

CHAPTER 35

The Second World War**TIME LINE**

- 1939 Germany invades Poland
Great Britain and France declare war on Germany
- 1940 The Germans conquer Denmark and Norway The Germans overrun the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg
Italy enters the war as Germany's ally
France signs an armistice with Germany
The German *Luftwaffe* begins the Battle of Britain
The Italians invade Egypt and Greece
- 1941 The Germans send Rommel's Afrika Korps to North Africa
The Germans overrun Yugoslavia and Greece
Germany invades the Soviet Union
The Japanese attack Pearl Harbor
The Red Army defeats the Germans in the Battle of Moscow
- 1942 The Japanese take the Philippines and advance into Southeast Asia
American marines land on Guadalcanal, beginning the island-hopping campaign in the Pacific
American and British forces land in French North Africa
- 1943 Roosevelt and Churchill meet at Casablanca The Battle of Stalingrad ends in a German defeat German and Italian forces in Tunisia surrender to the Allies
American and British troops invade Sicily and Italy
Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin meet at Teheran
- 1944 The Western Allies launch the invasion of Normandy
General Douglas MacArthur's troops land in the Philippines
- 1945 Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin meet at Yalta Germany surrenders

The Second World War was truly a global conflict. During its first years, from 1939 to 1942, the Axis powers – Germany, Italy, and Japan – won a series of impressive victories in Europe, North Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. Then the tide began to turn as the Allies, led by the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, pushed forward to victory.

Hitler's March of Conquest, 1939-1940**The Polish Campaign**

The Second World War began with Germany's attack on Poland on September 1, 1939, and the British and French declarations of war on Germany two days later. In their onslaught against Poland, the Germans

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demonstrated the effectiveness of their *Blitzkrieg* (“lightning war”) technique, the use of tanks and airplanes to support the infantry. In less than a month, Poland was crushed. In accordance with his pact with Hitler, Stalin invaded Poland from the east on September 17. At the end of the month, the Germans and Soviets partitioned Poland.

The Soviet Sphere of Influence

While the Soviets stood apart from the main conflict, they moved to establish a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe.

On November 30, 1939, the Soviet Union began the Winter War against Finland. While the Finns resisted with bravery and determination, they could not repel the overwhelming power of the Red Army. When the war ended in March 1940, Finland was forced to cede some 16,000 square miles of territory to the Soviet Union, primarily in Karelia near the Soviet city of Leningrad.

In the spring of 1940, the Soviets annexed the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania). They also forced Rumania to cede the province of Bessarabia.

The Phony War

The war in the West during the winter of 1939-1940 became known as the Phony War. Hitler did not carry out his anticipated offensive against France, nor did the Anglo-French Allies move against Germany. From their experience in World War I, the French had concluded that in a future war the advantage would lie with the defense. They had built the Maginot Line, a line of fortifications along their frontier with Germany, and hoped to be able to repulse a German attack.

Hitler’s Scandinavian Campaign

On April 9, 1940, the Germans invaded Denmark and Norway. This move into Scandinavia was designed to provide a secure route for the shipment of iron ore from neutral Sweden through Norway’s coastal waters to Germany.

The Germans occupied Denmark almost immediately. In Norway, the Germans had the assistance of Vidkun Quisling (1887-1945), a pro-Nazi Norwegian, whose name quickly became a synonym for traitor. The British failed in their effort to relieve Norway.

Britain’s failure in Scandinavia led to a debate in the House of Commons on Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain’s conduct of the war. Facing considerable opposition, Chamberlain stepped down. On May 10, 1940,

Winston Churchill (1874-1965) became prime minister. Earlier, in March, Paul Reynaud (1878-1966) had replaced Edouard Daladier (1884-1970) as France's premier.

The War in the West, 1940

On May 10, 1940, Hitler's long-awaited assault on Western Europe began, as the Germans overran Luxembourg and invaded the Netherlands and Belgium. The attack on the Low Countries outflanked the Maginot Line.

Surrender of the Netherlands and Belgium

Once again, the German *Blitzkrieg* proved irresistible. The Netherlands fell after five days. When Belgium surrendered at the end of May, a large Allied army was left stranded along the Belgian-French border near the English Channel. Between May 26 and June 4, the British succeeded in evacuating some 338,000 troops, two-thirds of them British, from the beaches of Dunkirk.

