Americans from the reservations. Thousands of Indian men and women found war work in the major cities, and thousands more answered Uncle Sam's call to arms. More than 90 percent of Indians resided on reservations in 1940; six decades later more than half lived in cities, with a large concentration in southern California.

Some twenty-five thousand Native American men served in the armed forces. Comanches in Europe and Navajos in the Pacific made especially valuable contributions as code talkers (Native American men who served in the military by transmitting radio messages in their native languages, which were undecipherable by German and Japanese spies.) They transmitted radio messages in their native languages, which were incomprehensible to the Germans and the Japanese.

The sudden rubbing against one another of unfamiliar peoples produced some distressingly violent friction. In 1943 young “zoot-suit”-clad Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Los Angeles were viciously attacked by Anglo sailors who cruised the streets





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## 35-6 Holding the Home Front

Despite these ugly episodes, Americans on the home front suffered little from the war, compared to the peoples of the other fighting nations. By war's end much of the planet was a smoking ruin. But in America the war invigorated the economy and lifted the country out of a decade-long depression. The gross national product vaulted from less than \$100 billion in 1940 to more than \$200 billion in 1945. Corporate profits rose from about \$6 billion in 1940 to almost twice that amount four years later. (“If you are going to try to go to war in a capitalist country,” said Secretary of War Henry Stimson, “you have to let business make money out of the process, or business won’t work.”) Despite wage ceilings, overtime pay fattened pay envelopes. Disposable personal income, even after payment of wartime taxes, more than doubled. On December 7, 1944, the third anniversary of Pearl Harbor, Macy’s department store rang up the biggest sales day in its history. Americans had never had it so good—and they wanted it a lot better. When price controls were finally lifted in 1946, America’s pent-up lust to consume pushed prices up 33 percent in less than two years. The rest of the world, meanwhile, was still clawing its way out from under the rubble of war.

The hand of government touched more American lives more intimately during the war than ever before. The war, perhaps even more than the New Deal, pointed the way to the post-1945 era of big-government interventionism. Every household felt the constraints of the rationing system. Millions of men and women worked for Uncle Sam in the armed forces. Millions more worked for him in the defense industries, where their employers and

## 35-7 The Rising Sun in the Pacific

Early successes of the efficient Japanese militarists were breathtaking: they realized that they would have to win quickly or lose slowly. Seldom, if ever, has so much territory been conquered so rapidly with so little loss.

Simultaneously with the assault on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese launched widespread and uniformly successful attacks on various Far Eastern bastions. These included the American outposts of Guam, Wake, and the Philippines. In a dismayingly short time, the Japanese invader seized not only the British-Chinese port of Hong Kong but also British Malaya, with its critically important supplies of rubber and tin.

Nor did the Japanese tide stop there. The overambitious soldiers of the emperor, plunging into the snake-infested jungles of Burma, cut the famed Burma Road. This was the route over which the United States had been trucking a trickle of munitions to the armies of the Chinese generalissimo Jiang Jieshi ( **Chiang Kai-shek**), who was still resisting the Japanese invader in China. Thereafter, intrepid American aviators were forced to fly a handful of war supplies to Jiang “over the hump” of the towering Himalaya mountains from the India-Burma theater. Meanwhile, the Japanese had lunged southward against the oil-rich Dutch East Indies. The jungle-matted islands speedily fell to the assailants after the combined British, Australian, Dutch, and American naval and air forces had been smashed at an early date by their numerically superior foe.

Better news came from the Philippines, which succeeded dramatically in slowing down the mikado's warriors for five months. The Japanese promptly landed a small but effective army, and General Douglas MacArthur, the eloquent and egotistical American commander, withdrew to a strong defensive position at Bataan, not far from Manila. There about twenty thousand American troops, supported by a much larger force of ill-trained Filipinos, held off violent Japanese attacks until April 9, 1942. The defenders, reduced to eating mules and monkeys, heroically traded their lives for time in the face of hopeless odds. They grimly joked while vainly hoping for reinforcements:

*We're the battling bastards of Bataan;*

*No Mamma, no Papa, no Uncle Sam.*

Before the inevitable American surrender, General MacArthur was ordered by Washington to depart secretly for Australia, there to head the resistance against the Japanese. Leaving by motorboat and airplane, he proclaimed, “I shall return.” After the battered remnants of his army had hoisted the white flag, they were treated with vicious cruelty in the infamous eighty-mile Bataan Death March to prisoner-of-war camps—the first in a series of atrocities committed by both sides in the unusually savage Pacific war. The island fortress of Corregidor, in Manila harbor, held out until May 6, 1942, when it too surrendered and left Japanese forces in complete control of the Philippine archipelago (see Map 35.2).

including the construction of the “Alcan” Highway through Canada.

Yet the Japanese imperialists, overextended in 1942, suffered from “victory disease.” Their appetites were bigger than their stomachs. If they had only dug in and consolidated their gains, they would have been much more difficult to dislodge once the tide turned.

## Hell in the Pacific

Assaulting Japanese island fortresses in the Pacific was a bloody, costly business. These American soldiers perished as they stepped ashore at Buna beach in New Guinea in 1942. Their damaged landing craft wallows in the surf behind them. Appearing in *Life* magazine on September 20, 1943, nearly two years after Pearl Harbor, this was the first photograph of dead GIs that the War Department allowed to be published.



George Strock/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

Chapter 35: America in World War II 1941–1945: 35-9 American Leapfrogging Toward Tokyo  
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## 35-9 American Leapfrogging Toward Tokyo

Following the heartening victory at Midway, the United States for the first time was able to seize the initiative in the Pacific. In August 1942 American ground forces gained a toehold on Guadalcanal Island, in the Solomons, in an effort to protect the lifeline from America to Australia through the southwest Pacific. An early naval defeat inflicted by the Japanese shortened American supplies dangerously, and for weeks the U.S. troops held on to the malarial island by their fingernails. After several desperate sea battles for naval control,

1. Defeating the Japanese in China by funneling supplies over the Himalayan “hump” from India.
2. Carrying the war into Southeast Asia (a proposal much favored by the British, who could thus regain Singapore).
3. Heavy bombing of Japan from Chinese air bases.
4. “Island hopping” from the South Pacific to within striking distance of the Japanese home islands. This strategy, favored by General Douglas MacArthur, was the one finally emphasized.

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## 35-10 The Allied Halting of Hitler

Early setbacks for America in the Pacific were paralleled in the Atlantic. Hitler had entered the war with a formidable fleet of ultramodern submarines, which ultimately operated in “wolf packs” with frightful effect, especially in the North Atlantic, the Caribbean, and the Gulf of Mexico. During ten months of 1942 more than 500 merchant ships were reported lost—111 in June alone—as ship destruction far outran construction.

## 35-11 A Second Front from North Africa to Rome

Soviet losses were already staggering in 1942: millions of soldiers and civilians lay dead, and Hitler's armies had overrun most of the western USSR. Anglo-American losses at this time could be counted only in the thousands. By war's end, the grave had closed over some 20 million Soviets, and a great swath of their country, equivalent in the United States to the area from Chicago to the Atlantic seaboard, had been laid waste. Small wonder that Kremlin leaders clamored for a second front to divert the German strength westward.

Many Americans, including FDR, were eager to begin a diversionary invasion of France in 1942 or 1943. They feared that the Soviets, unable to hold out forever against Germany, might make a separate peace as they had in 1918 and leave the Western Allies to face Hitler's fury alone. Roosevelt rashly promised the Soviets in early 1942 that he would open a second front on the European continent by the end of the year—a promise that proved utterly impossible to keep.

British military planners, remembering their appalling losses in 1914–1918, were not enthusiastic about a frontal assault on German-held France. It might end in disaster. They preferred to attack Hitler's Fortress Europe through the “soft underbelly” of the Mediterranean. Faced with British boot-dragging and a woeful lack of resources, the Americans reluctantly agreed to postpone a massive invasion of Europe.

An assault on French-held North Africa was a compromise second front, and a far cry from what the badly battered Soviets were demanding. The highly secret attack, launched in November 1942, was headed by a gifted and easy-smiling American general, Dwight D. (“Ike”) Eisenhower, a master of organization and conciliation. As a joint Allied operation ultimately involving some 400,000 men (British, Canadian, French, and chiefly American) and about 850 ships, the invasion was the mightiest waterborne effort up to that time in history. After savage fighting, the remnants of the German-Italian army were finally trapped in Tunisia and surrendered in May 1943.

### Women at War

Members of the Women's Army Corps disembark in North Africa in 1944. (Note: “Auxillary” was dropped from the name in 1943.)

For many months Italy appeared to be a dead end, as the Allied advance was halted by a seemingly impregnable German defense centered on the ancient monastery of Monte Cassino. After a touch-and-go assault on the Anzio beachhead, Rome was finally taken on June 4, 1944. The tremendous cross-channel invasion of France begun two days later turned Italy into a kind of sideshow, but the Allies, limited in manpower, continued to fight their way slowly and painfully into northern Italy. On May 2, 1945, only five days before Germany's official surrender, several hundred thousand Axis troops in Italy laid down their arms and became prisoners of war. While the Italian second front opened the Mediterranean and diverted some German divisions from the blazing Soviet and French battle lines, it also may have delayed the main Allied invasion of Europe, from England across the English Channel to France, by many months—allowing more time for the Soviet army to advance into Eastern Europe.