The Fall of France

On June 5, the Battle of France began. On June 10, Italy entered the war. When the war began, Italy, unprepared to fight a major war, had declared its non-belligerency. Mussolini had grown jealous of Hitler's gains, however, and wanted to share in the spoils of victory.

On June 14, the Germans took Paris. The French government had fled south, and on June 16, after the French cabinet decided to seek an armistice, Premier Reynaud resigned. France's new government, headed by Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain (1856-1951), signed an armistice with the Germans on June 22.

The Vichy Government

Under the terms of the armistice, Germany occupied northern and western France. Unoccupied France was ruled by a collaborationist government, headed by Pétain, with its capital at Vichy in central France.

The Free French

On the eve of the French surrender, General Charles de Gaulle (1890-1970) went to London, where he established the Free French movement, a government-in-exile committed to continuing the war.

The Battles of Britain and the Atlantic

The Battle of Britain

After the fall of France, Great Britain stood alone in the struggle against Hitler's Germany.

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The RAF Against the Luftwaffe

Hitler began planning for Operation Sea Lion, his invasion of England. In order for the Germans to launch this invasion, it would be necessary for the *Luftwaffe*, the German air force, to win control of the airspace over the English Channel and southern England. During the first phase of the Battle of Britain, in August and September 1940, the *Luftwaffe* attempted to destroy Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF) and its bases. The RAF benefited from both the courage and determination of its pilots and from the newly invented radar warning system. The Germans suffered heavy losses.

The Bombing of British Cities

Frustrated in their effort to win control of the air, the Germans bombed London and other British cities in an effort to destroy industry and to weaken civilian morale. The effort failed.

Hitler's Diversion to Russia

Hitler was not unduly troubled by his failure in the Battle of Britain. By the late summer of 1940, the Nazi leader was already deeply involved in his planning for Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union scheduled for the spring of 1941. He believed that the British might soon be forced to make peace on his terms. If they did not, they would have no choice but to surrender once the Soviets had been defeated.

The Battle of the Atlantic

The German submarine fleet in the North Atlantic presented a serious threat to Great Britain. The ability of the British to remain in the war depended on imports of food and war materials, but German submarines were sinking Allied shipping faster than it could be replaced.

American Aid to Great Britain

Following the fall of France, the United States increased its assistance to Great Britain. In September 1940, the United States gave fifty old American destroyers to the British in exchange for ninety-nine-year leases on British bases in the Western Hemisphere. The Lend-Lease Act of March 1941 authorized the President to provide aid to "any country whose defense the President deems vital to the defense of the United States." In September, American ships began to convoy British ships in the North Atlantic, and during September and October, German submarines sank one American destroyer and attacked two others.

Following the American entry into the war in December 1941, the United States stepped up its efforts in the Battle of the Atlantic.

Allied Victory in the Atlantic

The first turning point in the Battle of the Atlantic came in November 1942, the last month in which the Allied loss of ships exceeded new construction. The second came in May 1943, the first time the Germans lost more submarines than they were able to put into service.

Victory in the Atlantic made possible the unimpeded shipment of manpower and supplies from the United States to the European and Mediterranean theaters of war.

The War in the Mediterranean

North African Campaigns

Italian Failures in Africa

Italy's entry into the war endangered British control of the eastern Mediterranean. In September 1940, the Italians invaded Egypt from their colony in Libya, hoping to advance to the Suez Canal. The British drove the invaders back. Early in 1941, the British conquered Italy's East African Empire, occupying Italian Somaliland, Eritrea, and Ethiopia.

Rommel's Campaign

In order to stave off an Italian collapse in North Africa, the Germans, in early 1941, dispatched the Afrika Korps, commanded by Field Marshal Erwin Rommel(1891-1944), nicknamed the Desert Fox. In April 1941, Rommel's troops and their Italian allies renewed the attack, pushing the British back into Egypt. At this point, Hitler was committed in the Balkans and was preparing his assault on the Soviet Union. Reinforcements were not sent to Rommel, who was unable to follow up on his successful advance.