## The Big Two

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and U.S. President **Franklin D. Roosevelt** meet at the Casablanca conference in Morocco, January 1943. The two leaders had a remarkable personal relationship that shaped the outcome of World War II and the course of history. They met in person nine times over the course of the war. “It is fun to be in the same decade with you,” FDR cabled to Churchill after one of their meetings. As for Churchill, who was desperate for American aid in the struggle against Hitler, he once commented that “No lover ever studied the whims of his mistress as I did those of Franklin Roosevelt.”



Getty Images

Chapter 35: America in World War II 1941–1945: 35-12 D-Day: June 6, 1944

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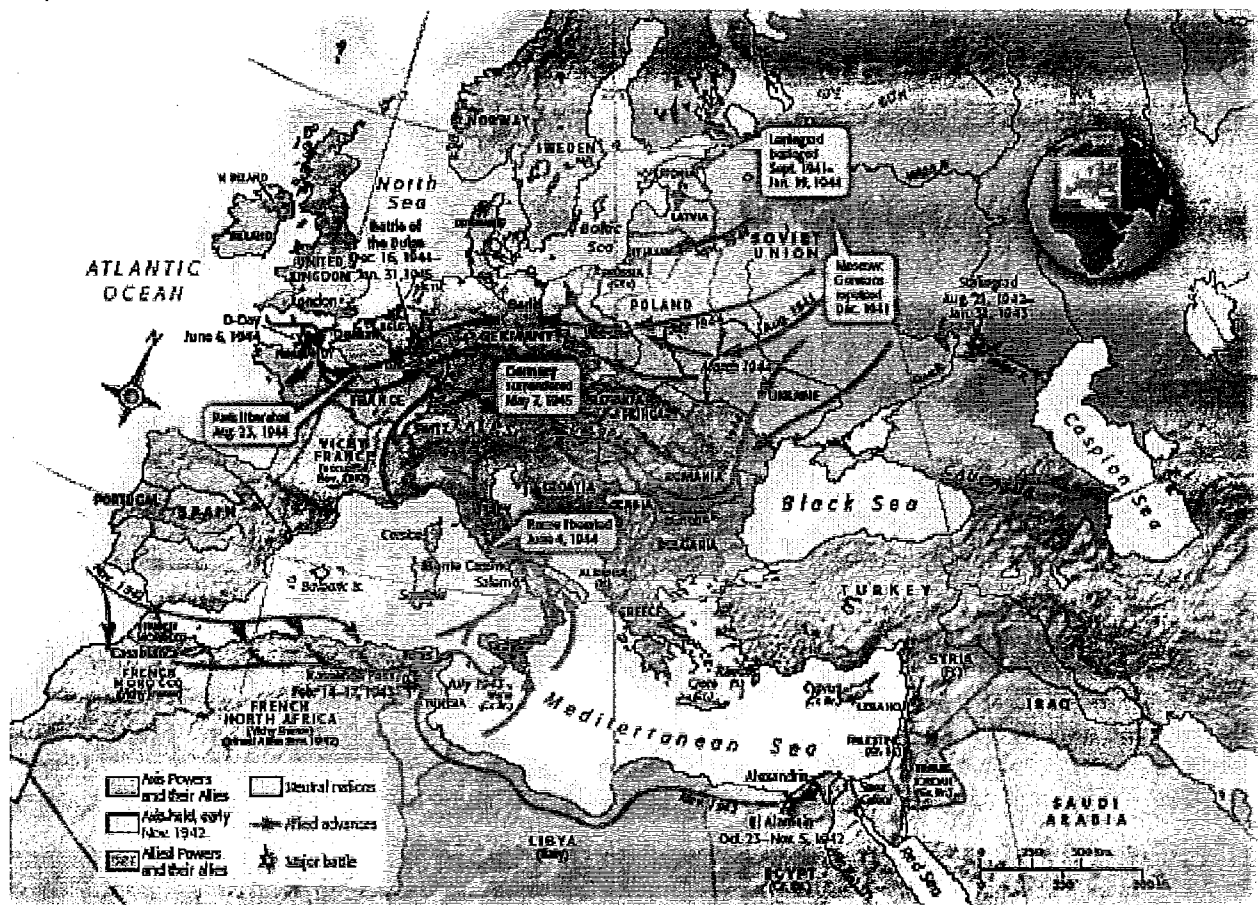
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## 35-12 D-Day: June 6, 1944

## Map 35.4

## World War II in Europe and North Africa, 1939–1945



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## Allies Landing in Normandy, June 6, 1944

Nine-foot ocean swells on invasion day made loading the assault landing craft, such as the one pictured here, treacherous business. Many men were injured or tossed into the sea as the bathtublike amphibious vessels bobbed wildly up and down alongside the troop transports. As the vulnerable boats churned toward the beach, some officers led their tense, grim-faced troops in prayer. One major, recalling the remarkable Battle of Agincourt in 1415, quoted from Shakespeare's *Henry V*: "He that outlives this day, and comes safe home / Will stand a tip-toe when this day is named."

vice president and desired a renomination. But conservative Democrats distrusted him as an ill-balanced and unpredictable liberal. A “ditch Wallace” move developed tremendous momentum, despite the popularity of Wallace with large numbers of voters and many of the delegates. With Roosevelt's blessing, the vice-presidential nomination finally went to smiling and self-assured Senator Harry S Truman of Missouri (“the new Missouri Compromise”). Hitherto inconspicuous, he had recently attained national visibility as the efficient chairman of a Senate committee conducting an investigation of wasteful war expenditures. Nobody had much against him or on him.