During late 1941 and early 1942, the British again moved into Libya. An Axis counterattack pushed them back, however, and by summer, Rommel had reached El Alamein, about sixty miles west of Alexandria, posing a serious threat to the Suez Canal. By this time, Hitler was deeply involved in a new offensive in Russia, and once again reinforcements were not sent to Rommel. In late October, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's (1887-1976) British Eighth Army counterattacked, forcing Rommel's forces to retreat.

Allied Victory in North Africa

On November 8, 1942, Anglo-American forces, commanded by General Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890-1969), carried out Operation Torch, the invasion of Morocco and Algeria in French North Africa. The German and Italian defenders were caught in a squeeze as Eisenhower's forces advanced

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from the west and the British pressed forward from the east. In May 1943, the remaining 250,000 Axis defenders surrendered in Tunisia.

The Invasion of Sicily and Italy

Downfall of Mussolini

Victory in North Africa led to the Anglo-American decision to invade Sicily and Italy. The invasion of Sicily in July 1943 was followed by the Italians' overthrow of Mussolini the same month. Conquering Sicily, the American and British armies invaded Italy at the beginning of September. The new Italian government surrendered on September 3. The Germans had anticipated the surrender, however, and quickly took control of about two-thirds of the country.

The Italian Campaign

For the Allies, the Italian campaign proved long and frustrating. The Allies did not take Rome until June 4, 1944, only two days before the invasion of Normandy. The war in Italy lasted until the spring of 1945, ending only a few days before the final German surrender.

Hitler's Balkan Campaign

Just as Mussolini's defeat in Egypt drew the Germans into North Africa, so, too, did Italian setbacks pull Hitler into the Balkans in early 1941.

Having watched Hitler's march of conquest in the spring of 1940, Mussolini decided to achieve some victories of his own, and in October 1940, he invaded Greece from bases in Italian-occupied Albania. The Greeks counterattacked, threatening to drive the Italians into the sea. To save Mussolini, in April 1941 the Germans overran Greece and Yugoslavia.

The Russo-German War

The Invasion of the Soviet Union

Early German Victories

On June 22, 1941, Hitler's armies invaded the Soviet Union, advancing on three fronts: toward Leningrad in the north, toward Moscow in the center, and into the Ukraine in the south. In mid-July, the Germans took Smolensk, the traditional gateway to Moscow, and the 900-day siege of Leningrad began in early September. In mid-September, the Germans captured Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine.

Soviet Counterattack

The deterioration of Japanese-American relations in the autumn of 1941 enabled the Soviets to move troops from the Manchurian border to the

defense of Moscow. On December 6, 1941, Soviet forces led by Marshal Georgi Zhukov (1896-1974) counterattacked and drove the Germans back from fifty to one hundred miles before the front was stabilized in early 1942.

Campaigns of 1942 and 1943

Battle of Stalingrad

In the spring of 1942, the Germans launched a new offensive directed toward two objectives: the oil-rich Caucasus, lying between the Black and the Caspian seas, and the city of Stalingrad on the Volga River. While the Germans pushed into the Caucasus, they did not succeed in reaching the oil fields. At Stalingrad, the German attackers and Soviet defenders became engaged in one of the war's bloodiest battles. In early 1943, the remnants of the German Sixth Army surrendered.

Soviet Counterattack

In the early summer of 1943, the Germans launched their final offensive in the Soviet Union. A few days later, the Soviets counterattacked. By the end of the year, the Red Army had recaptured two-thirds of the Soviet territory the Germans had occupied.

The War in Europe During 1944 and 1945

The Air War Against Germany

By 1944, increased American aircraft production made it possible for the United States Army Air Force to put thousands of heavy bombers and escort fighters into the skies over Germany. The Americans specialized in daylight, high-altitude precision bombing, hitting at key targets, including facilities for the production of synthetic gasoline and rubber, aircraft factories, ball-bearing works, submarine bases, railroads, and electric power stations. The British Royal Air Force (RAF) concentrated on night area bombing.

Allied bombing did heavy damage to Germany's cities and economy. However, the bombing was not decisive. Victory over the Germans was not won by air raids but rather on the fields of battle.

The Normandy Invasion

By 1944, an Allied victory was in sight. In Italy, American and British troops continued their slow advance, while the Red Army pushed into the Baltic States, Poland, and the Balkans.

On D day, June 6, 1944, American, British, and Canadian forces commanded by General Eisenhower opened the Second Front in France.

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Operation Overlord, the invasion of Normandy, was the largest amphibious operation in history.

Attempted Assassination of Hitler

On July 20, 1944, German military and civilian opponents of the Nazi tyranny attempted to kill Hitler. The *Führer* survived and ordered vicious reprisals against his would-be assassins.

Allied Advance in France

As Eisenhower's troops began to push toward Paris, other Allied forces carried out Operation Dragoon (earlier called Operation Anvil), landing August 15 on the coast of southern France between Marseilles and Nice, and began to advance northward through the Rhone valley.

Following the liberation of Paris on August 25, Allied troops pushed into the Low Countries and toward the Rhine River frontier between Germany and France.

The Eastern Front

On the eastern front, by mid-September 1944, the Red Army had advanced to a line running through the Baltic states to the Vistula River east of Warsaw, southward to the Carpathian Mountains, and into the Balkans as far as Sofia, Bulgaria. Germany's allies, Finland, Rumania, and Bulgaria, had dropped out of the war.

The Battle of the Bulge

It seemed that the European war might be over by the end of 1944, but this assessment proved to be optimistic. It discounted both the determination and the ability of the Germans to continue their resistance.

The Germans launched a powerful counterattack against the advancing Americans in the Ardennes Forest in Belgium in December 1944. In the Battle of the Bulge, the Germans pushed the Americans back, but they were not able to achieve a breakthrough.

The End of the European War

In mid-January 1945, the Soviets took Warsaw. The Red Army's advance continued, halting temporarily when it reached the Oder River about forty miles from Berlin during the first days of February.

In early March 1945, American troops captured the last remaining intact bridge across the Rhine at Remagen. Allied forces were now pouring into Germany. American and Soviet forces met on the Elbe on April 25, while on

the eastern front, the Red Army moved through Hungary and into Austria, seizing Vienna on April 13.

At the end of April, Germany's armies in Italy surrendered. Italian partisans seized Mussolini, murdering him on April 28.

The Red Army entered Berlin on April 19, and Adolf Hitler committed suicide in his bunker beneath the city on April 30. His successor, Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz (1891-1980), surrendered to the Allies on May 7.

The Holocaust

When the Allies advanced into Germany in the final months of the European war, the enormity of the Holocaust—Hitler's attempt to exterminate the Jews of Europe—became evident. Hatred of the Jews had been at the center of the Nazi leader's thought (see Chapter 32), but few had imagined that he would attempt to carry this hatred to such extreme lengths.

Hitler entrusted what was euphemistically called the Final Solution of the Jewish Question to Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945), the head of the SS. The *Einsatzgruppen*, special SS murder squads, followed the advancing German army into the Soviet Union in 1941, rounding up and murdering Jews.

As the Final Solution gathered momentum, concentration camps, which had originally been established for German political prisoners, were converted into death camps, and new extermination camps were built. The SS rounded up Jews throughout Nazi-occupied Europe and shipped them to these camps, often in cattle cars. Auschwitz, located in Poland, was the most notorious of the camps, but there were others: Dachau in southern Germany, Buchenwald in central Germany, and Mauthausen in Austria, among them. The SS often found recruits among the local populations, especially in areas that had a powerful tradition of anti-Semitism, including the Baltic states, Poland, the Soviet Ukraine, and Rumania.

By war's end, the Germans had killed 6 million Jews, two-thirds of Europe's Jewish population. Some 1.5 million of these victims were children.

The War Against Japan

Early Japanese Aggression

In the early 1930s, Japan seized Manchuria, and in July 1937, went to war against China. While the Japanese succeeded in conquering most of the coastal areas of China, their efforts to overrun the interior bogged down.

In early September 1940, Japanese forces occupied bases in the northern part of French Indochina. In the same month, Japan signed the Tripartite Pact, allying itself more closely with Germany and Italy.

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American Economic Pressure on Japan

In an attempt to contain the Japanese threat and to aid China, the United States began to apply economic pressure on Japan. In late September 1940, President Roosevelt imposed an embargo on the shipment of scrap iron and steel to Japan.

In July 1941, the Japanese occupied the rest of French Indochina, which suggested that they were pressing forward in their efforts to create what they called the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere. Roosevelt responded to Japan's action by freezing Japanese assets in the United States.