Chapter 35: America in World War II 1941–1945: 35-14 Roosevelt Defeats Dewey

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## 35-14 Roosevelt Defeats Dewey

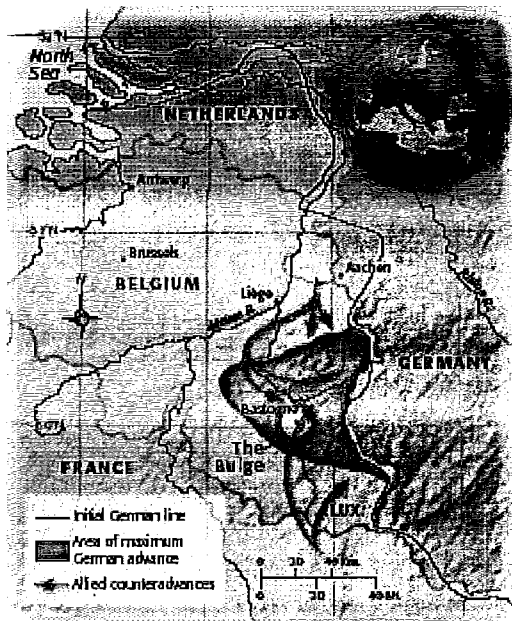
A dynamic Dewey took the offensive, for Roosevelt was too consumed with directing the war to spare much time for speechmaking. The vigorous young “crime buster,” with his beautiful baritone voice and polished diction, denounced the tired and quarrelsome “old men” in Washington. He proclaimed repeatedly that after “twelve long years” of New Dealism, it was “time for a change.” As for the war, Dewey would not alter the basic strategy but would fight it better—a type of “metooism” ridiculed by the Democrats. The fourth-term issue did not figure prominently, now that the ice had been broken by Roosevelt's third term. But “Dewey-eyed” Republicans half-humorously professed to fear fifth and sixth terms by the “lifer” in the White House.

In the closing weeks of the campaign, Roosevelt left his desk for the stump. He was stung by certain Republican charges, including criticism that he had sent a U.S. Navy destroyer to retrieve his pet Scottie dog, Fala. He was also eager to show himself, even in chilling rains, to spike well-founded rumors of failing health.

Substantial assistance came from the new political action committee of the CIO, which was organized to get around the law banning the direct use of union funds for political purposes. Zealous CIO members, branded as communists by the Republicans, rang countless doorbells and asked, with pointed reference to the recent depression, “What were you doing in 1932?” At times Roosevelt seemed to be running again against Hoover. As in every one of his previous three campaigns, FDR was opposed by a majority of the newspapers, which were owned chiefly by Republicans. Roosevelt, as customary, won a sweeping victory: 432 to 99 in the Electoral College; 25,606,585 to 22,014,745 in the popular vote. Elated, he quipped that “the first twelve years are the hardest.”

Roosevelt won primarily because the war was going well. A winning pitcher is not ordinarily pulled from the game. Foreign policy was a decisive factor with untold thousands of voters, who concluded that Roosevelt's experienced hand was needed in fashioning a future organization for world peace. The dapper Dewey, cruelly dubbed “the little man on top of the wedding cake,” had spoken smoothly of international cooperation, but his isolationist running mate, Bricker, had implanted serious doubts. The Republican party was still suffering from the taint of isolationism fastened on it by the Hardingites.





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In March 1945, forward-driving American troops reached Germany's Rhine River, where, by incredibly good luck, they found one strategic bridge undemolished. Pressing their advantage, General Eisenhower's troops reached the Elbe River in April 1945. There, a short distance south of Berlin, American and Soviet advance guards dramatically clasped hands amid cries of "*Amerikanskie tovarishchi*" (American comrades). The conquering Americans were horrified to find blood-spattered and still-stinking concentration camps, where the German Nazis had engaged in the scientific mass murder of "undesirables," including an estimated 6 million Jews. The Washington government had long been informed about Hitler's campaign of genocide against the Jews and had been reprehensibly slow to take steps against it. Roosevelt's administration had bolted the door against large numbers of Jewish refugees, and his military commanders declined even to bomb the rail lines that carried the victims to the camps. But until the war's end, the full dimensions of the "Holocaust" had not been known. When the details were revealed, the whole world was aghast.