American economic sanctions confronted the Japanese with a dilemma. In order to get what it needed from the United States, Japan would have to cease its aggression. The alternative was for Japan to seize the oil resources of the Dutch East Indies, an action likely to evoke a strong American response.

Attack on Pearl Harbor

In October 1941, a prowar group led by General Hideki Tojo (1885-1948) took power in Japan. On December 7, Japanese aircraft attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The United States declared war on Japan the following day. On December 11, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States.

Early Japanese Victories

The Japanese moved quickly to conquer Hong Kong, the Philippines, British Malaya with its great port at Singapore, British Burma, and the Dutch East Indies. Advancing into New Guinea, the Japanese threatened Australia. In addition, the Japanese seized the American possessions of Guam and Wake islands in the Central Pacific.

Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway

Two important naval battles took place in the Pacific in the spring of 1942. The Battle of the Coral Sea, fought on May 7 and 8, was the first naval battle in history in which the ships did not directly engage one another; all of the fighting was done by carrier-based airplanes. While the battle ended in a draw, it removed the Japanese threat to Australia.

The Battle of Midway, fought in the Central Pacific from June 3 to 6, resulted in an American victory, which eliminated the threat to Hawaii.

American Island-Hopping

In the Pacific, the Americans carried the war closer to Japan by a campaign of island-hopping. From the summer of 1942 to 1944, the names

of Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Kwajalein, Eniwetok, and Saipan became permanently etched on the minds of a generation of Americans.

Return to the Philippines

On August 20, 1944, troops commanded by General Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964) landed in the Philippines. In late October, the Battle of Leyte Gulf was fought. The battle resulted in the destruction of most of what was left of Japan's naval power and gave the United States full control of the sea around the Philippines. The campaign in the Philippines ended with the fall of Manila to the Americans in February 1945.

Iwo Jima and Okinawa

American marines landed on Iwo Jima, in the Bonin Islands some 750 miles from Tokyo, on February 19, 1945. At the beginning of April, American army units invaded Okinawa in the Ryukyu Islands southwest of Japan. During this brutal battle, Japanese kamikaze (suicide) pilots crashed their planes into American ships.

The End of the War Against Japan

Possession of these islands enabled the United States to step up the air war against the Japanese home islands. American military planners believed, however, that Japan could be defeated only by an invasion, which was scheduled to begin about November 1, 1945. They estimated that this invasion would cost as many as 1 million American casualties.

The Atomic Bombs

Concern about heavy casualties was a major factor contributing to the American decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan. On August 6, 1945, the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. On August 9, a second atomic bomb hit Nagasaki. The following day, Emperor Hirohito (r. 1926-1989) decided that Japan had no choice other than to surrender. He set one condition: He must be permitted to keep his throne.

Japanese Surrender

The Allies agreed to accept Hirohito's condition, and the news of Japan's surrender became public on August 14. The formal surrender documents were signed on September 2 on board the American battleship *Missouri* anchored in Tokyo Bay. The Second World War had ended.

Allied Wartime Diplomacy

During the war, the Allies held a series of conferences where they discussed military operations and their plans for the postwar world.

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The Casablanca Conference

In January 1943, a few weeks following the Anglo-American invasion of French North Africa, Roosevelt and Churchill met at Casablanca in French Morocco. The two leaders agreed to demand the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers. In part, this decision resulted from a desire to reassure the Soviets that the Western powers would not attempt to make a separate peace with Hitler.

With victory in North Africa in sight, the two leaders agreed to move forward with an invasion of Sicily and Italy but not to abandon plans for the cross-Channel invasion of France favored by Roosevelt.

The Teheran Conference

In November–December 1943, Roosevelt and Churchill met with Stalin in Teheran, Iran. The three Allied leaders discussed the plans for the Second Front in Western Europe, scheduled for the spring.

At Teheran, Stalin made clear his determination to extend Soviet power in Eastern Europe following the war, while Roosevelt sought to overcome the Soviet leader's suspicions of the West in an effort to win his cooperation in the postwar world.

The Yalta Conference

In February 1945, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin met at Yalta in the Soviet Crimea in the most important of the wartime conferences.