## Examining the Evidence

### Franklin Roosevelt at Tehran, 1943

In late 1943 the "Big Three" wartime leaders—British prime minister Winston Churchill, American president Franklin Roosevelt, and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin—gathered together for the first time. They met amid growing Soviet frustration with the British and Americans for their failure thus far to open a "second front" against Germany in Western Europe, while the Soviets continued to suffer horrendous losses in the savage fighting in eastern Europe. American military planners were eager to open a second front as soon as possible, but the British, who would necessarily have to supply most of the troops until America was fully mobilized, balked. Tension among the three leaders over the second-front plan—code-named OVERLORD, the operation that resulted in the Anglo-American invasion of Normandy on "D-Day," June 6, 1944—is evident in this report of their discussions in

nevertheless the United States does not feel that OVERLORD should be put off.

THE PRESIDENT questioned whether it would not be possible for the ad hoc committee to go ahead with their deliberations without any further directive and to produce an answer by tomorrow morning.

MARSHAL STALIN questioned, "What can such a committee do?" He said, "We Chiefs of State have more power and more authority than a committee. General Brooke cannot force our opinions and there are many questions which can be decided only by us." He said he would like to ask if the British are thinking seriously of OVERLORD only in order to satisfy the U.S.S.R.

THE PRIME MINISTER replied that if the conditions specified at Moscow regarding OVERLORD should exist, he firmly believed it would be England's duty to hurl every ounce of strength she had across the Channel at the Germans.

THE PRESIDENT observed that in an hour a very good dinner would be awaiting all and people would be very hungry. He suggested that the staffs should meet tomorrow morning and discuss the matter....

Source: FDR Library

## The Horror of the Holocaust

Although the outside world had some knowledge of the Nazi death camps before the war's end, the full revelation of Hitler's atrocities as the Allies overran Germany in the spring of 1945 stunned and sickened the invading troops. At General Eisenhower's orders, German civilians were compelled to view the evidence of the Nazi regime's genocidal crimes—though these witnesses at Buchenwald tried to look the other way, as many had done during the war itself.

Giant bomber attacks were more spectacular. Launched from Saipan and other captured Mariana Islands, they were reducing the enemy's fragile cities to cinders. The massive firebomb raid on Tokyo, March 9–10, 1945, was annihilating. It destroyed over 250,000 buildings, gutted a quarter of the city, and killed an estimated 83,000 people—a loss comparable to that later inflicted by the atomic bombs.

General MacArthur was also on the move. Completing the conquest of jungle-draped New Guinea, he headed northwest for the Philippines, en route to Japan, with 600 ships and 250,000 men. In a scene well staged for the photographers, he splashed ashore at Leyte Island on October 20, 1944, with the summons, “People of the Philippines, I have returned. ... Rally to me.”

Japan's navy—still menacing—now made one last-chance effort to destroy MacArthur by wiping out his transports and supply ships. A gigantic clash at Leyte Gulf, fought on the sea and in the air, was actually three battles (October 23–26, 1944). The Americans won all of them, though the crucial engagement was almost lost when Admiral William F. (“Bull”) Halsey was decoyed away by a feint.

Japan was through as a sea power: it had lost about sixty ships in the greatest naval battle of all time. American fleets, numbering more than four thousand vessels, now commanded the western Pacific. Several battleships, raised from the mud of Pearl Harbor, were exacting belated but sweet revenge.

Overrunning Leyte, MacArthur next landed on the main Philippine island of Luzon in January 1945. Manila was his major objective; the ravaged city fell in March, but the Philippines were not conquered until July. Victory was purchased only after bitter fighting against holed-in Japanese, who took a toll of over sixty thousand American casualties.

America's steel vise was tightening mercilessly around Japan. The tiny island of Iwo Jima, needed as a haven for damaged American bombers returning from Japan, was captured in March 1945. This desperate twenty-five-day assault cost over four thousand American dead.

Okinawa, a well-defended Japanese island, was next on the list: it was needed for closer bases from which to blast and burn enemy cities and industries. Fighting dragged on from April to June of 1945. Japanese soldiers, fighting with incredible courage from their caves, finally sold Okinawa for fifty thousand American casualties, while suffering far heavier losses themselves.

The U.S. Navy, which covered the invasion of Okinawa, sustained severe damage. Japanese suicide pilots (“kamikazes”) in an exhibition of mass hara-kiri for their god-emperor, crashed their bomb-laden planes onto the decks of the invading fleet. All told, the death squads sank over thirty ships and badly damaged scores more.



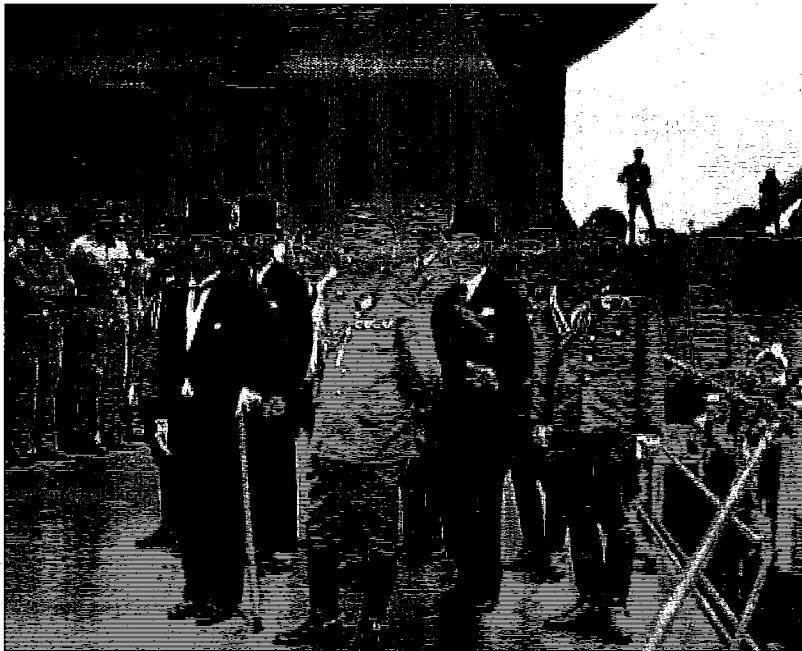
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The Potsdam conference (From July 17 to August 2, 1945, President Harry S Truman met with Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and British leaders Winston Churchill and later Clement Attlee (when the Labour party defeated Churchill's Conservative party) near Berlin to deliver an ultimatum to Japan: surrender or be destroyed.) , held near Berlin in July 1945, sounded the death knell of the Japanese. There President Truman, still new on his job, met in a seventeen-day parley with Joseph Stalin and the British leaders. The conferees issued a stern ultimatum to Japan: surrender or be destroyed. American bombers showered the dire warning on Japan in tens of thousands of leaflets, but no encouraging response was forthcoming.

America had a fantastic ace up its sleeve. Early in 1940, after Hitler's wanton assault on Poland, Roosevelt was persuaded by American and exiled scientists, notably German-born Albert Einstein, to push ahead with preparations for unlocking the secret of an atomic bomb. Congress, at Roosevelt's blank-check request, blindly made available nearly \$2 billion. Many military minds were skeptical of this "damned professor's nonsense," but fears that the Germans might first acquire such an awesome weapon provided a powerful spur to action. Ironically, Germany eventually abandoned its own atomic project as too costly. And as it happened, the war against Germany ended before the American weapon was ready. In a cruel twist of fate, Japan—not Germany, the original target—suffered the fate of being the first nation subjected to atomic bombardment.

What was called the Manhattan Project (Code name for the American commission established in 1942 to develop the atomic bomb. The first experimental bomb was detonated on July 16, 1945, in the desert of New Mexico. Atomic bombs were then dropped on two cities in Japan in hopes of bringing the war to an end: Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and Nagasaki on August 9, 1945.) pushed feverishly forward, as American know-how and industrial power were combined with the most advanced scientific knowledge. Much technical skill was provided by British and refugee scientists, who had fled to America to escape the torture chambers of the dictators. Finally, in the desert near Alamogordo, New

1945. General Douglas MacArthur then made a conciliatory address, expressing hope “that from this solemn occasion a better world shall emerge ... a world founded on faith and understanding.” A Japanese diplomat attending wondered “whether it would have been possible for us, had we been victorious, to embrace the vanquished with a similar magnanimity.” Soon thereafter General MacArthur took up his duties as director of the U.S. occupation of Japan.



AP Photo

Chapter 35: America in World War II 1941–1945: 35-18 The Allies Triumphant  
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## 35-18 The Allies Triumphant

World War II proved to be terribly costly. American forces suffered some 1 million casualties, more than one-third of which were deaths. Compared with other wars, the proportion killed by wounds and disease was sharply reduced, owing in part to the use of blood plasma and “miracle” drugs, notably penicillin. Yet heavy though American losses were, the Soviet allies suffered casualties many times greater—more than 25 million people killed. In grim testimony to the nature of modern warfare, World War II was the first war that killed more civilians than armed combatants (see “Thinking Globally: America and the World in Depression and War: A Study in Contrasts,”).

Thinking Globally

**America and the World in Depression and War: A Study in Contrasts**

The Great Depression of the 1930s was a monstrous, planetary-scale economic



FDR Library

Meanwhile, Hitler was relentlessly building his war machine, while FDR's America clung stubbornly to its traditional isolationism. And when the great conflict of World War II finally erupted, Hitler's Germany and Roosevelt's America fought decidedly different wars. Indeed the United States' experience in the war stands in vivid contrast to the experience of *all* other combatants, including not only Germany but also America's allies in the "Grand Alliance."