Soviet Agreement to Enter the War Against Japan

The atomic bomb had not yet been developed, and Roosevelt was concerned about the number of casualties the United States might suffer in an invasion of Japan. In response to Roosevelt's appeal, Stalin agreed to enter the war against Japan within three months following the defeat of Germany. In return, the Soviet Union would acquire the southern half of Sakhalin Island, which Russia had lost to Japan in 1905, the Kurile Islands, and a sphere of influence in Manchuria. In addition, the Soviets would receive an occupation zone in northern Korea.

Occupation of Germany

At Yalta, the three leaders agreed to add France as an occupying power in Germany, dividing that country into four zones of occupation instead of three. Churchill was anxious to encourage France's recovery of its status as a great power, hoping that France would contribute to the reestablishment of a balance of power in Europe.

Agreement on Voting in the UN

Agreement was reached on voting procedures in the Security Council of the new United Nations organization, with each of the Security Council's five permanent members (the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, France, and China) to have a veto.

Disagreements on Poland

The question of Poland was the most difficult issue considered at Yalta. The United States and Great Britain maintained relations with the Polish government-in-exile located in London. The Soviets had broken relations with the London Poles after they refused to accept Moscow's demand to annex eastern Poland. 'When the Red Army entered Poland in 1944, the Soviets had established at Lublin a pro-Soviet, Communist-dominated government that agreed to Moscow's territorial demands.

At Yalta, Stalin agreed to permit a broadening of the Lublin government by adding to it representatives of the London Poles. The Polish government continued to be dominated by Communists, however, and the non-Communist representatives found themselves outnumbered and outmaneuvered. Stalin also promised to permit free elections in Poland, but they were never held.

While the Soviets annexed eastern Poland, the Poles were to be compensated by territory taken from Germany. No final commitments on this territorial compensation were made at Yalta, but the Soviets ultimately gave Poland the southern part of East Prussia-the Soviets annexed the northern part of the province-and German territory lying east of the line formed by the Oder and Neisse rivers (the Oder-Neisse Line).

Friendly Governments Versus Free Elections

The Big Three also agreed on the text of the Declaration on Liberated Europe, pledging that postwar governments in the liberated countries of Europe would be established on the basis of free elections.

There was a basic incompatibility between the Soviet demand for friendly governments in Poland and other Eastern European countries and the Western Allies' demand for free elections. In most of Eastern Europe, and certainly in Poland, free elections would almost inevitably have led to the establishment of governments hostile to the Soviet Union. Stalin therefore got the friendly governments he wanted by imposing Communist-dominated regimes on countries occupied by Red Army troops. The Western powers protested Soviet actions, but Moscow ignored the protests.

The Potsdam Conference

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New Participants: Truman and Attlee

On April 12, 1945, President Roosevelt died and was succeeded by his vice president, Harry S Truman (1884-1972). In mid-July 1945, Truman met with Churchill and Stalin in Potsdam, near Berlin, in the last of the wartime Big Three conferences. During the conference, Churchill was replaced by the newly elected British prime minister, Clement Attlee (1883-1967).

Decisions on German Occupation

By the time the Potsdam Conference met, the Americans, British, French, and Soviets had taken possession of their zones of occupation in Germany. The Potsdam Conference agreed that the occupation authorities in each zone should promote demilitarization, denazification, and democratization. On the controversial issue of reparations, the conference decided that each power should be permitted to remove property from its own zone, while the Soviets would also receive a percentage of capital equipment from the western zones.

The Potsdam Conference agreed to establish a four-power Allied Control Council to determine the policies to be executed in all of the four zones in Germany. In practice, however, the four powers failed to reach agreement on common policies, and thus each power proceeded to determine policy for its own zone.

The Second World War had far-reaching consequences. In Europe, the defeat of Germany created a power vacuum in Central Europe that made possible a great westward expansion of Soviet power. The growth of Soviet power, in turn, evoked an American response. The result was the Cold War.

In Asia, the defeat of Japan led to an increase of American influence, power, and responsibility in the western Pacific and East Asia. Throughout Asia, and in Africa, as well, the war helped intensify nationalist movements, thereby hastening the disintegration of Europe's colonial empires.

The Second World War also brought many technological developments, especially the atomic bomb, which presented future generations with the specter of mass annihilation.