Hitler's vaunted "thousand-year Reich" lay in smoldering ruins at war's end, his people dazed, demoralized, and starving. The strutting Führer had brewed a catastrophe so vast that its conclusion seemed to sunder the web of time itself. Germans remember the moment of their surrender on May 7, 1945, as the *Stunde null*, or "zero hour," when history's clock came to a fearful halt. Elsewhere, even America's main wartime partners, Great Britain and the Soviet Union, had paid a far greater price in blood and treasure than the United States. Uniquely among all the belligerents in World War II—perhaps uniquely in the history of warfare—the United States had managed to grow its civilian economy even while waging a hugely costly war. In Germany, Britain, and the Soviet Union, the civilian standard of living had gone down by approximately one-third. In the United States, the civilian economy had actually expanded by 15 percent, preparing the way for phenomenal prosperity in the postwar decades.

### **German Chancellor Adolf Hitler**

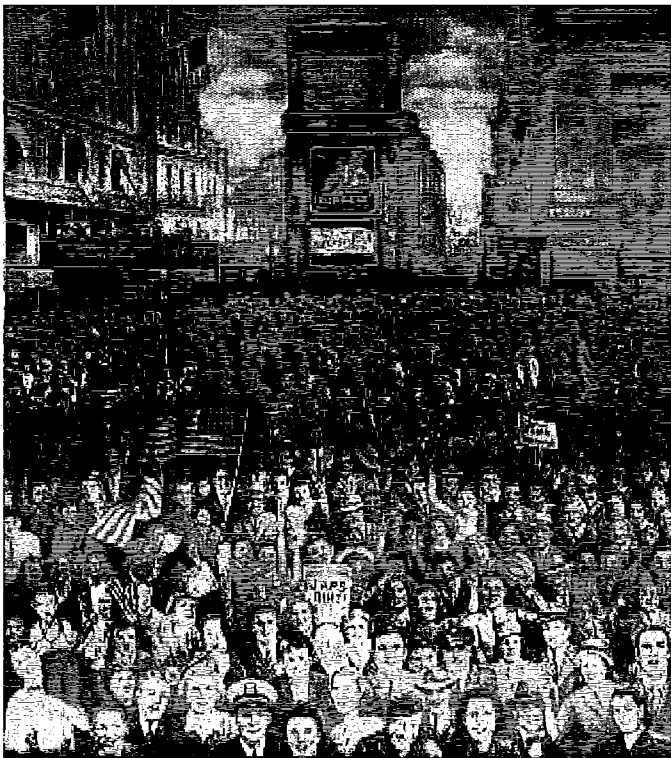
Germany (including Austria)	3,500,000	1,600,000	\$272 billion	\$50–\$75 billion
Italy	242,000	60,000	\$94 billion	
Japan	2,000,000	650,000		

Sources: *World War II casualty estimates vary widely. The figures here are largely taken from David M. Kennedy, ed., The Library of Congress World War II Companion; I. C. B. Dear, ed., The Oxford Companion to the Second World War; Louis L. Snyder, Historical Guide to World War II; and John Ellis, World War II: A Statistical Survey.*

For all the misery that depression and war visited upon the United States, Americans could count their blessings that fortune had spared them the enormous deprivations and horrors that were all too common elsewhere. Yet some observers worried that America was now assuming leadership in a world where the depths of other peoples' wounds and woes could scarcely be imagined.

### V-J Day: Crowds Cheering at Times Square, by Edward Dancig, 1947

Russian-born American artist Edward Dancig captured the feelings of triumph and relief that Americans felt at the end of World War II. His painting shows the V-J (Victory in Japan) Day celebration of August 15, 1945, in New York's Times Square.



D. Wigmore Fine Art Ltd

by 1945, and therefore history's most awful weapons—especially the second bomb, on Nagasaki—were unnecessary to bring the war to a conclusion. Still other scholars, notably Gar Alperovitz, have further charged that the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not the last shots of World War II, but the first salvos in the emerging Cold War. Alperovitz argues that President Truman willfully ignored Tokyo's attempts to negotiate a surrender in the summer of 1945 and rejected all alternatives to dropping the bomb because he wanted to intimidate and isolate the Soviet Union. He unleashed his horrible new weapons, so this argument goes, not simply to defeat Japan, but to end the Far eastern conflict before the Soviets could enter it, and thereby freeze them out of any role in formulating post-war reconstruction policy in Asia.

Each of these accusations has been vigorously rebutted. Richard Rhodes's exhaustive history of the making of the atomic bomb emphasizes that the Anglo-American atomic project began as a race against the Germans, who were known to be actively pursuing a nuclear weapons program. (Unknown to the Americans, Germany effectively terminated its effort in 1942, just as the Anglo-American project went into high gear.) From the outset both British and American planners believed that the bomb, if successful, would be not just another weapon, but *the* ultimate instrument of destruction that would decisively deliver victory into the hands of whoever possessed it. They consequently assumed that it would be used at the earliest possible moment. There is, therefore, no credible reason to conclude that German cities would not have suffered the fate of Hiroshima and Nagasaki if nuclear weapons had become available sooner or if the European phase of the war had lasted longer.

It is true that American intelligence sources in the early summer of 1945 reported that some Japanese statesmen were trying to enlist the still-neutral Russians' good offices to negotiate a surrender. But as R. J. C. Butow's fine-grained study of Japan's decision to surrender demonstrates, it was unclear whether those initiatives had the full backing of the Japanese government. Moreover, the Japanese clung to several unacceptable conditions, including protection for their imperial system of government, the right to disarm and repatriate their own troops, no military occupation of the home islands, no international trials of alleged war criminals, and possible retention of some of their conquered territories. All this flew squarely in the face of America's repeatedly declared intention to settle for nothing less than *unconditional* surrender. As for the Nagasaki bomb (dropped on August 9), Butow also notes that it conclusively dispelled the Japanese government's original assessment that the Hiroshima attack (on August 6) was a one-time-only stunt, with little likelihood of further nuclear strikes to follow. (even then, some diehard military officers, refusing to acknowledge defeat, tried, on the night of August 14, to storm the Imperial Palace to seize the recording of the emperor's surrender announcement before it could be broadcast the following day.)

Could the use of the atomic bombs have been avoided? Studies by Martin J. Sherwin, Barton J. Bernstein, and McGeorge Bundy have shown that few policymakers at the time seriously asked that question. As Winston Churchill later wrote, "The decision whether or not to use the atomic bomb to compel the



nation's war machine. The WPB had sweeping powers over the U.S. economy and was abolished in November 1945 soon after Japan's defeat.)

- **Office of Price Administration (OPA)** (A critically important wartime agency charged with regulating the consumer economy through rationing scarce supplies, such as automobiles, tires, fuel, nylon, and sugar, and by curbing inflation by setting ceilings on the price of goods. Rents were controlled as well in parts of the country overwhelmed by war workers. The OPA was extended after World War II ended to continue the fight against inflation, but was abolished in 1947.)
- **National War Labor Board (NWLB)** (Established by President **Franklin D. Roosevelt** to act as an arbitration tribunal and mediate disputes between labor and management that might have led to war stoppages and thereby undermined the war effort. The NWLB was also charged with adjusting wages with an eye to controlling inflation.)
- **Smith-Connally Anti-Strike Act** (Passed amidst worries about the effects that labor strikes would have on war production, this law allowed the federal government to seize and operate plants threatened by labor disputes. It also criminalized strike action against government-run companies.)
- **WACs (Women's Army Corps)** (The women's branches of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Coast Guard, established during World War II to employ women in noncombatant jobs. Women now participated in the armed services in ways that went beyond their traditional roles as nurses.)
- **WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service)** (The women's branches of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Coast Guard, established during World War II to employ women in noncombatant jobs. Women now participated in the armed services in ways that went beyond their traditional roles as nurses.)
- **SPARs (U.S. Coast Guard Women's Reserve)** (The women's branches of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Coast Guard, established during World War II to employ women in noncombatant jobs. Women now participated in the armed services in ways that went beyond their traditional roles as nurses.)
- **Bracero program** (Program established by agreement with the Mexican government to recruit temporary Mexican agricultural workers to the United States to make up for wartime labor shortages in the Far West. The program persisted until 1964, by when it had sponsored 4.5 million border crossings.)
- **Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC)** (Threatened with a massive "Negro March on Washington" to demand equal job opportunities in war jobs and in the military, **Franklin D. Roosevelt's** administration issued an executive order forbidding racial discrimination in all defense plants operating under contract with the federal government. The FEPC was intended to monitor compliance with the

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## Chapter Review

### 35-19c Chronology

- 1941     United States declares war on Japan  
          Germany declares war on United States  
          Randolph plans black march on Washington  
          Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) established  
          Roosevelt delivers “Four Freedoms” speech
- 
- 1942     Japanese Americans sent to internment camps  
          Japan conquers the Philippines  
          Battle of the Coral Sea  
          Battle of Midway  
          United States invades North Africa  
          Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) founded
- 
- 1943     Allies hold Casablanca conference  
          Allies invade Italy  
          Smith-Connally Anti-Strike Act  
          “Zoot-suit” riots in Los Angeles  
          Race riot in Detroit  
          Japanese driven from Guadalcanal  
          Tehran conference
- 
- 1944     *Korematsu v. U.S.*  
          D-Day invasion of France  
          Battle of the Marianas  
          Roosevelt defeats Dewey for presidency
- 
- 1944–1945     Battle of the Bulge
- 
- 1945     Roosevelt dies; Truman assumes presidency

**Ronald T. Takaki**, *Double Victory: A Multicultural History of America in World War II* (2000)

**Isabel Wilkerson**, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (2010)

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### 35-19e

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